

workers power

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

ROYAL MAIL “WE WILL ROCK YOU”



VICTORY TO THE POSTAL WORKERS!

INSIDE:

- For a united public sector strike
- For a new, mass workers party
- No war against Iran
- Russian revolution – 90 years on



League for the
Fifth International

EDITORIAL

As Brown bottles election... Let's not bottle the fight for a new workers' party

“He bottled it!” “Coward!” “He’s in the Brown stuff!” The tabloids positively exploded with glee at Brown’s discomfiture. Having spent all summer building up our new prime minister (the Brown bounce) the media brought him down to earth with a bone shaking crash.

After allowing Ed Balls, “the prime minister’s closest advisor”, and Spencer Livermore, Director of Political Strategy at Number 10, to whip up frenzied speculation that an autumn election was a near certainty, the hapless Gordon has had to call it off.

The reason for both the uncharacteristically bold advance and the typical panicky retreat was the same – the opinion polls. After the media hyped up a Labour’s conference which had all the substance and excitement of a party political broadcast, the polls gave Brown an 11 per cent lead. Brown used this at the Labour conference to encourage the union leaders into ever more fulsome praise. He thought too that speculation about an early election and a possible Labour landslide would unnerve the Tories, just before their conference.

But it only took another media event, this time David Cameron’s “brilliant” unscripted speech in Blackpool and his shadow chancellor George Osborne’s promise to the 5 per cent of the population, who pay inheritance duty (i.e. the seriously rich), to abolish it, and Gordon’s 11 per cent lead disappeared in a puff of smoke. Worse, an ICM poll in 83 marginal seats actually showed a Tory lead of 6 per cent.

Of course, as usual, Brown is trying to shift the blame onto others, but the whole fiasco has blown away the carefully constructed image of the strong and decisive leader, as well the man who had made a clean break from Blairite spin.

But if Gordon Brown has to drag himself out of the mire to ribald laughter, so have the leaders of the big three unions. They have absolutely fawned on Brown since his “coronation”, even though he has relentlessly pressed on with his attacks on their public sector members’ pay and conditions.

After Brown’s speech to the Labour Party conference, void of the smallest promise to raise their members’ pay, restore their union rights, protect their pensions or stop privatising services, the leaders of the big general unions tried to outdo one another with servile soundbites.

- Dave Prentis of Unison: “a speech worth waiting for
- Paul Kenny of the GMB: “an extremely strong, powerful speech.”
- Tony Woodley of Unite: “He is in touch with ordinary working men and women... the most Labour speech we have heard for a decade.”
- Brendan Barber of the TUC: “a speech ... fired

with a commitment to social justice and opportunity”

But perhaps the most extravagant toadying came from Billy Hayes of the CWU, leader of the striking postal workers: “We know that the Liberals want to privatise Royal Mail, we know what the Tories would do to Royal Mail. When we look at our party we see the difference that a Labour government makes. ... We thank the government and the party for that.”

Thus, while the government is trying to cut his members’ pay, slash their jobs, privatise their industry, he thanks it for not doing it as quickly as the Liberals and Tories would do.

The union leaders’ strategy can be summed up as: “If we hold our members back now, hamper every move to unite their struggles, this will help Gordon win an early election. Then at last he’ll be grateful to us. Maybe then he’ll throw us a dog biscuit.”

On the picket lines savvy militants are already predicting the knighthoods and “safe seats” their leaders have been offered. A new generation of “trade union barons” is up for ennoblement. But such bribery is hardly essential. Leaders like Woodley and Prentis actually do it for free; they do it out of sheer political and moral helplessness. There is, in their hackneyed phrase, “simply no other game in town.”

They lie of course. There is another game but it one they, as bureaucrats, will not and dare not play. It is called class struggle.

The alternative to spaniel-like fawning on Brown is to fight him, to coordinate strike action across the public sector, to give him a taste of our strength, to force him to back down.

This means supporting the postal workers right now and bringing all the other public sector unions out alongside them to smash Brown’s 2 per cent public sector pay limit.

Oh, but this will play into the hands of the Tories, the union leaders will chorus. If we make trouble for Brown then the Tories will get in! This whole argument is hopelessly naïve. If Brown breaks the backs of the postal workers today, if the public sector unions one by one go down to defeat, we will be in a much weaker position to resist Cameron if he wins an election in 2008 or 2009. But if we succeed this year and force the government and public sector employers to back down, we’ll be in a far stronger position to see off future attacks, whether they come from Brown or Cameron.

“But what about politics?” the union leaders will say. “We can’t just keep resisting one attack after another; we have to have influence in government.”

Indeed! That is why it is high time we built ourselves a new political party, one that exists to fight, day in and day out, in our communi-

ties, in the workplaces, on the streets, not one that comes cadging our votes every few years at election time.

The miserable failure of the John McDonnell campaign even to be able to stand for the Labour leadership, the abolition of constituency or union resolutions at Labour Party conference, the ousting of the RMT and FBU unions from Labour, all show that the idea of reclaiming Labour for the working class is a busted strategy. We, the working class, need a party of our own.

We need a government of our own too, that’s for sure! But we have to decide what we want a workers’ government to do. Then we have to decide how we can get a workers’ government, and what the road to real workers’ power is. A party needs to be assembled around this strategy, this programme, not around the idea of trimming your policies to get elected. That’s how old Labour turned into new Labour. Do we want to retreat that weary road again?

The burning task of the months ahead is to force the right wing union leaders to break with Brown on the issues of wages, jobs, pensions and democratic rights, and, if they won’t, to set out to get rid of them. Absolutely linked to this is the fight to break our unions from Labour, to stop them pouring millions upon millions down the drain of a government and a party that has been attacking us for ten years.

To the left wing union leaders – of the railway workers, the civil servants, the firefighters – we need to say: unite your members struggles now; build joint union committees in every locality; open them wide to all sectors in struggle, including local sections of the big three unions and launch a militant campaign of resistance to Brown. Again, if you don’t we will set out to do it “from below”, we the rank and file.

These leaders – Bob Crow, Mark Serwotka, Matt Wrack – have all broken from Labour. Now they should call a democratic and all-inclusive conference to debate and agree the basis for founding a new working class party. They should invite all the working class forces fighting against new Labour’s attacks, Left MPs like George Galloway and John MacDonnell and their supporters, the various socialist groups, the Communist Party of Britain (Morning Star), the anticapitalist youth. But, none of these forces should be allowed to block the formation of an independent working class party just because of their bankrupt strategies, which have failed: the cross-class populism of Respect, the pro-Labour strategy of the CPB, or the parliamentarism of the Labour left. All should be invited – none should have a veto.

We have wasted valuable time, but we can still do it Let’s begin the foundation of a new working class party.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

INHERITANCE TAX

The Tory proposal to raise the threshold for Inheritance Tax to £1 million caught the imagination of the middle classes up and down the country. The Tories tried to present it as a way of helping ordinary people avoid a 40 per cent tax on their wealth when they die.

In fact only 5 per cent of the population pay this tax anyway. And of course many selfish middle class types don't see why they should pay any tax when they die - they want their money to go to their children.

The obvious point in favour of inheritance taxes is that no one should have to worry how their families will get by after they die anyway. Decent pensions, well-funded services and affordable homes for all would remove the worry. And these can only be funded for the overwhelming majority who don't pay inheritance tax if the wealth of the rich is redistributed. Tax is one way of doing this, which is why the Tories hate it so much.

Since the days of the Communist Manifesto the working class has demanded taxes on inheritance. The anger people feel when they see their taxes frittered away would be overcome if state was under the control of working people, so spending could be planned democratically.

Until then, socialists should support a simple tax policy: very high taxes on unearned wealth, corporate profits and the super-rich, and slash taxes for working people, abolishing the Council Tax, VAT and all taxes that hit the poorest.

MUSHARRAF: 'OUR' TYRANT

No surprises in Pakistan, as President Pervez Musharraf is voted back into power by parliament after deporting his closest rival Nawaz Sharif.

Musharraf has steered a course through the rebellion of the last year, sparked by the lawyers' demonstrations and Islamic opposition. His resignation from the army changes nothing, as the military is still firmly in control.

Brown is busy supporting a deal being broked between Musharraf and liberal Benazir Bhutto - both of whom support the US war on terror. He cries crocodile tears for the victims of the vicious dictatorship in Burma - but Pakistan's tyrant is one of "our" murderers, so Brown tacitly backs him.

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LABOUR AND THE UNIONS

Pressure mounts for new working class party

A number of labour movement leaders have recently suggested the idea of recapturing Labour for the working class is a failed strategy. *Jeremy Dewar* looks at what they are saying and what is the way forward

The Labour Party conference took another step towards breaking its historic link to the trade unions and millions of working class people.

With over 85 per cent of delegates voting in favour, the party's sovereign body passed a resolution to renounce its own right to debate "contemporary motions". No longer will the leadership have to listen to constituency members and trade union delegates demanding policies reflecting their members concerns: to stop the private sector bleeding the NHS dry, to end the scandalous hiving off of council houses, to get the troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan. True these had all but been driven off the agenda by the combined cowardice of the general secretaries of the big unions and the middle class takeover of the constituencies. But one or two occasionally slipped through the net to embarrass the platform. There was even the odd government defeat to provide an opportunity for Blair and Brown to proclaim that it was "not binding" and they would simply ignore it.

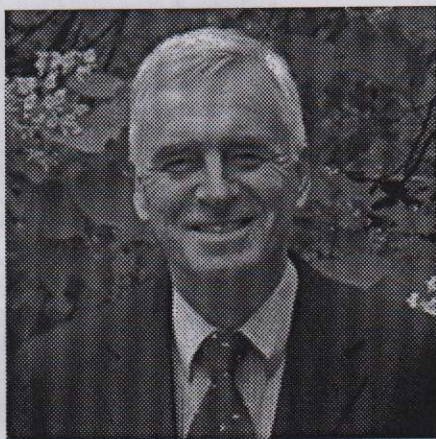
As Tony Benn said to *The Guardian*, shortly before the conference, there will now be "no point in joining the party locally or affiliating as a union in the hope of discussing policy. In short, party members will only have one campaigning function - to get councilors and a government elected with policies which they have played no part whatsoever in formulating."

Thus Gordon Brown has blithely destroyed the last remaining channel working class people had to influence party policy. From now on, the conference will become an unbroken party political broadcast.

Self-perpetuating

Of course, the parliamentary leadership always reserved to themselves the right to write the party's manifesto – and to ignore that too, once elected.

Similarly, the leadership has exercised a veto over the selection of parliamentary candidates since the defeat of the Labour Party Democracy Movement back in the 1980s. And, as the leadership contest fiasco showed in June, Labour's backbenches are now stuffed with yes men and women ready to block any challenge. Rule changes meant that John McDonnell, the only challenger to Gordon Brown, needed the backing of 45 Labour MPs before he could take his campaign, based on ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, restoring trade union rights and halting privatisation, to the broad-



John McDonnell MP, chairperson of the Labour Representation Committee, has questioned the future of the Labour left

er membership. He could only muster 29 votes. A self-perpetuating leadership is installed.

And what policies! On every point Labour is now pointing away from working class needs and aspirations and pandering to the bosses and "Middle England" – what once used to be called more frankly the middle class.

To Britain's bloody occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq can be added support for George Bush's preparations to attack Iran. Cuts in corporation tax and loopholes accompany the abolition of the lower rate of income tax that afforded the poorest workers some respite. Fat cats profit from public services and banks like Northern Rock get bailed out with billions of pounds, while the workers' pay and pensions are slashed.

Asylum seekers and migrant workers are deported to war zones or subjected to super-exploitation and racism. The police and courts get new powers of harassment and imprisonment, while our rights to strike and to protest are curtailed.

The trade union leaders went along with this and voted for the rule change at conference.

But even if they put up a fight, which they would only do under pressure from their rank and file members, they would meet bureaucratic blocking from the leadership, a barrage of deadhead, leadership loyal MPs, and inevitable threats to split – just as the right wing, led by current Brown aide, Dame Shirley Williams, did the last time the left made a serious play for party leadership, in the early 1980s.

Contrary to what the likes of Tony Benn and



Bob Wareing MP, ousted by the Blair-Brown "mafia" from his seat in Liverpool West Derby, will now stand against new Labour

the union leaders say, it is far more realistic to solve the crisis of working class political representation by forming a new mass party, based on the fighting trade unions and the militant movements against Brown's Labour government.

Alternatives

Hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of workers are deeply disillusioned with Labour. Hundreds of thousands have left the party, two trade unions – the railworkers and the firefighters – have left or been expelled and millions of workers have stopped voting for it. Not only that, but an anticapitalist movement led by the youth targeted globalisation with direct action, two million marched in February 2003 against Labour's war on Iraq, and hundreds of thousands of public sector workers have struck and are striking against the government. Two initiatives to rally rank and file trade union militants have been launched in the past 12 months: organising for Fighting Unions and the National Shop Stewards Movement.

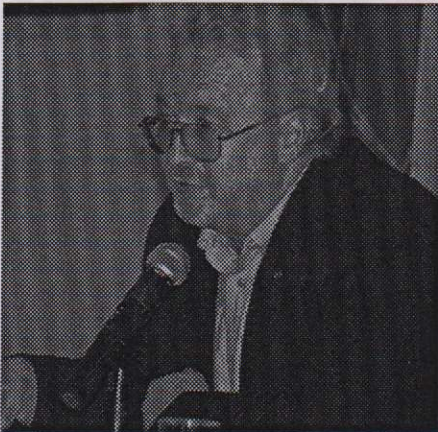
What is more, there are escalating attempts to organise a break from Labour.

In the past month, two important figures, up to now in favour of fighting to "reclaim" the Labour Party, have concluded that it cannot be done. Rob Griffiths, general secretary of the Communist Party of Britain, wrote in the *Morning Star*:

"The final crisis approaches for the whole trade union movement and the non-sectarian left. Are we to have a mass party of labour in

Britain? If the labour movement cannot or will not reclaim the Labour Party from the privatisers, the warmongers and the Thatcher fans, it will have to re-establish one. Does our movement have the leadership and vision to fulfil such a historic responsibility?"

Two weeks later, Griffiths was even more explicit: "From this Labour Party conference, every trade union, whether affiliated or not, and every socialist organisation has a responsibility to outline its proposals for reclaiming or re-establishing Britain's mass party of labour." Griffiths is predictably cautious about writing off the Labour Party, since a significant part of his own party is wedded to a strategy based on elect-



Rob Griffiths has called into question the Communist Party of Britain's strategy of supporting a left Labour government, and called on unions and political organisations to put forward ideas for reclaiming Labour or forming a new workers party

ing a left wing labour government, but there can be no doubt where he stands.

John McDonnell, the Labour left's flag-bearer in recent years, responded to Griffiths' challenge almost immediately: "The Left has the difficult task of accepting and explaining to others that the old routes into the exercise of power and influence involving internal Labour Party mobilisations and manoeuvres have largely been closed down. We have to face up to the challenge of identifying and developing new routes into effective political activity."

Typically, McDonnell did not spell out these routes, except for mentioning social movements and alliances. All well and good, but movements and alliances that fail to strive for political power are doomed to remain on the defensive – against this war or that privatisation – and cannot generalise their struggles and challenge the system. Only political parties can do that by taking the power and wielding it against the capitalists.

Interestingly, McDonnell also openly called for socialists to organise with trade union rank and file members, "where trade union leaderships have been incorporated as supporters of the status quo", a clear reference to the pro-Labour general secretaries who would sacrifice their members' pay and conditions to keep Gordon Brown in office.

We welcome these developments, to which should be added the Rail Maritime and Transport union's decision to stand against Labour in next year's London elections; and long-time left Labour MP Bob Wareing's announcement that he would stand against Labour in Liverpool after the antiwar campaigner was deselected "by the new Labour mafia" in favour of Blair-Brown loyalist Stephen Twigg.

What all this shows is that 10 years of a Labour government have brought the contradictions of

that party to breaking point. So what should socialists do, now?

Across the left wing groups and the much wider layer of trade union militants there are thousands eager to break with Labour. We should join forces to:

- Fight in the unions to get them to withhold their contributions to Brown and Labour, to call special conferences, ballot their members etc, and campaign for a re-orientation of the unions to building a new and genuine party of the working class and all the oppressed and exploited in Britain.
- Fight for conferences in every town and city to discuss a proposal to break from Labour and found a new workers party. Fight for a national conference of representatives of trade union branches/districts, political organisations and parties.

A conference should discuss:

- An action programme to resist the neoliberal attacks of government on wages, services, etc democratic rights, and to fight for the rights of immigrant minorities, women and youth. This action programme should be the basis for mass campaigning and direct action in as well as a platform for candidates in the coming elections.
- A full and democratic debate on the fundamental strategy of the party – its programme, which must centre on how we can create a new socialist society, by reform or revolution?
- An active attempt to link up with moves to form new working class parties in other countries. Under globalisation it is more than ever necessary to combine working class action across national borders a new party in Britain should reach out straight away and attempt to help form a new world party of the workers - a new international.

Reform or Revolution?

There is one danger that any new party should avoid like the plague. It must not follow old Labour, which set as its overriding goal winning a majority in parliament. Its policy therefore became whatever helped it to win elections. This is the source of all the trimming and pandering to the middle class throughout Labour's history, from the "floating voters" of Harold Wilson to the "Middle England" of Tony Blair.

This parliamentary cretinism was wired into the genetic code of Old Labour and led inevitably to New Labour – a party ruling for neoliberal capital. If we want to have a real working class party, it needs to have a real working class objective, which is not winning an election on any old basis, but creating a society in which workers are no longer exploited. Our objective must be a socialist society, in which planning replaces the market economy and production is for need not greed – a society, in which class distinctions can be abolished, and all can share in the fruits of our common labour.

The task of the party will be to mobilise support for this goal, and to link up every fight

against pay cuts, privatisation, racism and war into a mass movement against the capitalist system.

This would be a real alternative. At the current time, when so many people sense the emptiness and sameness of all the official pro-business parties, a clear, socialist message could recruit thousands upon thousands of workers and young people, sick to the back teeth of the lies and the hypocrisy of the bosses and their mouth pieces. A new workers party could use elections not to defraud the people, but to win support for all our daily demands and needs, and the goal of a society run by and for the working people.

The party could control its MPs and councillors, making them stick loyally to the policies agreed by the members. It could work to win the trade unions to it, and replace right wing union leaders with real fighters under the control of their members.

Our MPs and union full-timers would no longer be paid vast sums of money, and be free from democratic accountability. They would serve the party and the mass trade unions, not

lord it over them.

Last but not least, the party would prepare the working class for the inevitable and violent resistance of the ruling class to its taking power. The new mass party we need has to prepare for revolution if it is not, as tragically happened in Chile in 1973, to be crushed by the counter-revolution.

Of course Rob Griffiths, John McDonnell and Bob Crow do not agree with such a programme. Fine, let them argue openly for their ideas and let's have a democratic debate among all those that wish to break from Labour and form a new party. We are confident that many workers – black, white and Asian; Muslim, Christian and of no religion; established trade unionists, migrants and youth – can be won to the programme of revolutionary communism in the process.

However, if the supporters of Workers Power find ourselves in a minority in a new party, but nevertheless it is democratic and ready to fight the government and the capitalists we would continue to campaign within it for the consistent interests of the working class – for a world socialist revolution.

POSTAL WORKERS

Postal workers can win

Postal workers in the CWU are on strike again. The four-day stoppage on 4-9 October showed they remain united and more determined than ever to win. A CWU rep reports

The battle was serious before, now it is in deadly earnest. After six weeks of sham negotiations Royal Mail bosses Adam Crozier and Allan Leighton presented an ultimatum to the CWU (see box).

Postal workers responded with strikes in early October that shut down the post for a week. Gordon Brown himself called the strike "unacceptable" and blustered "I want these people back to work", but an opinion poll commissioned by the CWU showed that over two-thirds of the public backed the union.

The first round of strikes over the summer, which 95% of posties came out for, were abruptly called off by our leaders Billy Hayes and Dave Ward for secret talks, breaking the strike's momentum. Royal Mail's ultimatum proves talks were always a cynical exercise; they had no intention of conceding a real pay rise.

Never again must we call off strike action simply for talks!

Strikes show will to win

But if their intention was to demoralise us, they got a shock. Disbelief and anger in delivery offices and mail centres turned to steely determination. The early October strikes were as solid as the summer's, and a broader layer of workers were prepared to discuss all-out indefinite strike action to end the dispute quickly. With higher traffic than in the summer, the backlog will soon return.

No doubt in some offices management will try it on, as they have after every other strike, suspending members for dissuading potential scabs, for "doing their job properly", or simply for carrying out union business.

If anyone has any doubts, look at the recent case in Burslem office, where management accused 12 members of bullying and suspend-

ed them in an attempt to break an office that has mounted walkouts in the past year. Or Watford, where workers refused to use their own car on delivery! Mass walkouts and legal threats challenged Royal Mail's attacks and in many cases forced management to retreat.

Let's meet any victimisation or bullying with wildcat strikes!

How to beat Royal Mail

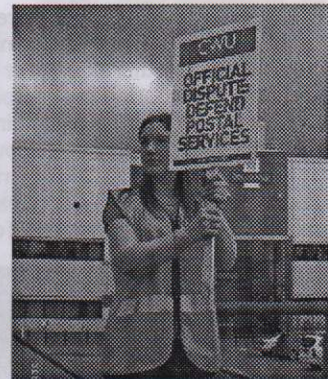
Royal Mail now faces "rolling strikes" once again, with different sections of workers coming out on different days, each striking one day a week. CWU leaders call this "maximum disruption, for minimum damage to members". Strikes could run up to Christmas.

But why take the risk, when we could settle it here and now? Every time we've relaxed the pressure, Leighton and Crozier have kicked us in the teeth. Instead of limiting our action to what will make Royal Mail enter meaningless talks, we should force them to back down by extending it - up to an indefinite, all-out strike.

Postal workers do important work. Without us there is no alternative network. More and more communication is by email, but the growth of the internet has driven the mail order business. Customers would soon be screaming blue murder at the dent in their sales.

We have the power to beat Royal Mail hands down - and if we can unite with the other unions, we can beat the weak and indecisive Brown, too.

If our leaders want "minimum damage to members", then they should call an indefinite all-out strike and campaign up and down the country, explaining to every member that such a stoppage could win within weeks, if not days. A massive campaign for solidarity funds and action from other unions would provide hardship funds for those who could not otherwise afford such action.



Birmingham strikers on picket duty (photos: Indymedia)

Royal Mail's ultimatum

- 1 Working into an early grave: no retirement until you're 65 and then a poverty pension
- 1 Flexibility, sweatshop style: annualised hours, changing shifts at a week's notice, covering those off sick for free, cut off only at management's discretion, doing any job you're told to, delivering door-to-door and election materials for free
- 1 Kicking out the union: a new industrial relations framework to cut out area reps, leaving offices to face management diktats alone
- 1 No pay rise: 6.7% over two years, not even enough to keep up with inflation

Watch Billy Hayes

Billy Hayes thanked Gordon Brown at the Labour Party conference for not privatising Royal Mail. Has he gone mad? Brown imposed the pay freeze back in March. He's the one behind the open market - which he has rigged in favour of TNT, UK Mail, etc.

Now that Brown has cowardly walked away from an election, it is likely that Hayes will seek to aid his rehabilitation with the public by trying to do a deal over the heads of the membership that will end the dispute. Even on 8 October, at the union rally in London, Billy Hayes was calling on Labour ministers to intervene. Doesn't he realise that, if they did, they would side with management?

Of course postal workers want the strike settled - but only on terms that will safeguard our jobs,

pay and conditions, that will set back the privatisation bandwagon, if not overturn it completely:

- Defend jobs and conditions - no efficiency deals that trade jobs for pay
- Raise our pay to £400 a week - the average British wage
- Close the postal market and nationalise the private mail companies under workers' control with no compensation to TNT, UK Mail, etc.

However, we do not trust Hayes or Dave Ward to fight for such a settlement, to mount the action necessary to win it, or to allow postal workers to decide when we strike or what we negotiate for. That's why we call for rank and file control of the strike, for a delegate meeting of all those offices that want to escalate the action and for a rank and file movement in the CWU.

FIGHTBACK

Postal workers, council employees, civil servants, teachers and lecturers...

Strike a united front!

The attack on public sector workers is being co-ordinated in Downing Street. *Jeremy Dewar* believes we can bust Brown's onslaught by co-ordinating our resistance

Public sector workers' pay is being cut this year because Gordon Brown demanded it back in March. When inflation was running at 4.8 per cent, he pegged pay awards to just 2 per cent; a real pay cut. Many face cuts to their pensions, too.

But Brown's demands went way beyond this. He wants total flexibility. Workers will not know how many hours they will get each week. They could be asked to perform an increasing number of duties. Their shifts could be changed, their hours cut. The aim is to crank up the workrate for no extra money.

By opening public services to the market, Labour has guaranteed easy bucks for the fat cats, who can cherry-pick which operations to provide and which obligations to avoid. This is creating a two-tier service, as those with money can buy better provision, while those without face cuts and queues. It undermines workers' conditions by blaming the mess on union "privileges".

Finally, all public servants face privatisation at the end - either by stealth or full on.

United strike

We can smash these plans by co-ordinating our actions. The unions could unite their strikes and really make them tell. The best way to do this would be by an all-out indefinite strike across the public sector, with no one settling until everyone has settled. This would be the quickest

and surest way to win.

The union leaders have a different strategy - and it has now been proven to be completely useless. Dave Prentis, Paul Kenny, Tony Woodley and supposed left winger Billy Hayes have all held back struggles, called off strikes, cajoled members into settling for less. They have kept our actions apart.

And why? To boost Brown and get him re-elected in the autumn or the spring. What a disaster!

Brown will attempt to claw his way back in the polls by increasing the tempo of attacks. But he is underestimating the public sector workers, the users of our services and others under attack. Hayes, Prentis, and co. must be forced to fight harder and unite the struggles - or make way for those who will.

Let's co-ordinate our actions from below, locally. Let's unite all the workers under attack, all those who want to defend their services, all the private sector unions in dispute to unite our actions and support the postal workers now.

Grassroots activists have got a real opportunity - and face a burning necessity - to form a rank and file movement to reclaim the unions from the sell-out merchants

Millions of workers must think the union leaders, who have placed all their bets on the coward Brown, are bankrupt. So is Labour, the party of Brown, Prentis, Woodley and Hayes. Now is the time to break from Labour and form a new workers party.

Unison council employees

Fearing a mass walkout, the government upped its offer to 2.475 per cent, with 3.4 per cent offered to low-paid staff. Hold on to your hat though; for 300,000 workers, this amounts to a miserly £6 an hour!

Three-quarters of these workers are women. Home care assistants, housing clerks, refuse collectors, cleaners, school cooks... they are the backbone of local services, and crucial to a united strike. They could persuade others to refuse to cross picket lines.

A ballot is underway that will close on 25 October, and 850,000 members could be on strike the next week.

But some Unison activists campaigning for a strike vote are facing trumped-up disciplinary charges; Plymouth branch secretary Tony Staunton has already been expelled from the union. Unison tops are Labour-loyal and desperate to save Brown further embarrassment.

NUT teachers and UCU lecturers

The NUT has submitted a claim of £3,000 or 10 per cent this year and awaits a response from the School Teachers Review Body. The leadership has already promised a ballot for action if it recommends a real pay cut. However, teachers need the full claim, if they are to catch up after years of falling pay.

Strike action should not be put off until after Christmas or limited to one day, as some NUT leaders have argued. Nor would a long campaign of partial and intermittent strikes work. Instead, bring the strike forward, and escalate the action to an all-out indefinite stoppage if the one-day protest does not win.

UCU college lecturers are also looking at taking action over the government's pay offer: 2 per cent this year, 1 per cent next. The union rejected the offer in July; branch delegates will meet on 6 October to discuss next steps. The left supports a motion for a real rise and co-ordinated action with other unions, starting with a one-day strike, then escalating if there is no result.

PCS civil servants

The PCS has already held two one-day national strikes this year over pay, outsourcing and 100,000 job cuts. Now, after a two-month consultation, union leaders are campaigning for a "yes" vote in an indicative strike ballot.

Meanwhile 90,000 Department of Work and Pensions staff have rejected by 76 per cent their latest pay offer - as little as 3 per cent over three years!

Yet the PCS leaders are still only arguing for a one-day strike, co-ordinated with other public sector unions if possible. They claim this would achieve the greatest impact on the media, public opinion and politicians - though earlier strikes had minimal impact.

It will take more than a day to defeat Brown, even if it involves postal and council workers. Strong sections, such as the DWWP, can lead the way. But rank and file militants will have to fight their timid Socialist Party leaders for bolder tactics.

Sabotage

Last month Unison officials tricked healthworkers into accepting a 2.5 per cent deal that was paid in stages and worth only 1.5 per cent, demobilising a section of workers, who could have played a key mobilising role with the public. They threatened to discipline anyone campaigning against the offer. Less than one in four members returned their ballots, so demoralising was the campaign.

On 1 October another blow: 350,000 council workers in GMB and Unite accepted an "improved" pay offer. Union literature failed to make the case for the strike, and both votes were lost on tiny turnouts.

BROWN'S BRITAIN

Racism on the

Labour and the Conservatives are trying to out-tough each other over immigration. *Kam Kumar* examines why racism is inevitable under capitalism – and how racist scares are used to divide us

Tory shadow minister Baroness Sayeeda Warsi says immigration is “out of control” and that British National Party voters had “some very legitimate views” on the issue. Her colleague David Davis backed her up, claiming a Conservative government would set an annual limit to greatly reduce number of migrants coming to Britain. New border police would enforce this.

Gordon Brown, not to be outdone, told the TUC that he would focus on creating “British jobs for British people”, stealing a key phrase of the fascist BNP. He would offer subsidies to the bosses to take on British workers first.

Meanwhile the newspapers regularly whip up racist fears: one out of four British babies has a foreign parent (Daily Mail), Leicester will be a non-white majority city in three years (The Sun) and so on.

This rising racism ignores the terrible conditions and poverty that the vast majority of migrant workers suffer, and the destitution and deportation refugees face from an increasingly draconian asylum system. It attempts to scapegoat newcomers for the problems workers face here in Britain. The aim is to divide the working class and hamper a fightback against the government and the bosses.

Global capitalism

Migration is the product of the world capitalist system, which destroys peoples livelihoods by war, throws peasants off the land so it can be developed by agribusiness, and floods third world markets with cheap, often subsidised goods and produce from the US and the European Union. People are driven by hunger, poverty and fear to travel across borders and continents in search of work.

Globalisation and its accompanying wars have recently increased the rate of migration. But it has been there since the birth of capitalism. How else were the Americas populated by Europeans?

Capitalism first needs to create



Migrant workers in East Anglia form the backbone of much of Britain's Agricultural sector

a class free of any property, so that it has to sell its ability to work. Then it needs to force them to live and work, where capital can exploit them.

Migrant workers therefore are part of the world working class. The bosses and their politicians want us to view them as rivals for housing, jobs, and health services, to scapegoat the most down-

trodden section of our class for their failure to provide basic resources. And, as the economic crisis of their system starts to bite, they will whip up this racism more and more.

But in fact we should unite with them to fight for better social conditions, higher wages and democratic rights. We should encourage them to integrate into the

working class movement.

Unions and campaigns have already won some heartening successes. In August asylum campaigners forced the government to cease deportations to DR Congo until it is proven safe. Thousands of migrant workers have joined unions in Britain, reviving the struggle against the same low pay and dodgy practices that many British workers face too.

Workers in Britain – millions of whom are second or third generation immigrants ourselves – have nothing to fear from these new additions to our numbers and our unions. We have everything to gain from their youthful energy and global experience of struggle.

Only one road will ensure we defend our livelihoods in a period where they are under attack, the road of united struggle to defend them and to overthrow capitalism. Then we can start to build the socialist order, where workers will not have to travel thousands of miles, risking life and limb, simply to feed themselves, but where everyone will be free to live and work wherever they choose.

British jobs for British workers?

Gordon Brown has called for 500,000 “British jobs for British workers” in an echo of the far-right’s favourite anti-immigration slogan. He will tighten English language requirements and take measures to fast-track British citizens into jobs. He will even subsidise employers with a £400 “training allowance” for low-skill jobs; Primark and Safeway signed up like a shot!

In addition, Brown will make it easier for British-based companies to cherry-pick skilled labour from poorer countries under the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme that comes into effect in 2008. This is designed for educated workers and middle class professionals with a high standard

of English. Meanwhile, a Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme for unskilled farm labourers. Unlike the skilled migrants, these workers will not have the option to apply for citizenship and will be told to leave once their contract ends.

What a vile set of categories, quite reminiscent of some of the most racist societies in histories, like Nazi Germany or apartheid South Africa. This exposes the two sides of Gordon Brown: a servant to big business, tending to their every need, and a calculation politician, prepared to play every card in the pack, including the racist one, just to get elected.

We demand full citizenship rights for all those who come to

work in Britain or flee from violence or repressive regimes, and an end to the racist scapegoating of migrants. English language tuition – which has been cut to the bone in recent years – and information on rights at work, to housing and to services should be free and available to all migrants. They should be paid for by a tax on the employers – after all, they are the ones, who exploit migrant workers.

Closing the borders will not halt migration, it will only make those working illegally do so in ever worsening conditions. It will not save jobs, but only strengthen the hand of those, who will chuck thousands on the dole as soon as they think profits are under threat.

rise

Migrants: exploited workers

Over 700,000 migrant workers came to Britain to look for work this year, mostly from the European Union, especially Poland. The government has imposed harsh restrictions on migrants from Romania and Bulgaria, the EU's poorest countries. If they wish to work here, they need a special work permit.

Many migrant workers do not stay, leaving a net annual immigration at about 200,000 for recent years. 16,000 Eastern European migrants left in 2006, citing exploitation, crime, and racist abuse and attacks as the reason. For example, tensions flared at a school in Chatham, Kent, last month, where the 15% of pupils are Eastern European and face racist bullying.

Those without legal papers, over half a million migrants, face sweatshop conditions or worse. The thousands of young women working effectively as slaves in the sex trade are at the darkest end of the spectrum of super-exploitation. Migrants are ten times more likely to be paid less than the minimum wage than the average worker; over a quarter have no contract.

Look at what happened to Hungarians working for Domino's Pizza. They regularly ended up with "negative wages", unable to quit because they owed the company money. The BBC found that workers had to buy and insure cars used to deliver pizzas for £1,700, pay the company extortionate rent for cramped accommodation, pay for money allegedly "stolen" from a safe, pay for their uniforms... one worker earned minus £47 for two weeks work!

When the workers complained, they were sacked and evicted. Fortunately, their union, Unite, fought back. Many got re-employed. But many more in similar plights remain unorganised and in debt bondage.

Brown's 'Britishness': reactionary to the core

By Andy Yorke

Gordon Brown's first conference speech as Labour leader and prime minister was a remarkable one. Close your eyes and you might have thought yourself back in the days of John Major or even Margaret Thatcher with their "Back to Basics" or "Victorian Values" campaigns.

Indeed, in the last year or two, you needn't even have closed your eyes when watching Labour's conference. The giant union jack last year or the vibrant blue background these were clearly meant to appeal to the "natural" Tory voter – i.e. the more socially reactionary members of the middle class.

Brown promised to get tough on the whole gamut of the moral panics regularly run by the Tory press – and, like the media, he focuses time and again on young people and their "stepping over the line".

He targeted binge drinking by young people, with hints he might reverse the liberalisation of the licensing laws. The police will be issued with mobile fingerprint machines, for use on groups of "loitering" youths, thus building up databases on people the police merely suspects. This is a further extension of the Asbo culture, where you can get a police record without being convicted of any crime whatsoever.

Brown cynically exploited the justified alarm in the black communities of London and Manchester about recent shootings of young people to extend police stop-and-search powers. These have always been used to harass young people, particularly from these communities. He indicated that he is sympathetic to calls for reclassifying cannabis as a class B drug, which will mean a return to street arrests for possession, raids on clubs and parties.

Taken together this is a recipe for a return to the worst days of the early 1980s.

Brown wants to stress disci-



pline (with punishments such as exclusion from school) for those that cross his moral "boundaries". Brown explicitly rooted his values in religion and patriotism, learned, he claimed, by listening to the sermons of his father, a Presbyterian minister – again, with heavy overtones of Thatcher's Methodist shopkeeper father, from whom she too claimed to have learned her "values".

"So yes we will strengthen the police. Yes we will strengthen our laws," Brown told the Labour conference, "But preventing crime for me also means all of us, as a community, setting boundaries between what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour – with clear penalties for stepping over the line. Boundaries that reflect the words I was taught when I was young, words upon which we all know strong communities are founded: discipline, respect, responsibility."

Brown's Britishness

And like the "Iron Lady", he resorted to patriotism as the keynote to be struck with monotonous insistency: he mentioned Britain or Britishness more than 80 times in the speech.

"I am proud to be British. I believe in British values... Britain has been tested and not found wanting. This is who we are. And there is no weakness in Britain today that cannot be overcome by the strengths of the British people. So don't let anyone tell us Britain is not equal to

every challenge."

His speech culminated in the pledge: "I will stand up for British values. I will stand up for a strong Britain."

For over a year, he has pushed the need to promote "Britishness" as the answer to the alienation of young Muslims, with his proposed Britain Day and obligatory citizenship tests for immigrants. Now he clearly believes everyone is in need of regular doses of patriotism. Not to be completely out-Toried by Brown, David Cameron has helpfully suggested he introduce a Pledge of Allegiance to be recited by students everyday in school.

It no accident that, alongside Brown's desertion of even the most basic defence of workers' interests, he raises the imaginary unity of the nation – of the low paid worker and the billionaire businessman. It is no accident either that he roots in the rubbish bin of Conservatism for disciplinary measures aimed at rebellious and disobedient youth.

Brown's speech signaled that, in terms of their morality and their attitude to the young, the deprived and the various established ethnic communities and immigrants, all three of Britain's mainstream parties are socially reactionary. All the more reason to create, alongside a new and *internationalist* workers' party, a mass youth movement of rebellious, revolutionary working class young people, black and white, willing to unite against capitalism, racism and British imperialism.

ANTIWAR

Thousands defy government ban

By Simon Hardy

The antiwar movement scored a huge victory on 8 October by marching on parliament, as Brown made his first speech to the House of Commons after the summer break. The police had tried to ban the demo, using an 1839 act, designed to stop Chartists - a revolutionary workers' movement - from barracking MPs. But they had to back down, faced with a militant turnout and widespread support.

Revolution and Workers Power members from universities in Leeds, Essex, East Anglia and across London played a prominent role, alongside a large contingent from Manchester, in resisting police attempts to restrict the protest. We called for solidarity with the resistance movements across the world: "Beirut, Baghdad, Kabul Gaza, victory to the intifada!"

Inside parliament, Brown said he would withdraw 2,500 British soldiers from Iraq by spring 2008. Outside, 5,000 students and activists, including postal workers, who joined the protest with their union banners and in uniform, called for the immediate and



total withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, and for no attack on Iran.

The march showed that thousands can be mobilised to oppose the war, despite Britain's seeming retreat from Iraq. They know that Brown is committed to keeping troops and fighter planes there against the wishes of the Iraqi people in order to assert imperialist control of the oilfields. They know the troops will simply be redeployed to

Afghanistan, where numbers have crept up to 8,000. They know the prime minister has secretly agreed to a massive attack on Iran.

Step up the action

It is both possible and necessary to up the tempo of the antiwar activity. The Stop the War Coalition annual conference on 27 October needs to urgently re-orient the movement.

• Call on rank and file soldiers -

most of whom know that they are in Iraq and Afghanistan for Big Oil and imperialist control of the world - to organise separately from their officers and to refuse to fight these reactionary wars. In return, we will support their democratic rights to freedom of speech and association, and for compensation for mental and physical injuries.

• Call on the unions and workers to block the supply of weapons and materials to the front, just like two Motherwell train drivers did in 2003. Call on students and school pupils to walk out, workers to strike and occupy city centres, should there be an attack on Iran. For mass direct action outside military bases.

• Stop Labour's war on Muslims. Students, lecturers and teacher should oppose surveillance of Muslim students, or restrictions on Islamic dress. This month's demo proved we can defy and break the attacks on civil liberties - abolish all the anti-terror legislation and fight against attempts to increase the number of days "suspects" can be held without charge.

• All troops out now!

European Social Forum comes to Sweden

Dave Stockton reports on three important events for the global anticapitalist movement

The World Social Forum has called a global day of action for 26 January 2008. Its target is admittedly a very broad one - "neoliberalism, war, colonialism, racism, and patriarchy." Without a clear target, the "diversity and plurality" celebrated as a source of strength, could turn into dissipation. Certainly the US preparations for an attack on Iran could provide one.

Signs are that local, regional and continental social forums around the world are pledging themselves to do this. A rather notable absence here is the "movement" in Britain, which apart from Workers Power, was not represented in Stockholm.

The second event under preparation is the next European Social Forum, to be held in Malmö, southern Sweden on 18-21 September 2008. The preparatory assembly last month attracted 165 participants

from 60 organisations and 20 countries; organisers expect 20,000 to come to Malmö next autumn.

The most positive session in Stockholm was the antiwar assembly, which adopted quite a good set of proposals.

- Hold protests against in town centres at 6pm on day of an attack on Iran; where possible, organise student walkouts and strikes
- Join the US movement with mass demos on the fifth anniversary of invasion of Iraq, calling for troops out now
- Break the blockade of Gaza - unions and social movement to send aid: medicines, food, fuel. End the sanctions
- Troops out of Afghanistan and Lebanon
- Support the demo and direct action in Vicenza, Italy on 14-16 December against the US/Nato

airbase. No to US bases in the Czech Republic or Poland.

The third event under preparation is the World Social Forum itself, due to be held in Belém, a city of 1.5 million inhabitants in the Amazon region of Brazil, in January 2009.

Crisis

Despite all these plans there is little doubt that anticapitalist movement is in crisis. The World Social Forum in Nairobi earlier this year was a signal failure according to Walden Bello, Samir Amin and Trevor Ngwane, all prominent figures. Its meetings have become less regular and divorced from mass struggles. They run the danger of becoming irrelevant.

At the same time, there is no sign whatsoever that huge numbers of people across Europe, Asia, Latin America are less willing than before to resist neoliberal "reforms" and

imperialist wars. Indeed, the global nature of capitalism's attacks demands an internationalist co-ordination of resistance. The WSF and ESF must become such centres of struggle - or the fighting parts should organise it themselves.

No, the crisis of our movement is at the top. It is a crisis of leadership or rather a total lack of leadership.

In Britain the situation is even more desperate. The London ESF in 2004 was a bureaucratic flop. Since then the Socialist Workers Party, Labour left and unions have barely participated.

If the UK is not to be absent from Malmö, then an ESF mobilisation campaign has to be set going. Revolution, the socialist youth movement and Workers Power will certainly be doing all in our power to get the maximum number to Sweden next September. Join us!

US attack on Iran could have incalculable results

In the United States, the war drums are beating again. Incredible as it might seem, an attack is being planned against Iran. And this is not just another Bush adventure; the US Democrats are also climbing on the battlegwagon. Dave Stockton reports

In the United States, the war drums are beating again. Incredible as it might seem, an attack is being planned against Iran. And this is not just another Bush adventure; the US Democrats are also climbing on the battlegwagon. Dave Stockton reports

Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards have all declared that "all options are on the table" for dealing with the "Iranian threat." A majority of Democrats supported a Senate resolution to classify the 125,000-strong Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a "terrorist organisation".

Seymour Hersh, the veteran investigative journalist, published evidence of the plans to attack Iran in the New Yorker on 8 October. According to his sources, the Pentagon has drafted war plans, the CIA has deployed extra resources and the White House has approached its most "reliable" allies, including Israel, Britain and Australia, and been guaranteed their support for any military strike.

He says the justification for war has been changed. Until now, it was based on Iran's supposed imminent possession of nuclear weapons and delivery systems capable of hitting Israel and Europe. However, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report of 30 August completely discredited that story. It confirmed that Iran only has a civilian nuclear programme and that Tehran has neither the intention nor the capability to develop nuclear weapons. It stated:

"Article IV (1): These modalities cover all remaining issues and the Agency [meaning IAEA] confirmed that there are no other remaining issues and ambiguities regarding Iran's past nuclear programme and activities.

Article IV (4): The Agency has been able to verify the non-diversion of the declared nuclear materials at the enrichment facilities in Iran and has therefore concluded that it remains in peaceful use." IAEA Report [emphasis Workers Power]

So, now, the excuse for war is to be Iran's supposed involvement in attacks on US and British forces in Iraq. Already, the latest propaganda from Washington and London suggests that most of their problems are the fault of Iranian "meddling". British army and naval authorities are reportedly aching for revenge after the humiliating capture of a navy surveillance boat and their expulsion from Basra.

According to Hersh, current plans focus on "sea-launched cruise missiles and more precisely targeted ground attacks and bombing strikes,



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and George Bush could be heading for war within months, according to American sources

including plans to destroy the most important Revolutionary Guard training camps, supply depots, and command and control facilities".

He cites a former senior American intelligence official:

"Cheney's option is now for a fast in and out - for surgical strikes. The Navy's planes, ships, and cruise missiles are in place in the Gulf and operating daily. They've got everything they need - even AWACS [surveillance airplanes] are in place and the targets in Iran have been programmed. The Navy is flying FA-18 [fighter jet] missions every day in the Gulf."

Hersh also reports a Pentagon consultant saying that further attacks on Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon, are also possible. "Add-ons are always there in strike planning," he said.

Two-stage scenario for new war

A detailed report in *The Sunday Telegraph* (16 September) cited a senior intelligence officer outlining a two-stage scenario for the new war. First, propaganda about Iranian interference in Iraq would lead to "reprisal" raids on Iranian "training camps" and "bomb factories". Next come air strikes that would, over two or three days, hit all of the significant military sites. This plan involves more than 2,000 targets.

Three aircraft carrier strike groups - USS Enterprise, USS Nimitz, and USS Truman - have already been moved to the Persian Gulf. In addition, the USS Kearsarge Expeditionary Strike Group took up position in late August off the Lebanese coastline.

Turkey is expected to play a key role and Israel is reportedly ready to follow up aerial attacks on Syria and Hezbollah forces in Lebanon. Clearly, it too is thirsting for revenge after its humbling last year.

According to this report, an even greater escalation is already anticipated, "Under the theo-

ry, which is gaining credence in Washington security circles, US action would provoke a major Iranian response, perhaps in the form of moves to cut off Gulf oil supplies, providing a trigger for air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities and even its armed forces." (*Sunday Telegraph* 16 September)

What such an attack would unleash is incalculable. Aerial bombardments of Iran's nuclear facilities, either by Israel or the US, could result in a disaster of Chernobyl proportions. Iran has the capacity to retaliate with missile attacks against US and British forces within Iraq and against their ships in the Persian Gulf. Even a couple of ships lost or a few dozen casualties would trigger a much heavier US assault, and maybe one with tactical nuclear weapons. Vice-President Dick Cheney has more than once confirmed his ardent desire to strike Iran with them.

Thus, even a "limited strike" on Iran, could unleash a horrific chain of events. It certainly would not stabilise Iraq. Since millions of Iraqi Shia are sympathetic towards Iran, and the puppet government is dominated by Shia parties, any attack could, and probably would lead to its complete collapse.

Some might argue that the Americans would not be so stupid as to pull the roof down on their own heads. However, nearly all unbiased observers and experts warned what would happen if they invaded Iraq, but that did not stop the invasion. US policy is not simply the unhinged war-mongering of Cheney or the neo-conservatives, nor is it just a project of Big Oil. It is the strategic project of United States imperialism. Its goal was never a democratic Iraq but the enforcement of its whole system for ruling the Middle East and exploiting its oil wealth. That is why opposition to war must extend not only to opposition to imperialism but to its overthrow - at home as well as abroad.

BURMA

Junta massacres

September saw a mass uprising against the Burmese military dictatorship throughout the country. Thousands demonstrated and were met by beatings, shootings and arbitrary arrests. Here the League for the Fifth International examines the current situation

More and more reports are emerging from Burma of the enormous scale of the massacres of unarmed protesters, including the young monks whose participation has been such a feature of the mass demonstrations of the last weeks.

“Many more people have been killed in recent days than you’ve heard about. The bodies can be counted in several thousand”, says a high-ranking intelligence officer for the junta, who defected to Thailand at the end of September.

Photographs of the mutilated bodies of monks floating in the rivers have appeared on the internet. A blog by a pro-democracy activist describes a raid on a monastery by riot police. “They systematically ordered all the monks to line up and banged and crushed each one’s head against the brick wall of the monastery. One by one, the peaceful, non-resisting monks fell to the ground, screaming in pain.”

The military regime, which has held Burma in its iron grip for nearly twenty years, when faced with an unarmed and consciously peaceful revolution, reacted with wholesale and savage repression. It has taken for its model its own actions in September 1988, when the army and police slaughtered 3,000 people, drowning in blood the last great popular uprising. It also copies the “successful” model of its main ally and backer the Chinese Communist Party: the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989. This is not, as some say, simply mindless brutality but a calculated attempt to destroy an entire new generation of young militants and atomise and terrorise the great mass of the population.

It must not be allowed to succeed. Its perpetrators and their international backers must be branded with infamy now, so that as soon as possible the Burmese people can deal with all those who ordered and organised it in the manner they so richly deserve.



Mass demonstration of monks and people in Rangoon

United Nations useless

Meanwhile the United Nations special envoy to Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, shakes the bloody hand of the military dictator, General Than Shwe, urging him to “engage in dialogue with the protestors”. In fact the UN is a broken reed for the Burmese masses to rely on. Calls for UN “blue helmets” intervention are a reactionary diversion.

Even worse are calls on United States imperialism to intervene. In the person of Barbara Bush, it condemns the repression and offers words of support for democracy. But in reality it is only interested in seeking a democratic and humanitarian rehabilitation for itself – discredited as it is by its invasion of Iraq (and with it the

slaughter of hundreds of thousands of its people). The US, European Union, Russian and Japanese imperialists, plus China and India are reactionary forces that would only act in pursuit of their own economic and strategic interests. They have no progressive role to play in Burma. All their talk of human rights and democracy is a cruel and cynical deception.

Condemnation of Burma for human rights abuses is also preparing the way for future pressure on China when cooperation turns to open rivalry for energy resources and markets. Indeed, the Russians and the Chinese have threatened to use their vetoes on the UN Security Council over any forthright criticism of the murderous

junta precisely because their records in Chechnya and Tiananmen would hardly bear examination on this score.

Only the international working class, the antiwar and anticapitalist youth worldwide can render any active assistance to the Burmese people. What, then, can we do to aid the Burmese resistance and help it to ultimate victory?

Workers’ solidarity

We must take immediate action to expose the crimes of Than Shwe and his butchers to the workers and youth of the world. We can and need to do this by organising our own demonstrations and pickets of Burmese embassies in every country. We must use the internet to spread reports of it in every language. We must demand that all support for the junta ceases, that it is isolated by workers’ and popular sanctions, that all states that continue to support it are added to the list of outcast nations.

We must force our governments to demand the immediate release of all political prisoners, to stop the repression of the monks and demonstrators. Nothing that the regime does carries any legitimacy; it must be treated as a pariah by the international working class and all progressive activists around the world.

The International Trade Union Confederation has correctly called on workers to exert pressure on the great multinational corporations to stop propping up the Burmese dictatorship. Burma was already a target for international trade union protests. Its police state promotes the systematic use of forced and unpaid labour (a form of temporary slavery) on infrastructural projects for joint ventures with multinationals, notably in building pipelines for the gas and oil sector, the country’s biggest source of foreign currency. International arms companies also serv-

its own people

ice the murderous junta. The ITUC lists amongst the major traders with Burma: Caterpillar and Chevron (USA), GlaxoSmithKline (UK), Total (France), Siemens (Germany), Swift (Belgium), Daewoo and Hyundai (Korea), China National Petroleum Corp and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (China), Gas Authority of India and ONGC Videsh Ltd (India).

But the ITUC calls only for public exposure and disinvestment. We appeal to dockers and stevedores, often in the forefront of progressive international causes, to take direct action, alongside seafarers, rail and airfreight workers, to halt all trade from and to Burma. Some commentators talk of Burma's economic isolation meaning that it is impervious to outside pressure. This is not true or, rather, is no longer so. India's trade alone has grown from some \$341 million in 2004-05 to \$650 million the following year, with a target of \$1 billion expected for 2006-07. Action by India's workers, alongside similar actions across the region, as well as in the imperialist countries, can hit the generals hard. All progressive forces must impose boycotts of Burmese companies and products, and imperialist multinationals that invest in Burma. Anything that generates revenue for the country should be targeted by a global campaign.

In addition we must demand that all states open their doors to political refugees from Burma, grant them full asylum rights, including the right to continue their struggle from their country of refuge. We must demand that countries, like Britain, that are still deporting Burmese refugees stop this loathsome practice.

Where next for Burma?

Whether this horrific massacre will in fact drown the developing revolution in blood will depend on whether the Burmese working class and its illegal, but existing trade unions can take mass strike action, even under the conditions of repression. The underground Federation of Trade Unions – Burma, which has sections amongst factory workers, energy workers, civil servants, stevedores, post and telecommunications, rubber plantation workers, health



Army fire on crowd and kill Japanese photographer (bottom right)

workers, etc. declared: "We highly regard those monks and the students and youth who sacrificed their lives bravely confronting the military dictatorship."

The FTU-B on 29 September called a general strike and for workers to take any action they can to halt the repression.

Whether the repression succeeds will also depend to on whether the army ranks crack under the impact of the horrors they are being forced to commit. We, too, can play a significant role by showing that the whole world is watching and that we will not allow business as usual with this vile regime.

Above all what this carnage shows is that a capitalist army, led by its high command and officer corps, is a permanent, terrifying danger, first of all to its own people, those it is supposed to defend. It shows, too, in the most horrible manner, that hopes for peaceful revolutions, of non-violent direct action being sufficient to remove this, of leaving the working class and mass strike action out of the strategy are vain hopes. They are a strategy for defeat and for worse bloodshed than so-called violent revolutions, i.e. ones where the masses are prepared in advance to use force. If such armies are not broken up by winning over the rank and file soldiers, if such high com-

mands are not overthrown and liquidated in the course of a revolution, then the tragic experience of Chile in 1973, of China in 1989 and of Burma itself in 1988 will be repeated again and again.

Indeed, those, like Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy, which urge restraint in front of the army, which call on the people to blunt their criticisms of the regime, which look to the United Nations to oversee a transition leaving the multinational corporations and even some of the generals and the army in a powerful position, are currently attempting to lead the protest movement into this trap.

Aung San Suu Kyi has real prestige because of her mistreatment and imprisonment by the regime. Nevertheless her strategy is based on a Buddhist/Gandhian method of non-violent protest linked with pressure for free elections and appeals to the international community to take action. In reality, she will be a safe pair of hands for Burmese capitalist and western imperialism, not surprisingly given that she is a member of the post-independence elite.

Important, and indeed almost inevitable, as mass unarmed street demonstrations are at the beginning of any revolution, alone they are insufficient to win. Only mass

workers' strike action, halting the wheels of the national economy, only workers and peasants' militias, culminating at a critical moment with an armed uprising, can destroy such regimes and replace them with one based on democratically elected councils of delegates of workers, peasants and the youth. In Burma, too, the oppressed nationalities, Karen, Kachin, Chin, Mon and others, whose resistance to military repression has been a permanent feature of Burmese politics, must play a vital role; working class and progressive forces must support their right to self-determination and independence if they wish it.

Above all, the vanguard of all these struggles needs urgently to create a revolutionary workers party.

In spite of the bloody "order" that reigns in Rangoon and Mandalay, we remain convinced that the Burmese people, workers and youth, will eventually overthrow this regime. The power of an awakened and mobilised working class ready to fight to the end for its social and political freedoms is unstoppable. Even if the present phase of the uprising has been defeated, yet more will come. The heroic youth of Burma alongside the workers, despite their present terrible sufferings will learn the necessary political lessons and learn them well.

VENEZUELA

Workers clash with Bolivarian state

Rico Rodriguez is a militant of the German section of the League for the Fifth International and spent two weeks in Venezuela at the end of August. Here he reports on the struggle between the unions, state and employers, and the debates in the new United Party of Socialism. Rico will be speaking at universities across Britain later this month

What do you think about the current situation in Venezuela?

It is very exciting. President Hugo Chávez' launch of a mass party, was met with an enthusiastic response among the people as a whole, not just the workers.

But there are fundamental contradictions between the government's words and deeds. On the one hand, Chávez announces the nationalisation of "strategic sectors" and talks about major steps towards socialism; on the other, he pays generous compensation to the multinationals and does not touch the most important economic sectors such as the banks.

This ambivalence is mirrored in the population. On the one hand, wide sectors enthusiastically support Chávez and millions want to join his new party; on the other, the government is in regular conflict with the trade unions.

Can you explain those contradictions a little more?

The strongest pillar of the government is among the marginalised people living in the slums. They have gained a lot from the *misiones* [state anti-poverty projects] and other social measures. But the working class hasn't had much in the way of gains from the government so far. At the same time they have an undoubtedly higher degree of class consciousness, so they are asking: "Hey, our president is talking about socialism and the end of exploitation, so why don't we get more of it?"

The government faces more and more demands from the workers. For example, the workers of PDVSA, the national oil company, have been waiting for a new labour contract for more than a year. The management – set up by Chávez and directly subordinate to him – refused to negotiate with them, and the Department of Labour also refused to intervene.

After many petitions and demonstrations, the management finally agreed to negotiate. But the first

offer they made was ridiculous, not better than any a normal capitalist company, and totally neglecting any share for the workers from the rising price of oil. The workers continued to demonstrate to demand a much better settlement. On 26 September the police attacked a demonstration, opening fire, injuring several workers, and arresting 30. Small wonder that workers are beginning to ask: "If the government is on our side why do they act like this?"

Another example is Sanitarios Maracay, a company taken over by its workers, and one of the few factories to carry out production under workers control. The government gave them no practical support and refused to accept their demand to expropriate the company; on the contrary officials told them to "stay within the regulations". Moreover the government places its orders with rival companies producing under normal capitalist management.

At the beginning of August, Toyota workers struck for better working conditions, following a rise in industrial accidents. The management refused to negotiate, and when the local labour minister didn't react the union referred to the national labour minister, José Rivero. He told them to return to work and obey the law.

How does the UNT (*Unión Nacional de los Trabajadores*) react to this?

It is divided. While all this is going on, Chávez is trying to tie the trade unions ever closer to his government. He announced in March that when the PSUV (United Party of Socialism) is formed, the unions must be subordinate to it. So the Chavistas in the UNT are trying to get the union to adopt this line.

They organise mostly around the FSBT (Socialist Bolivarian Workers' Force), the direct arm of Chávez in the trade union movement. The classistas, who oppose subordination to the government, are grouped around C-CURA (Cor-

riente Clasista, Unitaria, Revolucionaria y Autónoma).

FSBT chair, Oswaldo Vera, declared in August that the UNT didn't represent the working class in Venezuela, as it only unionised less than 20 per cent of the workers.

But most trade unionists and ordinary workers consider the UNT their biggest achievement, and most trade unions have joined it. That is why there is so much tension within the UNT. C-CURA is demanding elections to give it a legitimate democratic structure, which doesn't exist at a national level. The Chavistas oppose this, arguing that the most important task is to support Chávez' reforms.

What can you tell us about the new party, the PSUV?

When the party was announced, 5.7m signed up to become members. Up to now, slightly more than a million have actually taken part in constructing the party, still a huge number. But the government is already introducing bureaucratic measures into the party. All public sector employees have been "asked" by their managers to join it, in a friendly manner of course. Chávez has announced that the party "won't be Marxist-Leninist" before any democratic discussion by the members about its character. He also said that the working class is "not the subject of the revolution" and that, in his opinion, this is "an obsolete standpoint".

Before any national congress and without an elected leadership, still less a programme, a disciplinary committee has been set up. On top of this, no organised tendencies or currents will be allowed in the party, and all other independent parties and organisations have been called on to dissolve themselves and enter.

But even if many join because of their jobs or for some material advantage, the project is still meeting a lot of sympathy from the masses, and there are still a lot of people getting involved in politics the first time in their lives, with

honest expectations and sincere illusions.

What do you think it is correct for revolutionaries to do with regard to the new party and the trade unions?

We in the League for the Fifth International believe it is correct to join the party and fight for a revolutionary programme, for real democratic centralism, the right to form organised tendencies and factions. But we also fight for the trade unions to maintain their complete organisational autonomy from the party. If party members are freely elected as union leaders by the membership, that is another matter, as it is if the union freely decides to follow the lead given by the party. This was Lenin and Trotsky's position and it holds good today.

Of course there are ominous signs that the party will become a party of class collaboration not class struggle. There is the danger, too, that it is intended to be a loyal sounding box for the great leader, like many populist or Stalinist parties. But abstention from the struggle within it now will only help Chávez to make it into just this, and then use its mass force to crush the independent unions and the left.

What is the position of the largest Trotskyist organisation in Venezuela, the PRS (*Partido Revolución y Socialismo*)?

It has more or less split on this issue. One part has entered the PSUV and another stays outside. Their different approaches are, in part, connected to a different evaluation of the Chávez regime. Whereas those entering consider that the conflict between the government and imperialism is getting stronger, and that therefore the PSUV will play an important role in the developing revolution, the other comrades consider that Chávez' attacks on the independent trade unions show he will make a deal with imperialism, above all with the US.

ENVIRONMENT

The most polluted places on the face of the planet

A recent report highlighted the 10 most polluted places in the world. All of them are in the impoverished developing world. *Rebecca Anderson* explains that imperialism is to blame

Globalisation has opened up large parts of the world to investment from the world's richest corporations. This is usually portrayed as a win-win development, where the economies of the poorer countries, like China, Russia and India, grow spectacularly and consumers in rich countries get cheap goods.

But the price being paid – immediately by those that have to live and work in the investment zones, and by all of us in the longer-term damage to the environment – is huge and unacceptable. China, Russia and India share six of the world's most polluted areas, while Ukraine, Peru, Zambia and Azerbaijan host the others.

The Blacksmith Institute report should spur the environmental and labour movements to take solidarity action in support of those suffering from the multinational companies' criminal – and murderous – negligence, and to demand change.

The economies of China and India are growing rapidly, fuelled by the desire for western bosses to increase their profit rate by relocating industry there in order to exploit cheap labour. The Special Economic Zones in south Asia and the huge manufacturing areas in regions like Guangdong in China offer low taxes, lax employment laws (sweatshop labour) and little or no environmental regulation. Multinational corporations can make a financial killing by employing workers in these countries and save money not only on wages but also by using cheaper, more polluting methods of production.

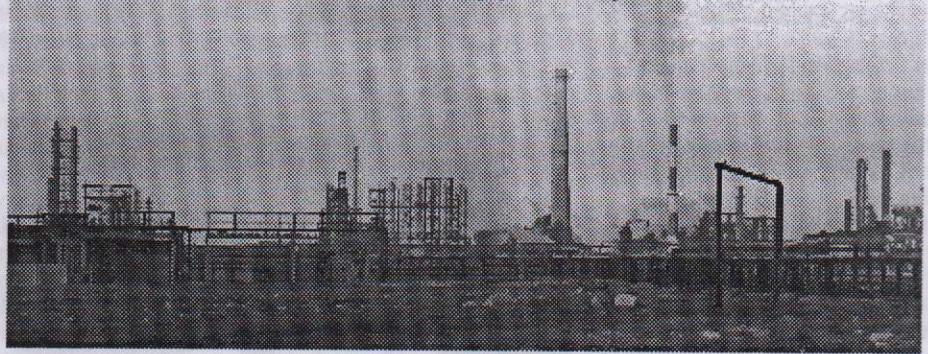
It would cost only \$500 million to clean up the worst of the damage, which affects an estimated 12.5 million people. Just to put this figure in perspective, the US spends four times this amount every week on the Iraq war.

The two cities where the most people are affected by pollution are Chernobyl in Ukraine and Linfen in China. Nuclear meltdown in Chernobyl in 1986 still affects 5.5 million people through radioactive material seeping into the soil and groundwater. More than 4,000 children living in the fallout area were diagnosed with thyroid cancer between 1992 and 2002.

Automobile and industrial emissions – especially from the burning of coal, which is mined just outside the city – engulf Linfen. Residents suffer from bronchitis, pneumonia and lung cancer due to the poor air quality.

Many of the cities in the report are there because they are polluted with lead, which causes brain damage, seizures, comas and death in people exposed to it for a long period. Zambia was mined for lead by British imperialists.

The most polluted place on the planet - Sumgayit, Azerbaijan



Though the mines were closed long ago, the pollution still affects a quarter of a million people. Lead concentrations found in the blood of children living in the town of Kabwe were found to be 5 to 10 times higher than the levels specified as permissible in the USA; the lead from the mines has seeped into the ground, and can be found in the water, plants, cattle and even in the dust in the streets.

And this explains why the capitalists have allowed this level of pollution to occur. The workers movement in many imperialist countries fought for many generations to protect themselves at work, for legislation to tackle problems like smog, black lung and asbestos, and for a safer working environment. In most third world countries the lack of these laws allows the imperialists to carry on polluting indiscriminately.

Make the polluters pay

Despite the relatively low cost of clean-up, and measures to prevent pollution, it would take enormous political pressure for governments to do anything about it. It would mean enforcing strict regulations that would discourage investment, and also government investment in infrastructure – measures that the World Bank and IMF forbid developing countries from taking.

So, what can we do? First, we should demand the IMF and World Bank abandon these poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs) and call for international standards for production that are enforced by trade union and community monitoring. Companies should be taxed to pay for the damage they have caused: if they try to close down their factories, throwing workers on the scrapheap, they should be nationalised under workers control; if the factories cannot be made safe, workers should be redeployed with no loss

of income. The third world debt should be cancelled and reparations made to compensate for decades of environmental degradation.

In the case of Kabwe, the British government should pay for the replacement of the contaminated soil and cleaning up and rebuilding the city. The people of similarly blighted areas could draw up plans for repairs and we could help fight for the polluters to pay.

Capitalism, through pollution and global warming, is killing our planet. As the world is meant to be cutting CO2 emissions, China has now become the most polluting country, outstripping even the USA in its carbon output. Capitalism is an anarchic system that pollutes as it grows; yet the profit motive and competition prevent the imperialist powers from agreeing a common plan to reverse the damage.

In order to stop climate change and clean up pollution we need to control how the world is run, based on humanity and the planet's need, rather than the greed of a tiny minority.

Underdeveloped countries have the right to build their own industries and break the cycle of dependency, but this can be done with the best available technologies so we can stop destroying the planet. Down with business secrecy and patents that put private profit before saving the planet and safeguarding future generations from terrifying diseases.

Ultimately we must fight for international working class control of industry so we can plan production, implement carbon reducing measures and prevent pollution. Socialism provides the only alternative to capitalism's wanton destruction of the planet.

To read *Ten most polluted places in the world* go to <http://www.blacksmithinstitute.org/ten.php>

THE LEGACY OF CHE

40 years since his death... WHAT DID CHE STAND FOR?

Guevara is an icon for young radicals around the world, as an anticapitalist fighter, who gave his life in the struggle for the revolution. *Mark Booth* looks at the legacy of Che, 40 years after his death

On the 40th anniversary of Che Guevara's death, Mark Booth examines the life, politics and impact of the most instantly recognisable revolutionary of the second half of the 20th century.

On October 9th 1967 the 39 year old Ernesto "Che" Guevara was murdered by a Bolivian soldier on the orders of a CIA operative. "Shoot, coward, you are only going to kill a man" he said. A revolutionary icon for an entire generation, Che has been a symbol of rebellion and resistance all over the world. Yet when someone becomes an icon, their politics and actual role in history usually gets lost.

Born into a middle-class but socialist-inclined family in Argentina in 1928, the young Ernesto travelled extensively in Latin America, seeing first hand the poverty, exploitation and oppression inflicted by local elites subservient to US imperialism.

His transformation into an active revolutionary came after the election of Jacobo Arbenz in 1952 as president of Guatemala on a radical-populist platform. Arbenz nationalised the huge US United Fruit company, granted trade union rights and began redistributing land. This alarmed US imperialism which set about orchestrating his overthrow.

Guevara travelled to Guatemala, along with many other Latin American militants, to offer his services to the government. Guatemala was a storm of debate amongst parties and groups on how to defend the government from the coming American attack. Guevara was highly critical of the Arbenz government for not arming the workers and poor and building a popular militia.

On June 26th 1954 US mercenaries invaded Guatemala and Arbenz simply resigned, throwing the resistance into disorder. Guevara fled to Mexico where he first met the Castro brothers, Raul and Fidel, and after a night spent discussing the revolutionary struggle he pledged his active support

to their Cuban July 26th Movement.

The J26M was a coalition of leftists and revolutionary nationalists, opposed to the dictatorship of General Fulgencio Batista, and prepared to launch guerrilla struggle to overthrow him. It had no pro-

Batista regime finally crumbled in 1958. The rebels marched into Havana in January 1959 and the J26M took power. Fidel Castro as the leader of J26M at first played a Bonapartist role, balancing and arbitrating between the pro-capi-

ters' councils, but by a privileged bureaucratic elite. The working masses had no rights. So, when Castro moved to overthrow capitalism in Cuba he set out to create not a workers' democracy but the type of bureaucratic workers' state that existed at the time in the USSR.

Castro nationalised US-owned sugar companies and this led to a growing US economic blockade. In April 1961 the new Democrat President John F Kennedy sponsored an abortive attack by Cuban exiles (The Bay of Pigs). In February 1962 a full-scale economic embargo of Cuba was enacted. Then in October 1962 the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. Though it appeared that Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev had completely backed down by removing Soviet missiles from Cuba, he did receive a pledge from the US government not to invade or interfere in Cuba and to withdraw US missiles from the Turkey-Soviet border.

Guevara's left Stalinism

Guevara's own ideas in this period were in turmoil and constant development. From a leftist radical in the early 1950s he quickly sought to study Marxism, but the sources of Marxism he came across were those of Moscow and the Cuban Communist party. Another source of influence was Mao's China which in June 1960 publicly split from Moscow.

Economic and military aid from the Soviet Union was the major factor for Che in backing the USSR, as for Castro. But when it came to what strategy could successfully seize power in Latin America, he did not see the October Revolution or the history of Bolshevism as the key. Instead he saw the Chinese and the Vietnamese Communist Parties as at least as important a model, with a strategy based mainly not on the workers, but on peasant guerrilla warfare:

"We consider that the Cuban Revolution made three fundamental contributions to the laws of the revolutionary movement in the



programme beyond the overthrow of Batista and many of its members still looked to the democratic system and capitalism of the USA as the model to follow. Guevara and the J26M trained for 18 months before 80 of them boarded a small boat, the *Granma*, and set sail for Cuba.

Guerrilla Campaign

Through daring attacks on Batista's troops and army bases the rebels gained supplies and reinforcements from the local peasantry and rural working-class. At the same time they carried out land reforms in areas under their control which won them support from the peasantry and rural workers.

The guerrilla army grew to around 3,000 and after two years of struggle the corrupt and brutal

talist right wing of the movement and the left wing led by Guevara.

In spring 1959 he visited the US and courted American support. In vain. Republican President Eisenhower declared that there would be no deal. Cuba simply could not be allowed to set an example that overthrowing pro-US regimes and exercising of any sort of independence could work. In 1960 this drove Castro to break with his own right wing in the J26M and turn to the Soviet Union for aid.

The USSR was at this time a state in the deepest bureaucratic degeneration. Although it had inherited a planned economy from the October revolution (see pages 18-21) the government and the plan was controlled not by the workers themselves through democratic work-

current situation in America. First, people's forces can win a war against the army. Second, one need not always wait for all conditions favorable to revolution to be present; the insurrection itself can create them. Third, in the underdeveloped parts of America, the battleground for armed struggle should in the main be the countryside." *Che Guevara, Guerrilla Warfare (1961)*

In short Che sought to weld together the ideas of Stalinism as to what a workers' state should look like, with a strategy based on Latin American peasant guerrillism. He theorised the experience of the J26M into the idea of the *foco* - that a small group of guerrilla fighters could enter the jungle or the mountains and form the nucleus of a revolutionary movement.

By 1963 real differences emerged between Guevara and Castro. Fidel sided openly with Moscow in the Sino-Soviet split. He praised the Soviet policy of "peaceful co-existence" with the USA. Che however denounced it and the reformist "peaceful roads to socialism" being promoted - with Moscow's blessing - by the western Communist Parties. Instead he wanted to spread revolution. Whilst Castro, up to the time of Che's death, was prepared to give limited logistical support to Che's interventions in the Congo, Argentina, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Peru, he did so only so far as these did not lead to a rupture with Moscow.

Though apparently validated by Che's experience in Cuba, the guerrilla strategy was to prove disastrous everywhere else. In Cuba with a crumbling dictatorship it took the USA by surprise. Castro, driven to desperation by a US offensive, was offered support from the Soviet Union for its own geo-strategic purposes, and carried out a bureaucratic expropriation of the capitalists. Guevara theorised this series of conjunctural events into a strategy, which after all seemed to have worked, but only by creating a system like the USSR - a bureaucratically planned economy with a one party dictatorship over the working class.

Nor did Cuba act as a launch pad for other revolutions. Given Guevara's call for "a hundred Vietnams" this might seem to be a strange statement. But after a brief attempt to export the Cuban model to Latin America, there followed a whole series of disastrous failures for the foci of indigenous and Cuban guerrillas. But it is this period that

Che is most associated with and that gives him (and Cuba) their "revolutionary" prestige.

When Guevara himself attempted to apply this in Bolivia, it failed totally. Bolivia had a stronger central military regime than that of Batista, armed and trained by US imperialism, with a network of loyal government officials in towns and villages who could report on the movements of the guerrillas. True, Bolivia had a powerful revolutionary tradition - as it has today - but it was centred not in the rural areas but amongst the tin miners of the Altiplano and the factory workers of La Paz. It was a country too where Trotskyism was a stronger tradition than Stalinism and where the Trotskyist strategy of a mass working class struggle for power, in alliance with the peasantry, was more widely understood.

Nevertheless the tin miners of Siglo XX seized control of their mine in support of Che's insurgency. This led to the military dictator Barrientos sending in the army led to the "massacre of San Juan," (St Johns Day, 24 June 1967).

Exporting revolutions?

This disaster preceded Guevara's death by a few months, but also indicates the falsity of the idea that a guerrilla *foco* can act as a trigger to the working class as a whole. It ignored the simple fact, well understood by Lenin, that revolutions cannot be made in any circumstances, so long as there is a repressive regime, but requires objective conditions as well as subjective

ones. Amongst the former are a national economic, social and political crisis, where the ruling class is divided and unable to go on in the old way, the mass of workers and peasants are mobilising and are unwilling to put up with their deteriorating conditions. It requires as its key subjective factor a party with deep roots in the working class and a clear strategy programme for working class power.

Guevara's martyrdom encouraged more to follow him than to analyse him. Hundreds, possibly thousands of Latin American revolutionaries left the urban centres, left the working-class militants and went to fight in the jungles; others developed the even more suicidal tactic of urban guerrilla warfare. Both deprived the working-class movement of many of its best fighters who could have been instrumental in building the revolutionary workers parties needed to overthrow capitalism.

Che never fundamentally broke from a Stalinist conception of a workers' state. Of course he was no privileged bureaucrat who exploited a revolution others had made, like most of the Russian and much of the Chinese bureaucracy. He was fiercely anti-bureaucratic in his instincts, refusing all privilege that was offered along with his government position. He despised the "material incentives" that the Soviet bureaucracy under Khrushchev and Brezhnev advocated as the way to motivate a skilled elite.

But bureaucracy is not just privilege. Its origins lie in the destruc-

tion of working class democracy and its persecution of the revolutionary vanguard, as in the Soviet Union between 1924 and 1938. If it is not prevented from doing so by a political revolution to install workers' council democracy and dissolve the elite caste, the bureaucracy will finally restore capitalism, just as Trotsky predicted in 1938.

In his writings, *Socialism and man in Cuba*, Che described how the leadership would communicate with the masses "...like the dialogue of two tuning forks whose vibrations interact, producing new sounds." Nowhere did he write that leaders should be elected and recallable and respond to the demands put on them by the workers, and that tactics and strategy should be debated within a revolutionary party.

This was a recipe for an unelected and potentially bureaucratic leadership which, as shown when the guerrilla army took power in Cuba, was forced to crush all real examples of workers democracy as a threat to its own rule. Che's desire was for a workers' state without bureaucratic privileges, but without workers' democracy and workers' control such a state could never exist.

Guevara was a heroic fighter who wanted to destroy capitalism and imperialism. As a human being and a fighter, as a vivid writer about his own experiences, there is much about "Che" to be admired, but his strategy cannot guide the struggles of the workers and peasants today, except to disaster.



1917–2007

Lenin's struggle for

In the last article in this series, we saw how the right wing coup of General Kornilov and his secret co-conspirator Prime Minister Alexander Kerensky misfired. This article by *Dave Hughes* and *Mark Hoskisson*, first published in *Workers Power* in November 1987, shows how Lenin waged another inner party struggle to get the Bolsheviks to organise an armed uprising

The October Revolution was no historical accident. It flowed from two factors decisive for the victory of any proletarian revolution. On the one hand there was the crisis that gripped Russian society in the autumn of 1917. The dual power between the workers' councils or soviets and the bourgeois provisional government had not resolved any of the major issues that caused the revolution in February. The war lingered on, the cities were ever nearer to starvation rations, and the peasants were taking the solution to the land question into their own hands by seizing the estates of the big landlords and burning down their mansions.

The regime of dual power survived only thanks to the compromising parties based on the working class and the peasantry, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries, or SRs, as they were known. But this regime was more and more intolerable to both the workers and peasants on the one side, and the bourgeoisie and the landowners on the other. The question was simply, which side would have the determination and strength to overthrow it.

However, the failure of General Lavr Kornilov's coup had brought a solution to the crisis within reach. Would the Bolsheviks be able to seize the opportunities offered to bring this about? The workers' Red Guards were now heavily armed; the Kronstadt sailors and rebellious Petrograd soldiers had purged their reactionary officers and remained mobilised. Furthermore, after the failed coup, the prestige of the Bolsheviks, heart and soul of the resistance to it, soared. In Petrograd, in Moscow and across urban Russia, they won majorities in the district and city soviets. In the peasants and soldiers' soviets, the left wing of the SRs also grew rapidly in strength.

Yet the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, elected months previously, was still dominated by the right wing Mensheviks and SRs. But the numbers of Bolsheviks and Left SRs were growing week by week. Thus a struggle took place, which resulted, by 25 September, in the election of a new execu-

tive body, a Presidium, consisting of two SRs, one Menshevik and four Bolsheviks - Lev Kamenev, Alexei Rykov, G Fedorov and Leon Trotsky. Trotsky replaced the Menshevik (and member of the government) Nikolai Chkheidze.

After the Kornilov coup, it was clear that Alexander Kerensky and the bourgeois ministers lived, breathed and ruled, courtesy of the reformist leaders of the Soviet Executive. Kerensky, despite his actual impotence, had the insolence to demand that all power be concentrated in the hands of a five person "Directory" headed by himself. Kerensky borrowed the term from the conservative stage of the great French revolution, which began in 1795 and lasted till Napoleon Bonaparte's coup of 18 Brumaire (9 November 1799). For all his defeats he still saw himself as the future Bonaparte of the Russian revolution, the man who would "restore order."

Incredibly, to most workers, peasants and soldiers, the Mensheviks and SRs gave in to Kerensky's request, so desperate were they to preserve their alliance with the bourgeoisie. But the revolutionary soviets and their Bolshevik and Left SR majorities were not having this nonsense. Kerensky's Directory and indeed the entire Provisional Government found itself increasingly suspended in mid-air, unable to execute any task without the permission of the soviets. To try to resolve the problem of powerlessness and to cover up for their capitulation to Kerensky, the Mensheviks proposed the calling of a broad "democratic conference" of all the parties. Irakli Tsereteli, one of their top leaders, blustered: "If it turns out that apart from us there are no other vital elements in the country then we will take the power into our own hands."

Objective and subjective factors

In September and October the economic conditions in the country were going from bad to worse. This was due to the chaos engendered by the war and its continued mobilisation of millions of peasant soldiers, the disruption of communications and active sabotage by the industrialists and merchants, faced as

many of them were by workers' control in their plants and warehouses. With the onset of winter it was clear that economic catastrophe was approaching. The bourgeoisie saw their last hope in misery and famine, hoping these would demoralise and discipline the masses, forcing them to accept the rule of the "natural leaders" both in production and in the state. The stark choice facing the exploited classes in Russia was either to take full power into their own hands and use it to reorganise the economy, or to surrender their half of the dual power and let the capitalists rule again. The social crisis of October was the objective precondition for the insurrection.

Trotsky later noted:

"A mass uprising is no isolated undertaking, which can be conjured up at any time one pleases. It represents an objectively conditioned element in the development of a revolution, as a revolution represents an objectively conditioned process in the development of society."

However, subsequent history has shown, all too often, that favourable objective conditions - an acute revolutionary crisis - do not guarantee the victory of the proletariat. This was shown with tragic consequences in Chile, Portugal and Iran. To mobilise the proletariat for the direct struggle for power and weld it into a fighting force capable of destroying the bourgeoisie's state, a conscious leadership is required: the subjective factor.

The October insurrection proved that this was a revolutionary party, one armed with the correct programme, tactics and strategy, with thousands of fighting cadres, one prepared to arm itself and its class with rifles too. It was, and still is, the indispensable pre-requisite for victory.

Immediately after the Kornilov affair, Lenin expressed the belief that a peaceful development of the revolution was once again possible. In his article *On Compromises* Lenin explained that if "All power to the soviets" could be realised forthwith, that is, if the Menshevik and SR leaders in the soviets could be forced by the pressure of the masses to break

90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

the insurrection

from the bourgeoisie then:

"In all probability it could secure the peaceful advance of the whole Russian revolution, and provide exceptionally good chances for great strides in the world movement towards peace and the victory of socialism."

But before the ink was dry on the article he had written, Lenin, who was still in hiding from the repression received the news about Kerensky's Directory, and the Mensheviks and SRs' refusal to even consider the proposal for a "socialist" government based on the soviets, to which the Bolsheviks would play the role of a loyal opposition. The Bolsheviks policy was not to try to overthrow it as long as it retained the support of the workers through the soviets. Of course, if they won a majority in the soviets, they would demand that the right wingers made way for a left wing government. Lenin designated this a peaceful perspective, that the Bolsheviks were willing to test out if the right wing parties would take power from Kerensky and the bourgeois parties.

When he heard the news that the Mensheviks had capitulated to Kerensky's ultimatum, Lenin suggested re-titling his article *Belated Thoughts*. He wrote: "Perhaps the few days in which a peaceful development was still possible have passed too. Yes, to all appearances, they have already passed."

A turning point

Henceforth Lenin concentrated his thoughts on how to take the revolution forward under Bolshevik leadership. In less than a fortnight he concluded that an armed uprising against Kerensky and the Provisional Government was an immediate necessity. Over the following weeks he fought a relentless struggle to win the hesitant Bolshevik leadership to this perspective. He grasped that in a matter of weeks the objective situation had dramatically changed. He fought to change the party line accordingly. He struggled to make the subjective factor equal to the tasks of the objective situation.

The crisis of the dual power situation intensified on every front during September and October. In the countryside, as the days of the harvest passed, the peasant masses renewed their ferocious war against the landowners. The agrarian question, which Trotsky called the "subsoil of the revolution", acquired decisive importance. Traditionally the peasants looked to the SRs as their representatives. Yet the SRs were openly collaborating

with the landowners. The provisional government, of which the SRs were an integral part, declared in September - as instances of violence against the landowners rose from 440 in August to 958 - that:

"All must experience alarm over the disorders which were happening everywhere in the wildest forms."

The pitchforks that pricked the overfed bellies of the landowners alarmed the SRs far more than the hunger for land, peace and bread amongst the peasant masses. All the SRs could offer the peasants was that, on an unspecified day, a Constituent Assembly, which the bourgeoisie were successfully preventing from being convened, would address the land question. Unimpressed the peasants continued their land war. October saw 42 per cent of all instances of land seizure since the fall of the Tsar.

The peasant land war, spurned by the SRs and opposed by the bourgeoisie, had found a natural ally in the proletariat's revolutionary struggle. This in turn immeasurably strengthened the proletariat as the leader of all the oppressed and downtrodden in Russia. As Trotsky put it:

"In order that the peasant might clear and fence his land, the worker had to stand at the head of the state: that is the simplest formula for the October Revolution." (*The History of the Russian Revolution: Chapter 38*)

An internal debate

The continuation of the war and the threat of famine increased the mass of rank and file soldiers, sailors and workers' hostility to Kerensky. Indeed when some Bolsheviks saw Lenin's On Compromises they were indignant that a rightist course was being proposed. Once again lively and democratic internal debate took place in the Bolshevik party.

Anton Slutsky, a member of the Petrograd Executive Committee, at a meeting held on 7 September, argued:

"As in the factories, so among the poverty stricken peasants we see movement leftwards... For us to consider compromises now is ludicrous. No compromises! ...Our task is to clarify our position and to prepare unconditionally for a military clash."

In fact Lenin himself rapidly came to the same conclusion. The crisis had matured. Further delay might prove fatal. The Bolsheviks must launch the insurrection.

Lenin's changed views were communicated to the Bolshevik Central Committee in a number of letters and dis-



Lenin concluded that an armed uprising against Kerensky and was an immediate necessity

cussed on 15 September. Lenin argued that the forthcoming Democratic Conference, to which the Bolsheviks were aiming to send a sizeable delegation, would not resolve the question of the government. He expressed his belief that the Mensheviks and SRs would weight the conference in favour of the petit bourgeoisie. It would deceive the peasants and the workers. He wrote:

"We have the advantage of certain victory, for the people are already near to exhaustion and after showing them the importance of our leadership in the Kornilov days, and then offering the bloc members a compromise and having it refused by them amidst vacillation on their part which has continued ever since, we are giving the whole people a sure way out." That way out was a Bolshevik government, which could only be installed by smashing the reformist leadership, and the whole bourgeois state apparatus out of the way. All the efforts of the Bolsheviks should be directed towards the factories and barracks, not the Democratic Conference.

He argued that the Democratic Conference should be told that if it does not accept the Bolshevik programme in full then there would be an insurrection. And, anticipating opposition to this course of action from within Bolshevism, Lenin opened the struggle with the Bolshevik vacillators by declaring that the waverers should be left "in the waverers' camp".

Lenin's new course hit the CC like a bombshell. Copies of the letters were destroyed for fear that they might circulate beyond its membership. Not one of them, at that stage, favoured an immediate rising. The Bolshevik plans for the Democratic Conference had been framed along the lines of the *On Compromises*

1917–2007

policy. The declaration to the conference called on the conciliators to break with the bourgeoisie and transfer power into the hands of the soviets. It addressed a series of demands to the conciliators but not, as Lenin had favoured, in the form of an ultimatum.

The Democratic Conference, which opened on 14 September, was itself a factor in winning more Bolsheviks over to Lenin's insurrectionary views. Lenin's prediction that the government would rig the Democratic Conference's composition proved all too true. On the day it convened, the Bolsheviks, though increasingly a majority in the soviets, were a tiny minority at the conference. There were 532 SRs (of whom 71 were Lefts), 530 Mensheviks (only 56 Internationalists amongst them) and 134 Bolsheviks. The urban working class districts were grossly under-represented. Lenin vehemently opposed participation. However, the majority of the Bolshevik leadership, headed by Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, still stuck to the old line and argued for a "homogeneous socialist government" without the bourgeois parties. Trotsky, however, increasingly agreed with Lenin and called for the transfer of power from the provisional government to the soviets.

With such a composition, the conference, not surprisingly, voted for yet another coalition between the soviet parties and the Cadets, who, only a few weeks before, had worked hand in glove with Kornilov. The conference went on to establish a standing council, a "Pre-Parliament", which was there merely to advise the provisional government. The constituent assembly was put off once again because the government parties knew it would call into question the war, demand the expropriation of the land and thus blow up the coalition between the Mensheviks and SRs with the bourgeois parties, the Cadets and Octobrists.

This experience convinced Trotsky and Yakov Sverdlov that "All power to the soviets" could now only be achieved against the conciliators. It became for them a slogan for an uprising. By the middle of the conference, it became clear that they were moving closer to Lenin's position. The dispute over the rising now took the form of a dispute over whether on not the Bolsheviks should boycott the Pre-Parliament. Trotsky favoured such a boycott and fought for it on the CC. He won by nine votes to eight, but the closeness of the vote prompted the CC to consult the Bolshevik delegates arriving for the Democratic Conference. The delegation very much represented the regional and city "committee men" rather than the party rank and file. They tended to lean to the right. To Trotsky and Lenin's extreme annoyance they voted 77 to 50 in favour of participating

"All power to the soviets" became the slogan for an uprising against the Provisional government

in the Pre-Parliament. Lenin wrote:

"Trotsky was for the boycott. Bravo Comrade Trotsky! Boycottism was defeated in the Bolshevik group at the Democratic Conference. Long live the boycott! We cannot and must not under any circumstances reconcile ourselves to participation... There is not the slightest doubt that there are noticeable vacillations at the top of our party that may become ruinous."

Nevertheless, the tide in the Bolshevik Party was turning in Lenin's favour. His letters had become known in wider circles of the Party. Fresh forces representing the proletarian rank and file of the party were elbowing their way into the debate, supporting Lenin's line. His impatience, even his threat to resign from the CC was slowly bearing fruit. The first victory came when the CC, on 5 October, finally decided to boycott the toothless Pre-Parliament. This act announced Bolshevism's conviction that the future of the revolution now lay exclusively in the struggle for soviet power. As Trotsky wrote:

"We left in order to say that only soviet power can raise up the slogan of peace and toss it over the heads of the international bourgeoisie to the proletariat of the entire world. Long live the direct and open struggle for revolutionary power in the country." That walk-out received the virtually unanimous endorsement of factory resolutions from throughout Russia.

It signalled that the proletariat had seen enough of their leaders' wheeling and dealing with Kerensky and the bourgeoisie. Now was the time for something completely different.

The die is cast

On 10 October the CC met again to consider Lenin's views. This time he had donned his disguise (according to Alexandra Kollontai he looked like a Lutheran minister!) and attended, despite the risk of arrest by Kerensky's police. Lenin's resolution added a new dimension to his view of the situation; a rising in Russia could spark a European-wide revolt.

So important did Lenin regard news of disaffection in the German fleet that he began his resolution by noting, "the international situation as it affects the Russian revolution". The Stalinists, whose doctrine of "socialism in one country" contradicts a vital element of Lenin's Marxism, have systematically downplayed this aspect of Lenin's strategy.

The meeting came to a vote on Lenin's resolution. It was clear that the line of divide was between settling the fate of the revolution by staging a rising in the immediate future or the postponement of the rising and the acceptance of the role of "opposition" in a "democratic" (that is, capitalist) Russia. The resolution was clear:

"Recognising that an armed uprising is inevitable, and the time fully ripe, the Central Committee instructs all party organisations to be guided accordingly and to decide all practical questions from this standpoint."

The resolution was adopted, ten against two. The two vacillators were Lenin's closest comrades in the preceding decade, Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev. They resolutely opposed the rising from the day Lenin first proposed it till the fateful day itself. Kamenev in particular, was a consistent right winger within the party, who had never been reconciled to Lenin's April Theses and their strategy of working class power.

As late as August, Kamenev was still trying to build bridges to the Second International by speaking openly in favour of attendance at a proposed reformist peace conference at Stockholm. This was an open break with agreed Bolshevik policy, which was against attendance. In the aftermath of Kornilov's attempted coup, Kamenev leapt at Lenin's *On Compromises* and proceeded to give it an extremely right wing and constitutionalist interpretation. Thus, when Lenin changed tack and argued for a rising, the CC minutes record that Kamenev proposed:

"After considering Lenin's letters the CC rejects the practical proposals they contain, calls on all organisations to follow CC instructions alone and affirms once again that the CC regards any kind of demonstration in the streets as quite impermissible." This proposal was rejected by the CC.

Kamenev was playing on the fear, "the convulsion of doubt" as Trotsky called it, that lingered in the party after the July defeat. In so doing he was able to enlist wider support than he had ever enjoyed prior to July. In particular he won over Zinoviev. Zinoviev was wedded to the idea that, with the defeat of Kornilov, Lenin's perspective of peaceful development, a government with a socialist majority based on the soviets had become a long-term slogan. Zinoviev's gradualism centred more on a process of radicalisation within the soviets than did Kamenev's strategic belief that to go beyond the democratic revolution was suicidal. It expressed itself in an article he wrote on 27 September:

"In our view, the all-powerful authority over the Russian land is the Congress of Soviets opening on 20 October. By the time the Congress convenes, if it is able to meet at all, the experience with this new coalition [under Kerensky] will have failed and wavering elements will at long last associate themselves with our slogan, 'All power to the soviets'. Each day will witness a growth in our force."

In this perspective key decisions are left to the development of the (unconscious) "revolutionary process".

90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

But vacillations continue

Zinoviev and Kamenev, with support from other prominent Bolsheviks like V P Nogin, Alexei Rykov and David Riazanov, argued that Lenin's call for a rising was premature. The time was not ripe. The masses were supposedly not yet ready. In particular, Kamenev harboured the hope that a coalition of parties, including the Bolsheviks (something Lenin vehemently opposed), might emerge from the Democratic Conference.

Thus, while Trotsky was hammering away at the need for soviet power in every address he made to that conference, Kamenev argued:

"The only possible course is for state power to be transferred to the democracy, not to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, but to that democracy which is well enough represented here. We must establish a new government and an institution, to which that government must be responsible." At a Presidium meeting he went on to assure the Mensheviks and SRs of Bolshevik support for a government that was a "homogeneous democratic ministry". He stated:

"We will not overthrow such a government. We will support it insofar as it pursues a purely democratic policy and leads the country to the constituent assembly."

"Support insofar as" was the old rotten formula he and Stalin used back in March, against which Lenin's *April Theses* were directed. It made its re-appearance at the Democratic Conference. Even the debacle of the Democratic Conference and the Pre-Parliament failed to budge Kamenev. He resisted a boycott right to the end.

The decisive clash between Kamenev and Zinoviev, on the one hand, and Lenin and Trotsky, on the other, came a week after the historic 10 October meeting. A much larger CC was held on 16 October with representatives of various other committees also in attendance. It revealed that the vacillators represented a strong current in the party. Although Lenin's resolution for an insurrection was passed once again, by 19 votes to two, a proposal from Zinoviev to wait until the Second Congress of Soviets was defeated by 15 against six. This resolution was sharply counterposed to Lenin's and showed the extent of support for Zinoviev, given that it was not yet certain the Congress would be convened. Those forces were only for a rising in the abstract. Notables such as Mikhail Kalinin spoke of the rising as a far off event.

Nevertheless, with this decision, the die was cast. Once again it had taken a serious internal struggle within a thoroughly democratic party to come to a decision. Now the Bolshevik party set about preparing for the insurrection.

Next month, in issue 320, we look at the October insurrection, itself

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RESPECT

Class contradiction at root of crisis in 'Unity Coalition'

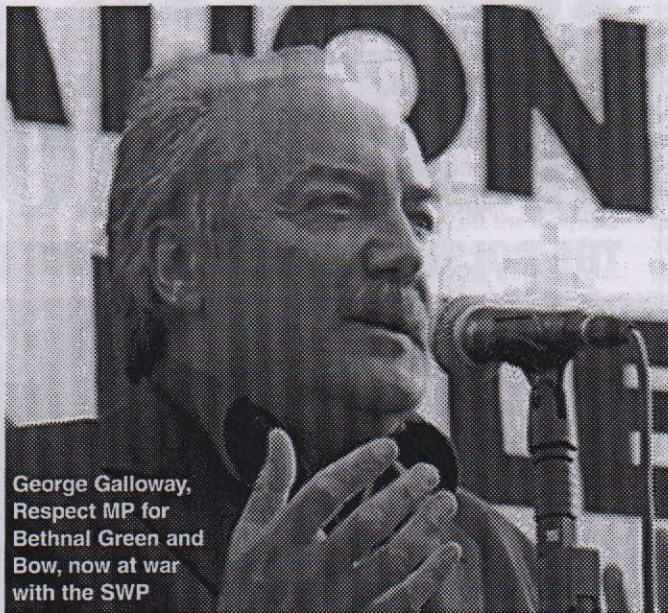
Despite an uneasy truce, the causes of the recent internal strife in Respect are still there, rooted in the class contradictions of the project, argues *Luke Cooper*

The criticisms in George Galloway's bombshell letter - "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" - seemed, at first sight, organisational and tactical. They ranged from the amateurishness, with which the Respect national office was run, the lack of proper fundraising and the dubious procedure, by which new staff were hired, to the more serious accusation of sidelining prominent Respect members like Salma Yaqoob.

These complaints were plainly directed at the Socialist Workers Party, which provides the apparatus that really runs Respect, as well as its National Secretary, John Rees. Galloway proposed appointing a national organiser and a small committee to run election work. This would effectively break the hold of the SWP over the organisation. Salma Yaqoob suggested that, if she were in John Rees's position, she would resign.

Such criticisms may well be justified. They are certainly typical of the way the SWP runs all its campaigns, or "united fronts of a special type" as it disingenuously describes them. But the real issue behind them is the future direction of Respect. Faced with the prospect of fighting an election in a new seat, Galloway wants to align the organisation even more closely with the views of the Muslim "community leaders", who he thinks can bring him a majority. For him, initiatives such as Organising For Fighting Unions and participation in Gay Pride, to which the SWP committed Respect, are obstacles to electoral success.

The SWP recognised that this was an attempted right wing takeover. The storm had been brewing since February, when the SWP's candidate, Helen Salmon, was not adopted for Moseley and King's Heath ward. It then raised the charge of "communalism", when it was not allocated any "winnable" wards in Tower Hamlets or south Birmingham.



George Galloway, Respect MP for Bethnal Green and Bow, now at war with the SWP

The Galloway/Yaqoob-SWP explosion is entirely due to the contradictions built into Respect when it was founded. *Workers Power* refused to join Respect because it was already clear that it was to be built on an unprincipled basis. What was needed was a campaign amongst the millions who had mobilised against the invasion of Iraq for the founding of a new, working class party; a party committed to continued mass demonstrations and strikes not only to stop the war, but also to win on other vital issues: the anti-union laws, creeping privatisation in health and education, pension "reforms", in short, bringing an end to Labour's entire programme. This would have included appealing directly to overwhelmingly working class Asian and Muslim people - on a class, rather than cross-class "communal" basis.

Respect was to be created on a different basis. The SWP set out to build a party based on anticipated electoral success among local Muslims. But this meant an alliance with the existing leaders of those communities. Of course, the broader Muslim community, even the worshippers in its mosques may be

largely working class, but their leaders are generally property owners. They may only be small businessmen, but the community leaders' commitment to private property makes them incapable - as a class - of supporting a working class orientation or programme. An alliance with them built a class contradiction into Respect.

What to leave behind?

Of course, the SWP leaders knew what restrictions "community politics", if not communalism, would put on them. That is why they decided to make Respect "less socialist", in Lindsey German's words, than its predecessor, the Socialist Alliance. They had been happy for the Socialist Alliance to have a left reformist programme because it was primarily aimed at attracting Labour lefts on the basis of their old politics. Using the same method, when they wished to attract Muslim voters as Muslims (not as workers, or as anti-imperialist youth), they developed a populist programme that offended their religious social views as little as possible.

That meant dropping issues like the right to abortion, gay rights,

and secular schools, in order to pander to the reactionary social views of the leaders of the Muslim community. Galloway, because he shares most of those views because of his own religious beliefs, was happier to actually express them. But a party censored on such issues, told by SWP leaders "not to make them shibboleths", could not be the party of the working class and all the exploited and oppressed in society.

Now, the architects of this strategy are suffering its consequences. At a series of internal SWP meetings to discuss Galloway's attack, it became clear that a sizeable proportion of their own members have taken the strategy at face value, and believe that because Galloway is their key electoral asset, his views have to be accommodated. It was clear that Rees and company have weakened their own organisation. That is why, at the Respect National Council, faced with a threatened walkout by Galloway, the brave SWP leaders effectively backed down to his organisational demands.

Whether Gordon Brown's decision to delay an election will allow Respect to stagger on beyond the conference in November is an open question. If it does, it will be because Galloway still needs foot soldiers, and the SWP cannot bear to see their strategy fail so obviously.

Respect was always a diversion from the main task facing the militant vanguard of British workers and youth, and its collapse would not be a tragedy for anyone except Galloway and the leadership of the SWP: providing its rank and file supporters, including SWP members and young Muslims, shed their illusions in the sort of politics Respect engendered, populism. There is no reason to despair. The objective conditions for breaking workers from Brown's new Labour have never been better. Now revolutionaries should argue openly for their politics and for a new working class party to fight for them.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

We fight racism and national oppres-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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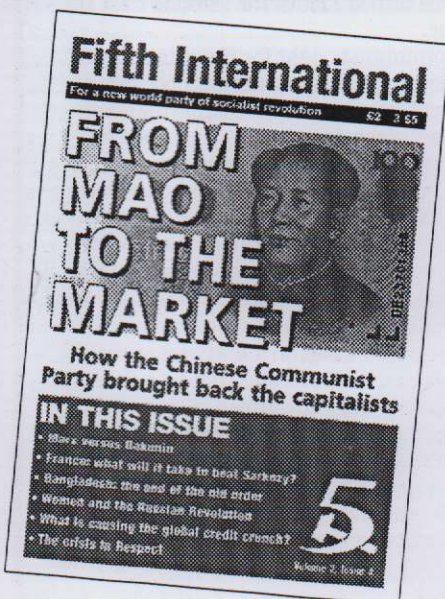
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Elections and revolution

Gordon Brown nearly called an election for November 2007, only half way through Labour's term of office. Why? Because he knew that all indicators suggest the economy is going to get worse over the coming two years, with the prospect of a downturn and falling house prices. If it wasn't for the Tory surge in the opinion polls, Brown was prepared to fix an election date that gave him the best chance of winning.

This is completely undemocratic. It is shameful that one man – the serving prime minister – can decide when a general election should take place, and manipulate this to his own advantage. But it is a sign of something more deeply wrong with the electoral system, something politicians know well but never acknowledge. While a general election is just a snapshot of the public mood at one given moment, the winners get to govern for four years or so, without being subject to recall. If MPs and governments break their promises, they can't be replaced until long after the damage is done.

This defect of all capitalist democracies explains how the majority of the British people opposed the invasion of Iraq – but it happened anyway. A majority oppose more privatisation – but the market madness is spreading deep into the heart of our hospitals and schools.

There are many more examples of how limited democracy is in Britain. An unelected House of Lords, drawn from the ranks of the upper classes, can delay and obstruct laws they don't like. A hereditary monarch – the most undemocratic institution imaginable – has to approve all laws before they take effect, and can dissolve parliament and even declare war. Sixteen and 17 year olds are denied the right to vote.

The judges, who interpret the law and pass judgment on working class people, are almost all drawn from the upper class and are not elected. Meanwhile billionaire media magnates control the press and many TV stations, pumping out propaganda for the rich and powerful, alongside hateful lies against asylum seekers and migrants. And of course, as in every capitalist country, all democracy stops at the factory or office gate: the boss is an unelected dictator who must be obeyed.

Far from being indifferent to democratic rights, communists fight for them to be extended as far as possible. Every right the working class can secure under capitalism is a potential restriction on the freedom of the capitalists to do just as they please.

We know from history that the democrat-

ic rights we have in Britain today were not granted out of the goodness of our rulers' hearts, but were forced out of them by class struggle. The great working class Chartist movement in the 1830s and 1840s first raised the call for votes for workers and for annual parliaments; the intense industrial struggles after the First World War secured votes for all male workers in 1918; the suffrage movement won votes for women in 1928.

Around the world today, in every country in which democratic rights are denied, communists should be in the front ranks of the fight to extend them. Not only in those dictatorships that the West opposes, like Burma, Iran and Zimbabwe, but also in countries where the dictators are their allies, like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, we advocate

Communists demand the abolition of the Monarchy and the House of Lords. We fight for the election of judges, annual parliaments, recallability of MPs, the right of Scotland and Wales to leave the UK if they wish, the nationalisation of the media and votes at 16

working class struggle to establish the broadest possible democratic rights: mass demonstrations, strikes and finally armed uprisings to overthrow the dictatorships and establish constituent assemblies, elected by the people.

In Britain today revolutionary communists demand the abolition of the Monarchy and the House of Lords, elected judges, annual parliaments, recallability of MPs, the right of Scotland and Wales to leave the UK if they wish, the nationalisation of the media under the control of the people, and votes at 16.

Despite these limitations on democracy, communists do not boycott parliamentary elections. Instead, the large numbers of working class people who are sick of Labour's privatisation, cuts and war – not least peo-

ple in the trade unions that have to fight this government's attacks on their pay and conditions – should set up a party of our own: a new workers' party. Such a party most definitely should take part in elections. But it should do so not to support and strengthen the rotten system we have today, but to get the widest possible audience for the fight against it.

All candidates of a workers' party would be chosen democratically by the party membership and could be deselected at any time. Its MPs should be paid no more than the average wage of a worker. They would not form a special grouping that dictates policy, but would have to represent the programme of the party as decided by its mass membership. All these measures would be used to prevent MPs becoming a privileged elite of sell-outs. Instead, they would be expected to be in the frontline of the fight against all privileges and against the capitalist system itself.

Capitalism cannot be overthrown by democratic means alone. Even a parliament stuffed with socialists would not be able to create socialism by passing a law in the House of Commons. They would meet resistance from the real state: the unelected civil servants, the billionaires in the boardrooms and, above all, the army, police and security services, who are bound by a thousand ties to the existing order, and who will be unleashed to repress any movement that comes close to dispossessing the capitalists. Then all the violent repression that the British state normally reserves for use against foreign resistance in places like Basra or Helmand would reveal its class essence and be turned against the working class at home.

Communists fight for the extension of democratic rights, and use elections to parliaments to secure rights that aid the development of the class struggle, and to obstruct the capitalist dictatorship. But our aim is a revolution to break up the capitalist state through mass action, and replace it with a form of state far more democratic: a workers' republic based on democratic councils of delegates directly elected by the mass of the working class, and subject to instant recall. A state based on these forms of workers' democracy, defended not by a standing army but by the armed people, could really set about creating a democratically planned economy, in which the decisions of the people will affect every aspect of life and work, and in which all exploitation and oppression can be systematically overcome.