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British section of the League for the Fifth International

Report back from the European Social Forum

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UNIONS: BREAK FROM LABOUR

The two faces of Bob Crow

Jeremy Dewar asks why the RMT leadership mixes political boldness with industrial timidity

Tabloid journalism's favourite bogeyman, Bob Crow of the RMT railworkers' union, was back on the front pages at the end of November as the RMT planned a work-to-rule – literally a go-slow – on the London Underground in protest against falling safety standards following the privatisation of the tube's repair and maintenance.

Dates set so far include 8-9 December, when the England rugby team is due to parade the World Cup in London, with further action pencilled in for the week up to Christmas Eve. Suddenly, the focus is on tube workers spoiling the party, while the tube derailments at Hammersmith and Camden Town, which provoked the dispute, are forgotten.

But another, potentially more important development in the RMT was ignored by the media. Four of its Scottish branches in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Motherwell and Wishaw, voted to affiliate to the Scottish Socialist Party.

These two news stories encapsulate the contradictions in the politics of the RMT and its leadership faction around General Secretary Bob Crow.

On the one hand, the decision to affiliate to the SSP is the boldest step yet in the campaign to democratise union political funds. While Andy Gilchrist (FBU) and Billy Hayes (CWU) are busy stamping on rank and file initiatives to end Labour's monopoly of union funds, Bob Crow has encouraged his members to decide how their money is spent.

Affiliation to the SSP will be an historic step. The rail union was a founding member of the Labour Party. Labour repaid this loyalty by reneging on its 1997 manifesto pledge to bring the industry back under public control, and privatising the tube infrastructure. RMT members are right to seek an alternative working class voice.

If the New Labour hierarchy responds by "disaffiliating" the RMT, then other unions – especially those associated with the Reclaim Labour campaign – must condemn this bureaucratic contempt for workers' democracy, demand the RMT's readmittance to the party and withdraw all funding



Bob Crow is a mainstay of the anti-war movement

until Labour's NEC does so.

However, the RMT leadership's political boldness is mirrored by its industrial timidity. The dispute on the Underground is a good example.

Like the vast majority of the travelling public, the RMT is solidly against rail privatisation. Yet, when the government privatised the tube's infrastructure, the RMT limited itself to a few days' strike action on the issue of safety and support for Ken Livingstone's forlorn attempt to block it in court.

Now the recent derailments have reminded passengers of the tragedies that privatisation could bring; they also came just after the government took mainline track maintenance back in-house because of the privateers' incompetence.

The opportunity is there for a mass campaign, directly involving passengers, mobilised in support of an all-out strike, for the re-nationalisation of the network – not under the bosses' control and at the taxpayers' expense, as was the case with Rail-track and the track maintenance crews, but under working class control and with no

compensation to the corner-cutting, casual labour-employed profiteers.

Instead, Crow and co. have opted for a potentially long, drawn-out strategy of overtime bans, slowing down to between 10 and 25mph over suspect track, closing overcrowded stations and the occasional one or two-day strike. The union is demanding a return to the regime of checking the rails every 24 hours.

However, the action is too limited to achieve its aims. Managers are quite happy to sit back and let the tabloids demonise tubeworkers. Passengers will be left watching helplessly from the overcrowded platforms.

Neither will the aims of the action guarantee safety. More frequent checks will not solve the problems of subcontractors, insufficient job levels, inadequate training programmes, let alone decades of underfunding. Crucially, it will not end the regime whereby track maintenance is carried out for private profit rather than the public good.

At the root of these problems lies the tradition of dividing working class politics into two camps: the trade unions for industrial

struggles and the workers' party for parliamentary action and the fight for socialism. But, as Bob Crow himself admits in an interview with Andrew Murray:

"Trade union politics are never going to be enough. As Lenin said, trade union politics are bourgeois politics."

Why must a union adopt a bourgeois policy in its industrial struggles (merely seeking improved conditions in a privatised industry) and look for a socialist policy (renationalisation) only through its party political affiliation? If we're into quoting Marxists, then Engels pointed out that trade unions should become "schools for socialism".

RMT militants on the tube must organise to take control of their dispute now:

- For the immediate renationalisation of all privatised work

- Call on the Stop the War Coalition and other unions to form borough-wide solidarity groups to draw on the tremendous well of support that exists and to deepen it

- Call on Aslef drivers to support the action

- Overturn the current strategy and replace it with one that swiftly builds towards an all-out indefinite strike. Yes, "only" 55 per cent of tube workers voted for strike action, while 85 per cent voted for action short of a strike. That's why a new campaign to win the waverers over to strike action is imperative.

- Build elected and accountable strike committees. Last year's firefighters' dispute shows how selective strikes can wear down the resolve of members while allowing the bosses time to regroup and go on the offensive. If members are to be trusted in their choice of party affiliation, then they should be trusted to run their own disputes too.

At the same time, through placing demands on the SSP and through building strong and vibrant solidarity groups, RMT members can begin the campaign for a new workers' party: a party that fights for progressive legislation in parliament while implementing workers' control from below; a party that uses elections and its representatives to promote the workers' interests, while recognising that only revolutionary struggle in the workplaces and on the streets can bring socialism.

Don't sit the SATs

By Kate Ford, NUT activist

This month teachers in primary schools will be balloted by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) for a boycott of the National Curriculum tests, known as SATs.

The tests are carried out at the end of Key Stages 1 (pupils aged 7), 2 (age 11) and 3 (age 14). They have long been a subject of hatred among teachers, parents and pupils. In the first few years after their introduction, the tests were boycotted – unofficially. This year we were promised, following the National Conference, an official ballot for all teachers.

Despite this, the NUT has decided to ballot only primary, not secondary teachers. Meanwhile in secondary schools, the longer the delay, the more difficult a boycott. If teachers over the next few months teach the content of the tests, then management can simply go ahead and invigilate the tests themselves.

So why are the National Executive adopting such a flawed strategy? Some of the leadership are not convinced that a ballot could be won in secondary schools. They have announced that there may be a future ballot of secondary teachers but only an indicative one. However, secondary teachers are only too aware of the true purpose of the SATs: they have nothing to do with helping pupils; they are used to push through government initiatives; they provide the endless piles of statistics, to create league tables and then to label some schools "failing".

Most importantly, they encapsulate everything that is wrong with capitalist "education". Under the profit system, mass education has only one end: the categorisation of the next generation of workers into a small proportion of professionals, supervisors and managers, a larger number of literate and numerate skilled workers, and a reserve pool of those deemed only useful as obedient, temporary and casual workers. The socialist – indeed, human – goal of bringing up a generation of independent and creative thinkers and doers is forgotten.

All those who want to see an end to SATs should demand a full ballot now. We cannot afford to wait until the New Year or beyond. On the streets, in town centres, we need to step up our petitioning.

And in the secondary schools we must start the boycott unofficially. Activists must circulate pledge sheets – which were used so effectively in building the unofficial boycott – to kickstart the action. We must also approach school students themselves for support; after all, the pupils have already shown their courage and political awareness by their mass, illegal strikes against the war. Their support can become decisive in winning over parents and the more reluctant teachers.

Such a campaign can not only demolish the SATs, but also put socialist education on the agenda; an education system, controlled by teachers, students and parents, and geared towards maximising human potential, rather than corporate profit margins.

Wildcat victories raise questions for rank and file

The shock waves from the wildcat strike action by postal workers across London and large parts of Britain in late October continue to reverberate. On Tuesday, 18 November 200 CWU members in Oldham walked off the job in support of a colleague victimised after a row over the backlog stemming from the unofficial strikes elsewhere. They won his reinstatement before the week was out.

Meanwhile, in the capital, negotiations continued in the wake of the climbdown by Royal Mail. There have been strong hints that the bosses are ready to concede the union's demand for £4,000 London cost of living allowance, though this has yet to be confirmed. As a result there could be further strikes in London in the run-up to Christmas. Crucially, post office management has not attacked activists central to the unofficial action and has retreated from attempts to impose new terms and conditions. It now looks unlikely that another major management offensive will happen this side of a general election in the wake of the wildcats.

But that means that CWU militants must seize on the opportunity afforded by this victory to consolidate rank and file organisation within and between depots, cities and regions.

Amid coverage of the recent walkouts across the capital placards, produced in the name of *Post Worker*, kept on popping up on TV and in newspapers. This was not surprising given the unofficial nature of the dispute and the absence of CWU material.

In its 15 November issue *Socialist Worker* reported that some 12,500 copies of *Post Worker*, first launched in 2000, had been sold in late October. The publication's website ran updates of the rapidly spreading wildcat action, providing information to battling workers who were getting no news at all from union officials.

The paper is undoubtedly "political" in many ways, reporting on issues that go beyond immediate workplace concerns. It has attracted the wrath of Royal Mail management and warrants backing against a threatened ban in the workplace.

So far, so good, but the SWP, which first set up *Post Worker*, has also billed it as the publication of an embryonic rank and file movement. It doesn't really measure up to this claim, however.

While there is nothing wrong in principle with such a paper carrying articles from general secretary Billy Hayes and other senior CWU officials, there has been little in the way of criticism in its pages

THE POST WORKER



of the leadership's role in defusing opposition to the Tailored Delivery System and other attacks on working practices. During the course of the wildcat strikes, for example, there were no clear warnings about the real possibility that officials would sell the action short. There was also no attempt to spur the development of elected strike committees for asserting the members' control over the dispute.

Then there is the question of the internal democracy of *Post Worker* itself. In theory the political make-up of its editorial board is diverse and inclusive. But a number of good CWU militants remain sceptical. They claim that the board rarely meets and there certainly appears to be little space for debate beyond the pages of the paper itself.

Clearly, there are legitimate concerns about protecting activists against victimisation, but a serious effort to build a rank and file organisation in the CWU will itself need to be open, democratic and clear about its objectives, which need to include a root and branch transformation of the union's structures and a commitment to building effective pressure on the current "left" leadership while preparing the ground for a challenge to it.

Down with anti-semitism! Resist anti-semitic attacks!

By Richard Brenner

The synagogue bombings in Turkey have again highlighted murderous anti-semitism. All democrats, socialists, anti-racists and anti-war activists must condemn this slaughter.

The perpetrators - Islamists close to or within the al Qa'ida terrorist network - claim that the synagogues were legitimate targets in their struggle against Israel's oppression of the Palestinians. This is a lie.

Synagogues are places of worship for the Jewish religion. They exist in cities all over the world. They are not instruments of the Israeli state or of the oppression of the Palestinians. To blame all Jews for the actions of the Israeli government is a despicable slander on an entire people. It promotes racist attacks; it weakens solidarity between working people of all nationalities and cultures; it plays into the hands of reactionaries everywhere by deliberately confusing two different things, Zionism and Judaism.

Zionism is the ideology and policy of the Israeli state, which denies the Palestinians self-determination. Judaism is something entirely different - it is a religion with characteristics of an ethnic group. As with all other ethnic groupings, every variety of ideology and political standpoint exists within the Jewish people. Some are religious, some secular. There are of course many supporters of Israel among the Jews. There are also determined opponents of Zionism, such as Noam Chomsky, Harold Pinter, Michel Warschawski and many more besides.

The far right in Europe has never abandoned anti-semitism. The Islamist reactionaries like al Qa'ida merely follow in their footsteps, with poisonous slanders about Jewish control of international finance and banking, of global conspiracies and such like. These pernicious fantasies are designed to give the poor and downtrodden an easy target for their discontent.

Anti-semitism is the anti-capitalism of idiots, a hate-filled diversion from fighting the real enemy. Who benefits from it? Reactionaries of every type. The capitalists who want to divide us; the clerics who want to fool us; the Israeli government of Ariel Sharon that wants to present all support for Palestinian rights as somehow "anti-semitic"; the far right and fascists who want to exterminate the Jews.

Once again it falls to the workers, the youth, the anti-capitalist movement to come to the head of opposition to racism and anti-semitism. Let's drive this putrid ideology out of society; organise self-defence of all minorities who face racial attack, including black people, Asians, refugees, Roma, Arabs and Jews; reject the poisonous anti-semitism of the Islamists; and open the road of struggle against the system that foments racial and religious hatred, capitalism itself.

workers power EDITORIAL

The reactionary politics of al Qa'ida...

Thursday, 20 November should have been the day George Bush and Tony Blair realised the game was up. Holed up in their fortified compound, Buckingham House, they should have gaped in awe at their TV screens, shocked by the coverage Sky News and BBC News 24 gave to the hundreds of thousands of protesters as they pulled down a mock statue of the American president.

Instead, they were saved by the appalling news of a double suicide bombing in Istanbul, which ripped apart the British Consulate and the HSBC bank headquarters. At least 27 people - mostly ordinary Turks and Kurds - were killed in the attacks, to add to the 23 who were slain by the bombing of a synagogue in the same city, the previous Saturday. More than 500 were injured.

The media response was predictable. The front pages of all the major daily papers as well as the top stories on the TV and radio did not mention the historic rally in London, but poured crocodile tears over the human tragedy that was unfolding in Turkey. Bush left London the following day, with commentators gushing emotionally about the two war leaders being more united and stronger than ever. Barely a word was said or written about the mass anti-war movement.

In Turkey, too, the bombings, claimed by Turkish groups linked to the al Qa'ida network, were met with anger and despair by the working class and popular movements. Despite the government's pro-US stance during the invasion of Iraq, the Turkish people were vehemently opposed to the imperialist adventure. Mass demonstrations and industrial action forced the Turkish administration to withdraw its offer of air bases and docks from which to attack the northern front in March.

Turkish trade union leaders continued to denounce the US and Britain at the national rally called to protest at the slaughter at the consulate, while condemning the Islamists, who consider the deaths of innocent workers - Muslim, Jewish and Christian alike - as "collateral damage", with the same degree of cynicism as Bush and Blair. Like the poor farmers who greeted the downing of a Black Hawk helicopter in northern Iraq with cries of, "This is how to fight the invaders, not suicide bombs", the Turkish workers can tell the difference between well-aimed blows at imperialism and acts that treat the masses as pawns to be traded in a power-game.

This is because al Qa'ida's opposition to US imperialism is a bourgeois opposition. It does not aim at liberation, democratic rights and freedom from oppression. Like bin Laden's Taliban proteges in Afghanistan, al Qa'ida wants the USA and Britain

out of the Gulf so that it can impose a brutal regime of oppression and exploitation. For bin Laden, the popular mass movement against Bush and Blair is not an ally, but an enemy. The bombings were aimed deliberately at sweeping the London demonstration off the front pages.

...and the revolutionary potential of the anti-war movement

But they will not succeed.

Over the past year Britain has seen an unprecedented series of mobilisations, larger in size, more frequent in action than the anti-Vietnam war movement. Starting on 28 September 2002 (400,000), it reached historic levels on 15 February 2003 (2 million). On 20 March, the day the war started, tens if not hundreds of thousands marched and blockaded streets nationwide: there were school strikes, some workplace strikes. On 22 March 500,000 marched. On 27 September 100,000, and Thursday 20 November saw another huge demonstration: the movement is far from dead.

This demo was the biggest ever held on a working day (that is not a day of strikes) in London. A vast sea of young people, school and university students, workers, trade union banners. Obviously masses of school students had left school early, and some had walked out, despite the threat that any student who did so would be summarily suspended.

The multiplicity of home-made placards revealed that the demo was against Bush and Blair both as the embodiment of war and the anti-capitalist movement's hit list: corporate plunder of the world, privatisation, destruction of jobs and services, destruction of the environment. This was not simply a demonstration of the anti-war movement but of the anti-capitalist movement too. What is more, it had a directly political edge for the first time.

Thus George Galloway got a huge response when he said: "We want to send a message that in next year's European elections we want to unite all the forces represented here today in a great movement: the peace movement, the trade unions, the Muslim community - all those who are disinherited and disenfranchised and don't have a voice. We want to drive more nails into the political coffin of Tony Blair."

Clearly on the war issue, a mass vanguard of young - and not so young - people have dislocated themselves from New Labour. The feeling is widespread that Blair and his ministers have shown no responsiveness to the popular will, and that the Labour Party has proved itself totally incapable of challeng-

ing him. The mechanisms for a challenge to - let alone a replacement of - Blair from within the Labour Party are almost non-existent because of the run-in to a general election in 2005. Unless, that is, Labour gets a right beating in the upcoming Euro and council elections.

Moreover, there is a growing disillusion with the whole political system, since parliament too has proved incapable of reining Blair in - either on war or on his unpopular "reforms such as foundation hospitals, which are the first real demolition blows at the foundations of the NHS. His fake "big conversation" exercise in trying to bridge the democratic deficit will be revealed for what it is: a presidential-style plebiscite, where only the prime minister can pose the questions, and only those answers that fit in with New Labour's plans will get an airing.

Forward to 2004

If these forces can combine with the rank and file trade unionists who are leading a revival of militant - often unofficial and illegal - action, then anything is possible in Britain in 2004.

Galloway, the Socialist Workers Party, union leaders like Mark Serwotka and Bob Crow, and independents like Salma Yaqoob and George Monbiot have started a useful discussion on what kind of political formation we need to challenge New Labour and open the road to a peaceful and just society, and what kind of policies can take us there. But this debate must not remain confined to big name leaders; it must take place at the base of the movement, in workers' conventions in every city, borough and town.

Worker's Power's contribution to this debate will focus on the following needs:

- Rank and file movements in the trade unions to ensure militant tactics, democratisation and a leadership to dissolve the bureaucracy.
- Social forums in every city, town and London borough to unite and mobilise the workers' movement - both trade union and political - fuse it with the anti-capitalist and anti-war movements and all natural allies of the working class. For a UK social forum.
- A new workers' party, based on the trade unions as well as the socialist organisations, won to a revolutionary programme and constitution.
- A revolutionary youth movement and international to unite and focus the struggles of young people against war and imperialism, racism as well as their own oppression.
- A new, mass, revolutionary Fifth International, born out of the anti-capitalist and world's labour movements.

If we start working on these tasks now, then the European Social Forum, in London, 2004, could provide the platform for a massive movement to kick out Blair and the whole New Labour cabal.

And with that in mind, we wish all our readers a Happy New Year!

Programme of the League for the Fifth International - Out Now - £1.50 € 2.50

FROM PROTEST TO POWER

MANIFESTO FOR WORLD REVOLUTION

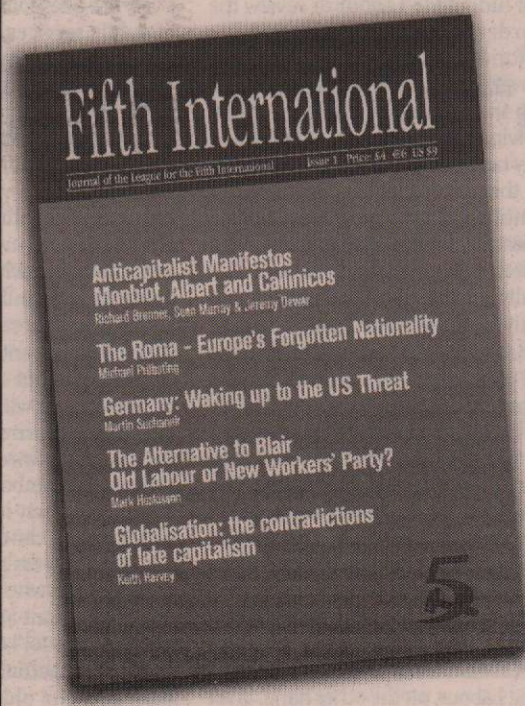
All history proves that the capitalists will never relinquish their property peacefully - to claim otherwise in the age of 'Shock and Awe' is either hopeless naivety or wilful deception. There is only one way: their apparatus of state repression must be overthrown by force. The capitalists' monopoly of military power - armies, police and security forces, prison systems, civil servants, judiciaries - must be smashed to pieces and replaced with the rule of the working people themselves.

This can be done - the majority of humanity can cast off the tiny minority of parasites. It will take mass organisation, an unambiguous strategy and, when the hour strikes, courageous and ruthless action.

Some may balk at this, but the alternative to revolution is not decades of undisturbed peace. Basing a global civilisation on the empowerment of a few thousand and the impoverishment of six billion is like lodging depth charges in the planetary core. If the logic of capitalism is left to unfold, our world will be torn apart by starvation, disease, poverty, environmental catastrophe, and war.

In the struggle against capitalism, greater energy is equivalent to greater humanity. For with the suppression of our exploiters and an end to the tyranny of profit, human history can truly begin.

Journal of the League for the Fifth International OUT NOW



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Firefighters need a rank and file movement

In June this year FBU leader Andy Gilchrist claimed that the union had won significant concessions from the bosses - "three and a half of our four pillars". On the strength of this, members voted narrowly to end the dispute, writes Mark Hoskisson.

Many militants, though, disagreed. Not only had the strike fallen far short of £30k for firefighters but also the union's negotiators had conceded many of the government's demands to undermine working conditions and cut jobs. It is now clear to everyone that the militants were correct. The strike was lost and, to underline the point, the pay award will not be given in full after all.

The bosses are on a roll. They now have the measure of Andy Gilchrist. Awkward? Not in the slightest. He demonstrated that, when it was a choice between going all out to defend his members or backsliding to avoid the dispute becoming a major confrontation with the Labour government, he opted to slide right back.

That's why the bosses delivered their calculated insult. The full pay award would only be paid when the "reforms" (attacks) had been "validated" by an independent body (presumably the Audit Commission). They have re-established "their right to manage" the fire service.

Thankfully, the FBU is not just Andy Gilchrist. All over the country rank and file members responded to this outrage with wildcat action, inspired by the postal workers' victory that had demonstrated the power of unofficial all-out action.

Faced with this revolt the FBU bureaucracy moved fast. Despite Gilchrist having signed a deal that



FBU chief Andy Gilchrist (inset) has betrayed the militancy of firefighters

technically allowed the bosses to phase in the award he quickly expressed sympathy with his members. Sympathy, but not solidarity. Terrified of the action spreading he spent all his time getting members back to work with the promise that the executive would do something. The something turned out to be the most useless gesture imaginable.

The executive decided to call a "consultative ballot" on the award. Only after this elaborate process would the executive consider organising a second ballot for action.

Amazingly, the executive didn't even have a position on whether or not to accept this latest smack in the mouth from the bosses. Its circular simply called on members to participate. The management circular was less shy:

"The implications of a NO vote

- If there is a NO vote then we anticipate that there will be a ballot for strike action.
- A NO vote will not lead to a resumption of negotiations. Negotiations on the Position Statement have finished and will not be re-opened.
- A NO vote means there will not be a pay increase at all at this stage.
- A NO vote means that the other benefits in the Position Statement (such as retained parity, improvement in control staff pay, the 4.2% increase in July 2004 and the pay formula increases in July 2005 and July 2006) cannot be implemented."

Meanwhile, in the words of the union's London Regional Committee "the General Secretary's letter to London members cannot be interpreted

as anything but an encouragement to vote 'YES'.

In effect, Gilchrist was acting as the bosses' messenger boy and, regrettably, the majority of FBU members who voted swallowed the bitter pill, with nearly 75% voting to accept the "phased" offer on a 56% turnout.

Especially in the wake of this disastrous result it is vital to start organising to win control of the union. The FBU membership, as the last strike showed, has few means of holding its membership to account. The militant rank and file need to organise themselves into a force capable of transforming the union into a democratic class struggle organisation. They can do this, in the first instance, by ensuring that any action that does go ahead - official or unofficial - is under the control of democratic strike committees elected from station meetings. The bureaucrats must not be left in control of the dispute - turning action on and off when it suits their negotiating purposes.

The fight for this rank and file strategy had begun before the ballot was finished. The London Region, one of the most militant in the country, has passed an emergency motion, which every other branch should support. It begins:

"RECLAIM YOUR UNION!"

The Fire Brigades Union is facing the biggest crisis in its history. Our leadership have completely surrendered the pay campaign to the employers and the government. They are in the process of giving away hard won conditions of service without any proper debate and without a mandate. They are in the process of ripping up

long-standing conference policies without holding a union conference."

This resolution is the beginning of a rank and file movement in the FBU. It goes on to register a complete "no confidence" in Gilchrist and the other negotiators; it demands a new system of democracy, giving power to the members; it calls for a recall conference to start the fight back.

Ruth Winters, Gilchrist's comrade-in-arms, has sent out a circular attacking the London resolution. It is a classic defence of bureaucratic methods: "I only hope that London management and employers do not take that lack of confidence on board when making decisions against our members."

In other words, we won't back you if management move against you. Militants like Steve Godward in Birmingham know only too well that Gilchrist and co are capable of Stalinist back-stabbing of the worst order. He was in dispute with Gilchrist. The management sacked him. Coincidence?

The fight between the rank and file and the bureaucracy is at the heart of the battle to revive the FBU and the unions generally. It matters little if these overpaid clerks sign up to Stop the War, their real role is to check and break the militant fighting spirit of the rank and file. For all his anti-war rhetoric, when Gilchrist had the opportunity to put a spoke in the wheel of the British war machine against Iraq, there can be little doubt that he struck a backroom deal with John Prescott to suspend any action for the duration of the attack.

The task of the day is to rally behind London and push on with the struggle to show Gilchrist and co what a real, rank and file awkward squad looks like.

New Stalinism not the answer to New Labour

Mark Hoskisson reviews, *A New Labour Nightmare: the Return of the Awkward Squad*, by Andrew Murray, Verso, £12.99

Andrew Murray chairs the Stop the War Coalition. He has worked for the TGWU and was employed as communications officer for the train drivers' union, Aslef, until the defeat of its left leader Mick Rix.

Murray got these jobs on the basis of references from his former employer, the *Morning Star*. He is a very good writer. He is clear and concise, with a nice turn of phrase. He also does his journalistic homework.

He is also, more importantly, a Stalinist. In part one of his latest book, he sets out his strategy for the unions. In part two, he provides a platform for members of "the awkward squad" to talk about that strategy.

Murray outlines the current revival of the labour movement. He points out that even right-wing officials have to place themselves to the left of Blair to stand a chance in union elections: "The truth is that the whole movement is moving left and the leading figures in almost every union reflect that in their specific industrial and political context."

Dave Prentis of Unison and Kevin Curran of the GMB, for example, have both issued warnings about New Labour's refusal to listen and have both spoken out against Blair's addiction to privatisation.

The "awkward squad" are not, therefore, exceptions. They are part of a general left advance, argues Murray, which can unseat Tony Blair and reclaim Labour.

That is the actual point of this book. It aims to direct the efforts of many top bureau-

crats towards "seeking to return the Party to something like a 'real Labour' perspective" because that "is the only way to keep the union link alive."

Wait a minute. New Labour is on the rampage. Trade unionists are thinking about breaking from it - to the left. The RMT decided to democratise its political funds, while the media union Bectu has balloted members on the Labour link. Bureaucrats have had to cut funding to Labour or review the link in order to outflank rank and file pressure for disaffiliation.

Moreover, we have witnessed two crucial strikes, in the fire service and in the post, both involving head-on clashes with Labour.

Murray tacitly admits that industrial conflict with the government is inevitable in a chapter entitled "Challenging New Labour". But he doesn't interview FBU militants who tore up their Labour Party cards, and who successfully got their political fund democratised only for the Stalinist leader Gilchrist to manoeuvre against them and reverse the decision. Interviews are reserved for the union tops in this book.

And the conclusion that Murray reaches is that workers who want to break with Labour are totally wrong. He excludes the possibility that the outcome of such a break could be a huge step forward, a new workers' party committed to struggle with the capitalist system. Any break from Labour by the unions could only be "an historic setback for working class politics".

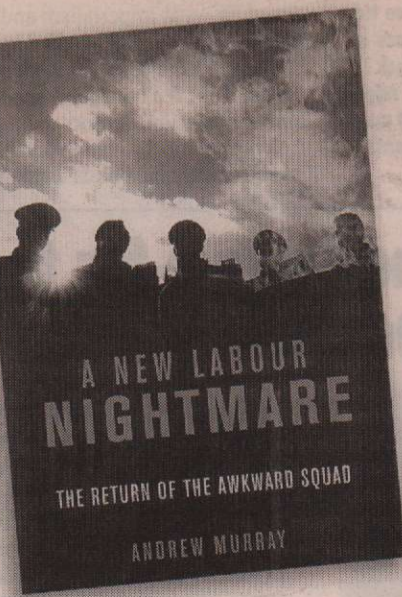
The great advance that would come from reclaiming Labour, on the other hand, is set

out in the following terms: "So defeating New Labour means more than a personnel change at the very top. It means bringing centre-ground labour figures like Robin Cook, Frank Dobson, Glenda Jackson and Peter Kilfoyle into a 'reclaim Labour' alliance with the unions and the left on a policy which would initially focus only on a very few questions - peace, defence of public services and elementary measures of an egalitarian nature."

We are supposed to give up the fight, launched by thousands of workers and youth around the globe, for "another world" in exchange for "a very few" minor reforms and values. Why? What about the anti-union laws, what about asylum seekers, what about the obscene gap between rich and poor in Britain? What about Iraq? These are burning questions that millions want answered.

Moreover, we are supposed to do this by hooking up with a former foreign minister who sold arms to Indonesian dictators, a man who allowed himself to be used to subvert the democratic will of trade unions and Labour Party in the battle over the London mayoral candidacy with Ken Livingstone, an actress turned Blairite minister and the man who spearheaded the witch-hunt of Militant and many other socialists in the Liverpool Labour Party.

There is actually very little new about this. It is the old idea of subordinating



militant class struggle to piecemeal advances at the top of the labour movement. This, Murray argues - against both Bob Crow and Mark Serwotka in the interview section of the book - will enable us to reclaim Labour.

Of course, Murray has to proffer some new aspects to this strategy. He insists that attention must be paid to the needs of women and black workers. He urges internationalism.

But these "new concerns" are the tricks of a make-up artist. They conceal the real thing: subservience to labour movement bureaucrats and a struggle to revive reformism as opposed to the fight for working class political independence, militant class struggle and rank and file democracy.

More wildcats kicking off

By a PCS member

Union members in the Department for Work and Pensions have rejected the department's pay offer by a huge 94 per cent. Management imposed the offer before the result of the ballot was known, suggesting that they are deliberately trying to engineer a dispute.

And have they got one, now! Their bully-boy tactics provoked a CWU-style walk-out in Glasgow and Basildon even before the votes were counted.

The pay offer will introduce a discriminatory bonus scheme, with most staff receiving a below the rate of inflation pay rise of just 2.6 per cent. For 90,000 low-paid administrative staff this is a real pay cut.

Under the controversial bonus scheme, all paid and unpaid leave of more than five days in a year (other than annual leave and bank holidays) would lead to a reduction in a bonus payment. The reduction would penalise those taking maternity and paternity leave, in addition to staff taking time off to study, care for a sick child or relative, or to attend a funeral.

The PCS will now ballot for strike action in early December, with a planned two-day strike in January followed by an indefinite overtime ban. However, this is the same tactic which led to a defeat in the health and safety strikes in JobCentre Plus. Union members should follow the example of Glasgow and Basildon and boycott the new appraisal system now. Management didn't wait for a ballot, neither should we!

Iraq: support secular revolutionary forces

Dear comrades

The New World Order led by America, its western allies, nationalist and Islamic forces, including both Arabs, and Kurds, have created a situation whereby they have destroyed civil life in Iraq and its socio-economic infrastructure. The society is without law and order, and people live in uncertainty. Iraq has become a battle field for the Islamists, nationalists, and the remains of Ba'ath party: all the forces of darkness in Iraq. The intervention of neighbouring countries supports terrorist groups in the name of fighting the occupiers. The bloody New World Order which is about the establishment of the world's only superpower, America, has nothing for people apart from hunger, poverty, war, destruction, and killings. Some of the Islamic and nationalist forces, in the name of opposition to the enemy are trying to show themselves as "loyal" to people; but it is all false.

At the same time the American forces are faced with a huge opposition by the workers, women, commu-

nists, radical forces, and trade unions under the leadership of the Worker Communist Party of Iraq. These forces today are organised in Union of Unemployed, trade unions, workers councils, and organisation of women's freedom. They represent the freedom loving, and secular people of Iraq. They oppose the American forces through mass struggle to change the situation for the benefit of the people, and to put in a foundation for a society where people can live in safety and dignity.

These forces, unlike the Islamic, Arabic, and Kurdish nationalists, are struggling and organising people in different ways against America and its allies, who put Iraqi people in a situation where they have to either be pro-American or relate to the Islamic and reactionary forces in Iraq. This leaves people with no choice due to poverty, hunger, and lack of security. The wealth of society is with elite, and the Islamists want to bring people's expectations down.

On the other hand, the Worker Communist Party of Iraq is the only radical force behind people's demands

and is highly engaged with organising and supporting different mass organisations in Iraq at the same time as standing against those forces who are terrorising people, violating women's rights, issuing fatwas against radical people and communists, and burning down the cinemas. We are working effectively to force the allied forces to withdraw from Iraq, at the same time as standing up against all terrorist forces who have destroyed people's lives through bombings.

Also our party works to organise people's power through trade unions, workers' councils, and other radical organisations to establish a society which allows a human life style, free from America's intervention, in which people are treated equally and not according to their religion, ethnicity or gender.

My message through this introduction is to call upon communists and humanists of the world, who came onto the streets to oppose American policies in attacking Iraq, to ally with those Iraqi people who are opposed to the occupying forces. These are not only America and its allies it is also the dark forces men-

tioned above. Imagine if the Allied forces now leave Iraq and power passes to a ruling council which includes all the dark forces, that are dividing power on the bases of tribe, religion and ethnicity, that are pro-American and will implement its policies, and that will oppress communists, radicals and women, and that will turn society into a battle field for nationalist and religious wars.

What should one expect from these forces, apart from imposing another Taliban, medieval-style government or Balkanisation.

The only hope and future for workers, women, and toilers of Iraq is those forces, who are struggling for freedom, equality, welfare and a society clear from the remains of the Ba'ath party, Islamic groups, America and its allies, a society under the direct rule of people's power with protection of their civil and individual freedoms.

NOORI BASHIR
Worker Communist Party of Iraq

Free Mario Bango - victim of racist justice

Dear Comrades,

On 20 November, the Bratislavan County Court sentenced Mario Bango to 12 years in prison without parole for attempted murder. Allegedly, he committed this crime on 10 March, 2001, when he injured Branislav Slamka with a knife on the bus. Mario, who is a young Roma, an anti-fascist activist and a member of the League for the Fifth International, was defending his brother Eduard from Slamka's racially motivated attack.

The element of self-defence was completely ignored by the court. The defence lawyer was unable to find a witness who dared to state publicly what anti-fascists have known for a long time - that Slamka was a member of the "National Socialists" and had previously participated in neo-Nazi attacks. The court explained the verdict with the argument that "Slamka was perfectly healthy when he got on the bus". This ignores the fact that no relationship could be established between the knife wounds caused by Mario and the head injury

that led to Slamka's death. Nor could Mario's intention to kill Slamka be established. Yet this tough sentence was meted out to Mario, who has no criminal record.

As the sentence was pronounced, Eduard Bango and his mother sang the Internationale.

This sentence clearly expresses the racist, political prejudice of the court. Slamka's defence was conducted by Robert Fico, chairman of the populist party, SMER. The Slovakian parliament even held a minute's silence for the Slamka on a motion of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) member, Kalman.

The sentence of the County Court contrasts sharply with the indifference of the Slovakian police and judiciary when dealing with neo-Nazi attacks or other racist crimes, as when Karol Sendrei from Magnezitoviece was murdered by the mayor and his son, a police officer.

The defence immediately appealed the case, which will continue before the Supreme Court. However, the behaviour of

the district and county courts, as well as the participation of the highly popular Fico, leave little hope of a fair trial.

The international campaign to free Mario Bango is now more important than ever. Mario has already received support from many activists from cultural, trade union, political, human rights, and anti-racist organisations. The scandalous, racist sentence of the court in Bratislava must be made known.

ARI
Czech REVOLUTION

Write to Mario at:
Mário Bango, nar. 8. 6. 1982
Ústav na vy'kon väzby
priečinok 1077
Chorvatská 5
812 29 Bratislava
Slovensko/Slovakia
More information, and details of how you can support Mario's case, can be found at:
<http://www.worldrevolution.org.uk/pages/campaigns/mariointro.html>

Solidarity wins release of the Thessaloniki 7

Dear Comrades

The Greek State has released all seven of the activists held because of their resistance to the EU summit in Haikidiki and Thessaloniki in June - after five months of psychological and physical violence. This is truly a victory for the solidarity movement around the world and a big defeat for the Greek state.

Five of the activists bravely went on hunger strike to highlight the police conspiracy to fit them up. After between 55 and 70 days without food, three of them - Carlos Martinez, Fernando Perrez and Spiros Tsistas - remain in a critical condition as we go to press.

Clear video and photographic evidence shows that one of the seven, Simon Chapman from London and a member of the Wombles, was framed by the Greek police who planted three black rucksacks on him. Photographic evidence proves that during the first impact with police, Simon was wearing his distinctive blue and purple rucksack.

Simon, Carlos and Fernando still

cannot leave the country while their legal team applies for a review of the bail conditions. Simon is also being interviewed by police regarding the allegations of the fit-up that has been well covered in the media around Europe and Greece.

An unprecedented inquiry began on Tuesday, 25th November in Athens, called by the Supreme court to investigate into these allegations.

Solidarity will continue; 22 people face serious charges for their resistance in June.

All anti-capitalist and revolutionaries should welcome the release of Simon and the other activists. Yet again, the forces of the capitalist state - as in Gothenburg and Genoa in 2001 - have shown that they are prepared to murder activists from the anti-capitalist movement in order to try and silence us. The courage of the Thessaloniki Seven must inspire all of us not to let them succeed.

RUPERT DOODROP
London

Obituary: Al Richardson 1941-2003

Al Richardson's sudden death from a heart attack in November shocked all of us who knew him, writes Stuart King. Our political paths crossed in the early 1980s when Workers Power was working a pamphlet on the Fourth International.

Al was already working with Sam Bornstein, a Trotskyist who had joined the movement before the war, on a history of British Trotskyism. This two-volume work covering the period 1924-49, *Against the Stream and War and the International*, is still the best history available.

It was typical of Al that whenever you talked to him about reprinting the soon to be out of print first volume, he would explain how much editing and correction work would be needed. Al was a perfectionist with a ruthless eye for detail.

As the editor of *Revolutionary History*, which he established and ran, Al provided a bridge between the "old Trotskyists" who had survived from the immediate pre-and post war generations and contemporary activists. His deep respect for these earlier generation, despite any political differences he had with them, enabled him to collect and scrupulously log their memories of their political activity.

In addition to collecting a vast archive of both published and internal material, the interviews he conducted with these veterans will be a lasting resource for all who want to continue to learn the lessons of the past. *Revolutionary History*, in issue after issue chronicled Trotskyist groups around the world in rich detail. Al liked to ensure that both sides of every historic dispute were

heard, the "heretics" quite as much as the orthodox.

Anyone who was on the *Revolutionary History* editorial board will remember that Al - despite his "bluff Yorkshireman" image - was, when needed, a skilled diplomat too. To get a wide number of rival Trotskyist groups to work together on a common project, and indeed veterans who had had bitter disputes in the past (and who had not forgotten them either) was measure of his organising skills.

He also managed to find time to set up and help keep running Socialist Platform Ltd which published a number of important memoirs and pamphlets; and he was a regular attendee of international gatherings and conferences on Trotskyist history. Al was an internationalist too, always willing

to meet comrades from other countries, open his home and his archives to them and help them discover as much as possible about their traditions too.

Like many of our generation, Al had joined the Trotskyist movement in the late 1960s; in his case he became a member of the International Marxist Group, forerunner of today's International Socialist Group. It was clearly an experience he never forgot - or forgave - judging from the salty comments and comic stories he would tell in the pub after meetings.

Al reacted to this early experience by becoming a long-time Labour Party member. He was convinced (like many of the pre and post-war Trotskyists he wrote about) that real Marxist advance would have to come through building a socialist current

in that party. These views are reflected in *War and the International*. On this we differed strongly with Al. But as the organiser and publisher of books and journals which enable one to make one's own judgement, he will be sorely missed.

The very scale of his work provides him with an enduring monument. It brought to a new generation, through the pages of *Revolutionary History*, the contributions made by Trotskyists to working class struggles, not only in Britain but throughout the world.

We will miss his determination and drive. We will miss his caustic wit. The best contribution we can make to his memory is to carry out the founding principle of the *Revolutionary History* journal, "to learn from history" so we are not doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Livingstone set to return to Labour

By GR McColl

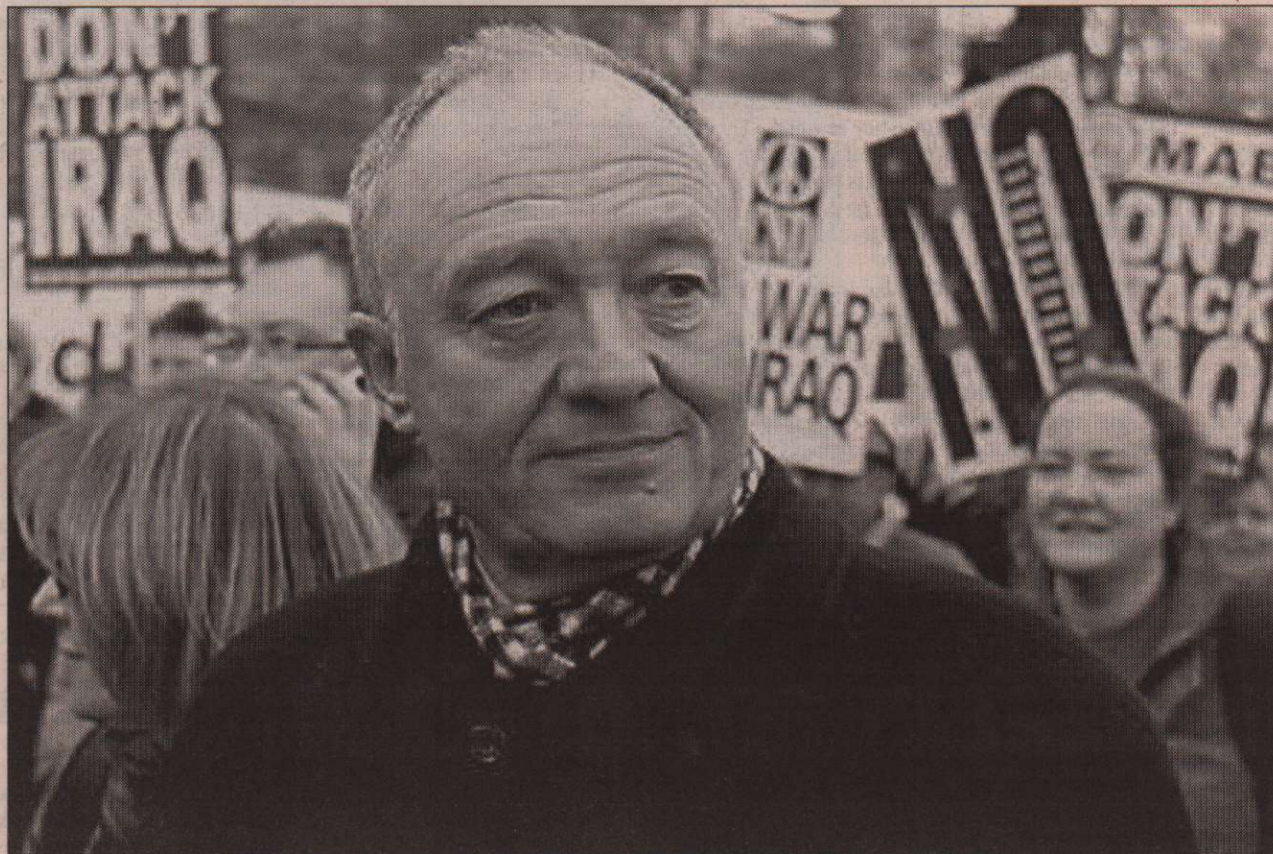
New Labour's national executive committee (NEC) looks set to readmit to party membership London's mayor, Ken Livingstone. The NEC had expelled Livingstone in early 2000 when he defied the blatant rigging of the party's selection procedure, which installed Frank Dobson as the official Labour candidate for mayor. Livingstone ran as an independent. The man dubbed "Red Ken" in the tabloids went on to score a clear-cut victory in the May 2000 poll, with Dobson limping home a distant third and causing acute embarrassment for Number 10.

Tony Blair left himself wide open to the charge of contempt for party democracy, but seemed indifferent to the criticisms of party members and the collapse of party activity in many of the capital's constituencies. In the run-up to the 2004 election, however, Blair himself appears to be pulling strings to secure Livingstone's readmission into the fold.

At first glance, Blair's conversion to support for his *bête noire's* return seems quite remarkable. But his motives are pragmatic. Many a Labour MP and member of the Greater London Assembly (GLA) fears that Labour will finish a disastrous fourth in the 2004 race. Labour's current candidate, GLA member Nicky Gavron, is widely seen as an absolute no-hoper.

Though Gordon Brown and John Prescott stay adamantly opposed to Livingstone's re-entry, Blair - for all his bluster - recognises that the past year has caused him and the party considerable damage. Livingstone's treatment in 2000 had already cost Labour dearly in the capital. By granting his wish for renewed membership, Blair is looking to staunch the erosion of electoral support in London and possibly muzzle one of his more clever critics. For his part, Red Ken has stayed remarkably quiet, though whether he is weighing his options or his silence is a pre-condition stipulated by Blair remains to be seen.

Livingstone's first term of office has con-



firmed that his politics have shifted rightwards. His methods remain thoroughly reformist - indeed brazenly opportunist. His four years as mayor have also illustrated that municipal reformism's room for manoeuvre in Britain has shrunk still further since his days as leader of the Greater London Council.

Despite a total budget of £4.7 billion, the mayor and GLA have, for example, no say on housing policies, despite the crisis of affordable accommodation in London. Likewise, the Blair government failed to introduce a London-wide body to replace the Inner London Education Authority, abolished by Thatcher shortly after the demolition of the GLC in 1986. The mayor's office pumps out a long series of policy papers and

often well-researched studies on social issues, but is generally impotent to act on the recommendations.

One key aspect of the state's activity has, however, been partly devolved away from central government and towards the GLA: policing. In contrast to the rhetoric that might have been expected from Livingstone in the early 1980s he now boasts of putting more cops on the beat, with Met Police numbers rising by 1,200 between 2001 and 2003. He was among the first politicians to threaten any "unruly" anti-capitalist demonstrators on May Day 2001 with dire consequences.

London local government does have some degree of influence over the London Development Agency, but the mayor's vision

for economic development in the capital would leave it thoroughly in the thrall of finance capital.

Livingstone has, of course, continued to make the right noises and symbolic gestures around such key issues as the war against Iraq, feting members of the Stop the War Coalition in the run-up to both the 15 February and "Stop Bush" demonstrations. As disabled Vietnam veteran turned anti-war activist Ron Kovic put it, "no mayor in the US has ever invited me to City Hall".

He has hinted at support for the £4,000 London Weighting claim by local government workers but has never actively campaigned for the demand. Similarly, he appeared to support the FBU pay campaign but maintained a distance from the strikes.

Still, Livingstone has staked his political reputation on moves to resolve London's transport crisis. His record is mixed but he can certainly claim to have made some difference. The buses may remain in private hands and drivers' pay abysmally low, but Livingstone has substantially reduced and frozen bus fares, raising passenger journeys to the highest level since 1969. While many socialists have opposed the congestion charge on the grounds that it is a regressive tax, the evidence since its introduction suggests that it has reduced vehicle traffic in central London, without worsening traffic patterns in neighbouring boroughs.

Where Livingstone has singularly failed, however, is in his opposition to the privatisation of London Underground. Though he has spent some time courting RMT general secretary Bob Crow, the mayor distanced himself from calls for strike action to halt the sell-off of the maintenance function to privateers. Unlike the "Fare's Fair" campaign of the early 1980s there was not even an attempt to mobilise a significant campaign by passengers.

Both Gordon Brown and the Tories seek to blame Livingstone for the steep rises in council tax in London. Undoubtedly, Livingstone has chosen to pass the buck to the capital's other local authorities, but in reality the existence of the mayor's office and GLA has been only one component of the surge in council tax bills. The immediate blame lies not with Livingstone but with Brown and the Treasury for imposing Tory spending limits as well as failing to introduce any significant reforms of the regressive council tax and to return control of business rates to local authorities.

Assuming that Livingstone does gain readmission to Labour, we shall see if Ken actually lends some ballast to the so far feeble efforts to "reclaim Labour" or if, in fact, he has cut a deal with Blair whereby he remains silent about "national politics". What has long been clear, even before he spurned the London Socialist Alliance's support in spring 2000, is that Livingstone has no intention of putting himself at the head of any break to the left of Labour.

Stop foundation hospitals

By Alison Hudson

When is a victory not a victory? When it's a victory won by the unions at the Labour Party Conference. When is a fightback not a fightback? When the battle is over creeping privatisation of the NHS.

I'm talking about foundation hospitals, of course. If you're still not clear, don't worry, foundation hospitals are coming soon to an area near you.

The Health and Social Care Bill which paved the way for foundation hospitals did not have an easy passage, with a government majority of just 17 and a recalcitrant House of Lords. However, Peter Hain's threat to keep both Houses at work throughout the weekend to force a vote - and some nifty last-minute deals by John Reid - won the day for New Labour.

Among Reid's placatory promises to his backbenchers was to "review the first waves" of Foundation Trusts (FT) before any further applications are approved. This statement implied that, apart from the first 25 applicants already approved, there would be a moratorium on the issue until these applications were reviewed. Not so: Reid carefully used the plural "waves" so that he could speak in the next 32 applications as "wave 2".

Reid already had plans in place, should New Labour have failed to get the bill passed, to introduce the FT changes by using "existing powers", according to a leaked Department of Health internal memo. But

democracy was most dramatically flouted when October's Labour Party Conference voted overwhelmingly to drop the plan completely after the big four unions (Unison, T&G, Amicus and the GMB) joined forces to take on the government. Reid responded that the government would ignore the vote and press ahead anyway. And so they did, as they did with the Private Finance Initiative last year.

New Labour insists that foundation hospitals will promote democracy, local ownership and choice. This is not true. FTs will be autonomous from the Department of Health, will be able to borrow money (up to a third of their turnover - tens of millions), and will have greater flexibility regarding pay and benefits for staff and the disposal of assets. With their privileged status they will be able to attract staff and patients from non-foundation hospitals resulting in loss of funding, possible reduction in services and such hospitals being less likely to be able to apply for foundation status themselves. A two-tier health service.

"Choice" is the new Labour buzzword - taken over from the Tories. But if choice means a minimum 40-mile round trip to your foundation hospital (as opposed to the run-down hospital in your own town) what choice is that for working class people? No choice at all.

Local democratic ownership is just a fig leaf for denationalisation. Membership of an FT is apparently restricted to staff and patients, or carers, who have been service users of the Trust within the previous three

years. So if you haven't recently used your local hospital you don't get a say! And who will have the time on their hands and the confidence and background knowledge of the subject to serve on the FT Boards? The educated middle classes. Membership will, in effect, be self-selecting and undemocratic. The elected Board of Governors will, in any case, only perform a role of strategic monitoring. The real business will be done by the Board of Directors - two thirds of whom will be the same old wannabe capitalist managers as before.

The unions are opposed to foundation hospitals for these reasons and because they fear that the new Trusts are just another stepping-stone along the road to privatisation. Foundation hospitals will be dealing with private business; they will open up a culture of competition within the NHS; they will encourage the practice of charging for non-medical services; they will be able to set up private companies; and private companies can even apply to become FTs themselves. Welcome to the Sheffield BUPA Hospital: the nightmare really begins...

In the summer Dave Prentis of Unison called foundation hospitals "a dagger in the heart of the NHS". Fine words followed from all the big four leaders at the TUC and Labour Conferences. They won the vote at the Labour Party conference but then lost it in the Commons and Lords. And this was their only strategy. As a Unison member, I checked Unison's website for details of the ongoing fight against foundation hospitals.

I found several long accounts of parliamentary lobbying by the union and the announcement of the setting up of a campaigning organisation, inspirationally known as "Foundation Trusts Concern". Its aims? Yet more parliamentary lobbying.

Foundation hospitals are at best money-wasting experiments in elitism. At worst they hold the door open for privatisation. The fiasco of the union fightback in a Labour Party they are so sure can be "reclaimed" makes it crystal clear that the parliamentary fightback is no fightback at all. But the not-so-awkward squad leaders know this. They have enjoyed their left posturing over foundation hospitals; now they can claim they fought a good fight and mutter about the evil Blair. Actually organising to defeat foundation hospitals was never truly on their agenda. The real solution would threaten their power base too much.

The only way to stop foundation hospitals is through working class action - the combined efforts of local communities, patients, and most importantly NHS workers. Unison members must demand that our leaders draw up a real fighting strategy immediately - to include militant campaigning and strikes. If the leaders refuse to do so, the rank and file must organise the fightback without them. Local communities and patients can get involved in protests, and workers and users combined can get elected to the Boards of Governors and sabotage foundation hospitals from the inside. We do not have to accept defeat on this issue.

Last month, the Queen announced the government's parliamentary legislation for the next term. It was the most repressive programme in living memory, proving that Tony Blair has no reverse gear and has the accelerator glued to the floor. *Rachel Hardcastle* outlines some of the measures and argues that Blair could be heading for a collision

Big brother Britain

When David Blunkett took up his post as home secretary, he promised to make his predecessor Jack Straw seem liberal in comparison. As the Queen listed the legislation to be placed before parliament in the forthcoming session, even Blunkett's worst enemy could scarcely deny the spectacular success with which he has carried out that pledge. Behind the sparse window dressing of social responsibility (child protection, registration of same-sex partnerships, protection of workers' pension rights) lies the real merchandise of new Labour's Christmas store: an attack on asylum seekers so brutal that even Michael Howard can criticise it from the left; a whole new set of police powers to deal with "civil contingencies" defined so loosely as to include any form of oppositional activity; and the first steps towards the introduction of compulsory ID cards.

The Civil Contingency Bill

The Civil Contingency Bill (CCB) is designed to update existing emergency powers legislation but extends those powers to such a degree that they will become not merely authoritarian but verging on the totalitarian. Not only will its catch-all measures be implemented according to highly subjective criteria, but the emergency regulations brought into force would allow the government to "disapply or modify any enactment or a provision made under or by virtue of an enactment." In other words, all existing legislation (including the Human Rights Act) which has been debated and passed in Parliament can be rendered null and void once the Prime Minister or Home Secretary decides that the situation is sufficiently serious to declare a state of emergency.

And how serious is "serious"? No definition is offered: the decision is left entirely to the discretion of the government. This conferring of arbitrary power on any government – let alone a government as addicted to invoking emergency legislation as Blair's – is unacceptable. Given the radically enhanced powers over people and property that will be handed to the police and other authorities, it will also be repressive.

The existing Emergency Powers Act (EPA), passed in 1964 and amended several times since, defines an emergency in terms of events or actions which "deprive the community or any substantial portion of the community of the essentials of life." Under the CCB, the circumstances that are considered to constitute an emergency will "be widened from limited threats to public welfare to include threats to the environment, to the political, administrative and economic stability of the UK and to threats to its security resulting from war or terrorism."

What are these nebulous threats? Again, whatever Blair, Blunkett or their successors decide. It is hard to imagine any meaningful form of industrial action or protest that does not in some way disrupt administrative or economic stability.

Blair has declared war on both the working class and the anti-war movement with these proposed new laws.

So what specific powers will be made available under the Bill?

- The prohibition of any specified assembly or activity



- The power to establish a 'special regulations tribunal' with apparently unlimited jurisdiction
- The power to allow any specified person to give any oral directions, which, if disobeyed or obstructed, can result in imprisonment
- The destruction or confiscation of private property, animal or plant life without compensation
- The power to compel a person to act in performance of any function

The application of most of these powers would run foul of the Human Rights Act and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). New Labour views human rights legislation as an optional extra, to be watered down for everyday use and discarded completely when required. Blair used the pretext of a "technical" state of emergency to act against the ECHR in pushing through the provision for indefinite detention without trial under the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act of 2001.

In fact, the CCB is deliberately intended to circumvent all human rights legislation. It will state that "emergency regulations should be treated as primary legislation for the purposes of the Human Rights Act." What does this mean? Under European law, national legislation that is at variance with the ECHR may stand, in line with the principle of parliamentary sovereignty, if it is considered as primary legislation which has been debated and passed in the national parliament. Although legal challenges can be raised, the courts can only rule that the legislation is incompatible with the ECHR; they cannot overrule a sovereign act of parliament. No such privilege applies to secondary or emergency legislation.

What the new Bill demands is that emergency powers are given the status of laws subject to extensive debate and amendment. And what rights will aggrieved citizens have, when they are arrested for attending a

prohibited assembly or protesting at the uncompensated confiscation of their property? Why, they can go to the court and have their treatment declared incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. And that is the counterbalance – the only counterbalance – available to the draconian provisions of the CCB through legal means.

Identity Cards

Since the entire civilian population can soon be treated as a terrorist threat, it is appropriate that time will be set aside in the coming session for the introduction of biometric identity cards to keep track of these menaces to society. The card has been plugged as an "entitlement card", a nice friendly piece of plastic to make sure that only those entitled to benefits and public services get to use them.

But the ID card is intended not for entitlement, but for exclusion and surveillance. From 2007 onwards, it will be an offence for a foreign national in the UK not to have an ID card, while any UK citizen applying for or renewing a passport driving licence from 2007 on will have to provide identification in the form of electronically-scanned fingerprints and iris patterning, which will then be stored in a national database.

The scheme will also provide another *panopticon*; security and IT providers stand to make a fortune out of the contracts for providing the cards and database systems. Of course, "entitlement" comes at a price (rights without responsibilities, remember?) the cards will cost almost £80, to be borne by the applicant.

The card will hold the following information: name, date of birth and sex; address; nationality; a unique personal number; and confirmation of the right to work (or not) in the UK.

Of course, once they are introduced on a voluntary basis, the cards will increasingly become *de facto* compulsory. How many people who have never left the country have yet had to get a passport simply to open a bank account? Banks and employers will almost certainly demand to see an ID card, thus making life impossible without it. From about 2012, the card will become compulsory: not only bank accounts and social security entitlements, but access to schools and non-emergency healthcare will depend on it.

The existence of a national – and through the EU, international – database of citizens, which will be monitored and shared by various state authorities, provides a sinister snoopers' charter for the 21st century. The tired argument that "if you've done nothing wrong, then you have nothing to fear" is laughable.

Police recently invoked anti-terrorist legislation against peaceful and legal protesters against the government-sponsored DSI arms fair. The Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts offer no protection either: the police and security agencies are already exempted from all of the meaningful provisions of these Acts. The cards will also be used as another weapon with which to bludgeon those scapegoats of our age, asylum seekers.

The cards and the CCB are not about safety and combatting "terrorism" but about fighting dissent and difference.

How to beat these attacks

The purpose of the Civil Contingency Bill is to criminalise dissent, and of Identity Cards, to identify and "neutralise" dissenters. The measures being introduced by Blair and Blunkett as part of the "war against terror" are indeed creating a wartime environment. New Labour has declared war on the working class, the anti-war movement, the anti-capitalist movement, asylum-seekers, Palestinians, and on that "terrorism" which is the revolt of the world's poor against their brutal masters. And since war has been declared, battle must commence.

It is clear from the emphasis in the CCB on prohibiting disruption, assembly and activity and from the desire to give names to the masses via ID cards that the one thing this government fears most is mass action, whether in the form of strikes or street protests. They fear the international nature of this struggle, too: part of the impetus towards ID cards comes from initiatives at a European level to monitor all cross-border movements. Apart from migrants and holiday-makers, the most

noticeable category of border-crossers have been the tens of thousands who have converged to protest at the meetings of the G8, IMF, World Bank and WTO, and to organise and debate at the European Social Forum.

If more trade unionists follow the path of the wildcat postal strikers, the new powers will be invoked. If protesters continue to gather in their hundreds of thousands in the streets, the new powers will be invoked. Despite and because of this, we must strike and march with renewed purpose and vigour.

If we will not be allowed to do this with impunity, we must be prepared to defend our strikes, protests and marches with defence guards, just like they have on the continent. If we do not have the capacity to defend ourselves in a disciplined and effective manner, we will be left with the poor comfort of a judicial declaration that our repression is incompatible with the Human Rights convention.

We must form social forums, or people's assemblies with all the social forces that

will be affected under these draconian laws, both to organise a mass, united campaign to defeat the Bills before they reach the statute book and to resist them should they be passed.

We must also work on an international level, connecting with all those in the workplaces, on the land and on the streets who are engaged in the same fight against the same enemy.

Blair and Blunkett's new laws have not come out of the blue. They are part of an internationally co-ordinated attack on the resistance to globalisation and its imperialist wars. Their measures are taken from the infamous US Patriot Act and, beyond that, the legislation of Third World dictatorships.

That our masters believe such draconian powers will soon become necessary should embolden us, not cower us. Let's show them that they have not over-estimated the threat to their rule; and let's show them what a threat to the political, administrative and economic stability of capitalist Britain looks like.

Right attack – left concede

Dave Stockton reports on what did and didn't happen at the ESF, and the goings on behind the scenes

From 13-15 November, according to the organisers' own figures, 51,000 activists from around Europe and beyond participated in the second European Social Forum (ESF). They listened to speeches, debated alternative strategies for resistance to war and globalising capitalism, they made international and even intercontinental contact with one another. This huge international gathering is and remains an enormous step forward over the narrow national isolation of the last 20 years and more.

In addition to the ESF proper, a Women's Assembly was held immediately before it that had about 3,000 taking part. After the ESF ended 5,000 participated in the Assembly of the Social Movements on Sunday 16 November. Also a trade union forum took place in central Paris on the two days before the ESF started. Unfortunately, this was "by invite only" from the ETUC bureaucrats. It appears that negotiations were going on between the ESF "organisers" and the union bureaucrats throughout but the outcome was never clear.

Thus ESF this year was thus roughly the same size as last year's event in Florence. The difference apart from its splitting into four separate sites – was that there was nowhere near the same flooding in of French labour movement activists and youth as there was on the Friday night in Florence. Also the 100,000 who marched in Paris on the Saturday was but a pale shadow of the million-strong march in Florence.

However, as in Italy, those who attended the sessions, were overwhelmingly young people – even if the platform speakers and organisers belonged to an older generation, and consisted in the main of union officials, academics and NGO full-timers. Overall there was less vibrancy and dynamism than in Florence but perhaps more concentration on which way forward for the movement. A critical, indeed self-critical spirit marked a number of seminars and even plenaries. This was a good thing and will be welcomed by serious militants, even if not by the Hooray Henrys or Henriettes of the movement.

The programme of the ESF centred on 55 huge plenaries, with thousands attending each plenary. These had too many platform speakers. Many of the speakers rehearsed identical arguments and often seemed to have few if any differences with one another. This left little room for debate from the rank and file participants but could not conceal the important debate that was running through the ESF.

Political Trends

Distinct political trends and their spokespersons were clearly visible. There was the neo-social-democratic and post-Stalinist reformists: led by ATTAC-France, with Bernard Cassen, Ignacio Ramonet, Jacques Nikonoff, Susan George, i.e. the academics and journalists of *Le Monde Diplomatique*. There were many representatives of the Parti Communiste Française (PCF). To these should be added the Guardian journalist George Monbiot, as Walden Bello, the advocate of autarky for third world bour-



The view from a typically crowded top table

geois governments.

In a slightly different category were the trade union leaders (CGT, CGIL, G10-solidaires, FIOM, COBAS, RMT, IG Metal, ver di FSN, Sud PTT). They were generally still only the more left-wing leaders plus more significant numbers of rank and file activists. Then there were the more radical populists led by the Disobedients, who occasionally spoke from the platform of the main sessions but mainly inhabited the Espace GLAD (Globalisation of struggles and Actions of Disobedience), plus Michael Albert from the United States.

The large organisations of the "far left" or "Trotskyist" tradition were headed by a large number of key figures of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR). These included its presidential candidate Olivier Besancenot, the philosopher Daniel Bensaid, François Vercammen and Attac organiser Christophe Aguiton. From Britain, the Socialist Workers Party and its international co-thinkers (the IST) notably from Germany, Greece and France, were headed by Alex Callinicos, Lindsey German, Jonathan Neale and Chris Nineham.

In addition the left reformist Italians were strongly represented by Rifondazione comunista, the Italian Social forums led by Fausto Bertinotti and Vittorio Agnoletto.

In the Assembly of the Social movements and its preparatory meetings the key figures were Sophie Zafari (delegate of the FSU, the teachers' union but also Attac and the LCR and Pierre Kalfa, G10 Solidaires union, Attac and the LCR and Luciano Mühlbauer from Cobas,

However, there was also a significant subjectively revolutionary current amongst those attending. Whenever hard hitting revolutionary interventions were made substantial applause often followed.

Reform or revolution

The 250 seminars, staged by coalitions of organisations, with fewer platform speakers and with much more space for contributions from the floor proved a far better location for debate. A similar number of workshops took place, organised by specific organisations.

In the plenaries on the future of the movement Bernard Cassen, former president of Attac, was blunt in his criticisms of the ESF in Florence. He criticised the ESF's annual nature, bemoaning the enormous labour involved in organising it, the over concentration on "action" and so on. He repeated suggestions that the movement should concentrate on winning over public opinion and existing establishment politicians and parties. As a speaker from

the League for the Fifth International pointed out, this method is a was that of the late 19th century British Fabians, who argued not only for "the inevitability of gradualness" (i.e. evolution not revolution) but for "permeating" the capitalist parties rather than setting up independent workers' parties to struggle for power.

For Cassen there could no question of the movement embracing the cause of the Iraqi resistance to the US and British occupation. This would only alienate those in power that Cassen sought to convince of the need for a minuscule tax on short-term speculative capital flows that he believes could humanise capitalism and make it truly national once again.

Needless to say the great majority at the ESF thought differently – Cassen's attacks on the left went down like a lead balloon every time, and nearly everyone recognised the justice of fighting imperialism and capitalism by direct action.

As in Florence – but even more nakedly – the huge democratic deficit at the top of the movement was open to view. Indeed, whenever this fact was pointed out, it drew loud applause. The activists are clearly becoming ever more aware of the undemocratic behind-the-scenes cabal who run the ESF. The Porto Alegre rules, the jet-setting international preparatory meetings and the need to work with left-reformist municipalities to secure venues strengthen the reformists like Cassen.

Compared to the ad hoc counter conferences and convergence centres which went alongside the anti-capitalist mobilisations of 1999-2001, these events are far more respectable, staid events. They run the very real danger of excluding the real lifeblood of the movement, the revolutionary élan of the youth and militant rank and file trade union militants. Already this has pushed the more radical, anarchist and populist elements to the fringes of these events. Their sectarian inability to handle reformism politically plays a role in this and leads them to withdraw to their own space – the Hub in Florence and the GLAD in Paris where they organise their own mini-utopias.

The Assembly of the Social Movements

The Assembly of the Social Movements (ASM) held on 16 November in St Denis – attended by several thousand activists was much less militant and enthusiastic, perhaps dampened by the dreadful weather but also by the lack of any clear focus and inspiration from the "leadership". It agreed on a whole series of actions for the coming year. But the statement it issued marked a victory for Attac and the right in

that they prevented the movement from calling for a European wide general strike or even a day of action.

The most important and wrong element of the principles of Porto Alegre states: "The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body".

The banning of debates from ending in decisions, that is votes, and the adoption of any policies or proposals by the ESF itself, condemns it to near impotence.

This was seen graphically at the Assembly on the Sunday and at the two preparatory meetings, one held on Tuesday and one on the Saturday night, which prepared the declaration and agreed the incredibly long list of boring speakers.

In order not to challenge Attac – and the mandarins of the World Social Forum the Italian organisers of ESF 2002 and the LCR/IST created the Assembly of the Social Movements, held on Sunday to decide, or rather endorse any action. It is not formally a part of the ESF itself.

Last year during the ESF a series of preparatory meetings was held throughout the forum, consisting of 80-100 delegates debated the various calls to action. The call for the global anti-war demonstration on February 15 came from this body.

Things were very different in Paris. On the Tuesday morning in Bobigny a hundred of so representatives of the social movements were presented with a statement which wanted the ASM to concentrate on a campaign culminating on the 9th of May, the day when heads of state finalise the European Constitution. It completely ignored the class struggle in Europe and did nothing to aid the necessary fusing of the anti-capitalist movement with the labour movement.

The key issue facing both movements in the coming year is the massive assault on the social gains of the European working class. The European constitution is a step towards setting these attacks in legal concrete, but we needed to call for a coordinated counterattack against the EU governments that are agreed on slashing health and education systems, pension schemes, jobs in the public sector etc.

It is vital to level up from the highest points achieved in the struggles of the last year. We have to learn from the mass strikes that took place in France, Germany, Italy and Austria in 2003.

At the preparatory meeting for the

Assembly on the Saturday night a draft statement to be put to the Assembly, drawn up by an anonymous working group, excluded both an explicit call for the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and any explicit call for a day of action against social cuts and privatisations.

Thanks to an Italian woman delegate, to the German and Greek ISTers, Berlin and Austrian Social Forum supporters and ourselves, enough fuss was made to force them into a new "consensus" or compromise. Whilst the Greek IST comrade Petras spoke strongly for the day of action Chris Nineham looked sick and then harangued his Greek and German comrades on the dangers of forcing the issue against the French, thus risking a premature split in the movement.

Compromise broken

Unfortunately, the compromise was brokered by the SWP and only weak and evasive formulations were included.

"We are fighting for "the withdrawal of the occupation forces from Iraq and for the immediate restitution of sovereignty to the Iraqi people" and – "We engage ourselves to take part in all the actions organised by the social movements, in particular to build for a common day of action supported by the social movements, notably by the European trade union movements."

No date and no real call to action, even though sections of the German and Italian unions wanted a day of action. The so called revolutionary left, the SWP and LCR did nothing about this rotten compromise. We hazard an educated guess that the SWP, particularly its leading members Nineham and Callinicos were so fixated with bagging the ESF for London in 2004 that they were willing to give in to the right wing.

The LCR, two of whose members Sophie Zafari and Pierre Kalfa, tried to railroad the preparatory meetings, has its eyes firmly fixed on the prize of the Euroelections (where its bloc with LO may get 20% of the popular vote). It clearly wanted not a day of action on the social cuts in February or March but a day of action on the European constitution on May 9th, just before the Euroelections.

Thus, thanks mainly to the political cowardice of the USFI and the IST – their latest infatuation with electoralism – the outcome of the Assembly and therefore of the ESF was much more evasive, more reformist than was the case in Florence. We simply cannot allow next year's Forum to be as barren of results as Paris. If so it could be the last. That would be a real tragedy for the international workers' movement.

The fight for the Fifth International at the ESF

By Richard Brenner

The question of creating a new International - a world party of anti-capitalist workers - was widely discussed at the European Social Forum.

Numerous plenaries, seminars and workshops debated the relationship between the global movement and political parties, the rise of a new internationalism, the way forward for the movement and the issue of a new International. A debate between Daniel Bensaid of the French LCR and Chris Harman of the British SWP on this subject was filled to overflowing.

The reason for this sudden surge of interest is obvious. Over the last year the power of internationalism has been unleashed - the call of the 2002 ESF in Florence for a day of anti-war action on 15 February was answered by over 20 million people in every major town and city in the world. This was the biggest coordinated action against imperialism in human history - the global anti-capitalist movement has become the world's second superpower. So the question everyone was asking in Paris was simple: where to next?

The question was posed point blank by a representative of the Italian trade union COBAS at the opening of the first meeting of

the ESF's Co-ordination on the evening of Tuesday 11 November. He said that Bernard Cassen of the French pressure group Attac had warned that the movement could go in one of two directions: either to remain a network of campaigns designed to pressurise existing governments and politicians to reform the system, or to set up a fifth International. Indeed, the French newspaper *Le Monde* had also warned as far back as December 2002 that the far left would try to persuade the global movement to found a fifth International.

In fact, it became very clear in Paris that the ESF was only one decision away from creating a new International. This decision was whether to allow delegates to vote on proposals. A democratic structure would have enabled the 51,000 delegates - and the 5,000 who attended the Assembly on Sunday 16 November - to decide on policies, actions and programmes. The ESF would have become more than the sum of its parts - it would have become a party in its own right. And it was this that the right wing and reformist forces within the ESF fought all week to prevent at all costs.

Most of the political organisations present fell in line with this. The French LCR, the Italian *Rifondazione Comunista* and the British SWP accepted that there would

be no voting, and that only 'consensus' proposals that had the agreement of the bourgeois leaders of Attac would be put to the Assembly. They agreed that the ESF should not set up an international political party, that it should not adopt a political programme or debate a revolutionary policy.

We did the opposite: we accepted the challenge. As our name suggests, we went to the ESF with the explicit aim of arguing for the creation of a new International. We fought at every level - on the co-ordination, in the plenaries and seminars and directly among the delegates with leaflets and petitions - for a European General Strike against welfare cuts and privatisation, for a democratic structure within the ESF, and for a new world party of social revolution.

On the co-ordination, our representatives fought the attempts of Attac to remove all mention of a joint day of strikes and demonstrations from the proposal to be put to the Assembly. Attac wanted to drop mention of this in favour of a day of debate on 9 May to challenge the European Constitution. Dave Stockton of the League for the Fifth International challenged this, saying that as there was no consensus the two proposals should be put to the assembly for the delegates to decide by holding a vote. At this the Attac members exploded in rage. Pierre Khalfa of

Attac (and the LCR), who was chairing the meeting, exploded with the words - "No Vote! No Vote! No Vote!". The very suggestion that delegates from working class and anti-capitalist organisations should decide on policy for themselves rather than having it decided for them in negotiations behind closed doors was a scandal and an offence not only to the bourgeois academics, union officials and journalists of the Attac leadership, but also to the political organisations, like the LCR, that had decided to compromise with them.

Outside the co-ordination - on the floor of the meetings and among the scores of thousands of workers and youth - our proposals caused no offence and were received warmly. Every call for democracy within the movement won enthusiastic applause. Every speech we made in plenaries or seminars advocating social revolution and the forcible overthrow of capitalism was clapped by around 40% of the delegates. It rapidly became clear that, despite the right wing complexion of the unofficial ESF leadership and despite the decision of most 'far left' groups not to challenge their ideas, there was a very sizeable constituency for revolutionary ideas at the ESF - a large revolutionary wing that was not finding a voice in the leading bodies and on the platforms. Despite our small size, we were able to give voice to that wing of the movement - we were its most organised component. This was acknowledged in the German bourgeois press reports of the ESF. Even the liberal journalist George Monbiot, writing in the *Guardian*, admitted that the 'only coherent programme' was advanced by the League for the Fifth International.

This was also reflected in levels of interest in our proposals and our organisation far greater than we had expected. Hundreds of delegates signed our petitions calling for a general strike and a new International. We distributed 10,000 leaflets setting out our proposals. We sold hundreds of items of literature including our new journal *Fifth International* and our programme *From Protest to Power - Manifesto for World Revolution*. Our workshop on the theme which way forward for the movement - networks or a new International? was filled to overflowing.

We won new supporters for the struggle for a fifth international in Britain, Germany, Slovakia plus sympathisers in France, Spain, Africa. Rank and file members of the LCR, the French communist party, the *Rifondazione Comunista* and the Brazilian *PSTU* all expressed great interest in our proposals. The French daily *L'Humanité* reported a large group of Spanish youth sitting up until 4am debating the opportunity to create a fifth International. The youth group *REVOLUTION* - which supports the fight for a fifth international - rallied groups in Greece, Turkey and Spain to its call for the formation of a youth international and won scores of new members.

The League remains a small organisation but wielded an influence out of all proportion to its size at the ESF by fighting consistently for revolutionary policy and for the next step forward for the global movement. This was in clear contrast to the approach of the SWP, LCR and *Rifondazione*, who instead of challenging the right-wing clique around Attac, presented general phrases about socialism while doing sleazy deals behind the scenes. The League was able to explain easily and prove it by pointing out to delegates what was happening at the co-ordination and why the right were blocking democracy.

The phenomenon of centrism - of political organisations using revolutionary phrases but carrying out a reformist practice - has never been easier to explain. The fact - and the bold message of the need for a fifth international - greatly raised our profile and enabled us to assemble new forces around us.

Next year the ESF is in Britain. The League for the Fifth International aims to advance support for its proposals over the coming year through building social forums in every town and city, promoting rank and file control of the trade unions, campaigning for a European General Strike, agitation for a new youth international and insistence on working class democracy in the movement, to break the hold of reformist cliques and allow the workers and youth to make their own decisions through the formation of a new International.

Revolution at the ESF

By Joy Knight

Over 51,000 activists from around Europe and beyond participated in the second European Social Forum in Paris and *World Revolution* was in the midst of it. With about 80 activists from Slovakia, Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Sweden and the UK, we were a multinational force to be reckoned with. We were armed with our revolutionary manifesto 'The Road to Revolution' and a concrete call to action to form a youth international - its no wonder that the German press called us the most radical wing of the movement.

WORLD REVOLUTION at the ESF

World Revolution went to the European Social Forum with a political message: we need to form a revolutionary youth international in order to strengthen our struggle against exploitation, war and capitalism. In every country we are facing the same attacks: on our education, on our welfare, on our jobs. Our message was clear: We must unite and fight together!

We hosted a workshop called 'Bringing together a global movement of revolutionary youth.' This attracted more than 100 participants from all areas of the world, from Colombia to Sweden. The introduction focused on the inherent radicalism of the youth and also the need for youth to organise independently because of the specific oppression youth face: insecurity of work, oppression at home and at school,

as well as youth as cannon fodder in the war. The need for us to organise together in an international - a revolutionary youth international - has never been greater.

The need for international co-ordination and cross border actions was obvious to those who attended. We decided to support the call from the American movement for mass international anti-war demonstrations on 20 March. We also discussed organising school strikes on the 19th of March and proposed a joint declaration /statement from the participants of the workshop as a whole to continue to strengthen and build the movement. The activists from the UK invited all participants to come to London to the STOP BUSH protests (Nov 19-21). The offer was gladly taken up by some French activists.

We also called on the ESF organisers for a youth space/assembly/forum at the next ESF so we could discuss and debate with other groups and individuals how to build the youth international and how to take the movement against capitalism forward.

World Revolution co-hosted a seminar, War, occupation and resistance with NGO Workers Against the War and the Day-Mer Turkish/Kurdish Community Centre. This was attended by over 150 anti-war activists. The panel had four speakers: one from Iraq, one from Turkey, one from Palestine and one from Revolution UK. All gave accounts of the resistance against occupation and war in the different countries. The discussion focused on what it would take to stop the war - mass action

by workers across the world to halt the military machine. Again the need for a mass revolutionary international was discussed.

We also participated in many other seminars about youth and debated the way forward for the movement. We went to the JCR (a large left French youth organisation) seminar to raise the call for a youth international and to get their support for a youth forum/assembly at the next ESF. Even though the panel of speakers remained silent we did talk to many of their members, and also many other groups and individuals, who were definitely interested in our calls for a youth space and a new youth international. SEGI, a Basque youth group, have invited us to speak at their conference in April on the question of developing international resistance.

THE ESF

As in Florence - but even more obviously - the huge democratic deficit at the top of the movement was open to view. But there was also a much stronger feeling of resentment against the 'talking shop' aspect of the social forum than there had been in Florence. Following the charter set out by the World Social Forum, no decisions can be taken, no action planned in the name of the social forum. That is why they have a separate day - an Assembly of the Social Movements - to set a calendar of events.

Last year, the idea of the social forum was new and exciting - but this year people were demanding concrete proposals. Young people didn't want to hear a plethora



Revolution members marching in Paris

of speakers from the platform, but wanted to know how they - the activists - could hook up with others and make their struggle more effective. Many people that attended the *World Revolution* workshop or seminar supported our attempts to develop real action proposals.

Most of the activists we talked to were also aware of the behind-the-scenes manoeuvring and stitch-ups that are being puppeteered by the international elite - choice of plenary speakers by the 'big hitters', the list of floor speakers at the Assembly of the Social Movements - is decided undemocratically. There is a growing movement within the ESF to democratise the process so that there aren't dreadful stitch-ups like the 'compromise' statement that was dictated to the Assembly of the Social Movements - a watered-down declaration with no call to action.

Looking to the Future

The next ESF is definitely to be held in Britain and most probably in London. This is an excellent opportunity for the British movement to advance by building local social forums across Britain. It is this way that we can make the movement stronger and develop grassroots links between different progressive social campaigns.

We, as *World Revolution*, can play an important role in campaigning for the youth space/assembly where all the youth can come together and decide their future and the future of the movement. And we call on other activists to join us in this struggle - the struggle for a youth international.

Read *Revolution's* call for a new youth international at: www.worldrevolution.org.uk

Elections deepen crisis

Maureen Connolly surveys the wreckage of Blair's plans for reviving the Northern Ireland Assembly

The elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly last month has produced a sharply polarised political stalemate between Irish republicanism and the most reactionary populist wing of loyalism.

Sinn Féin with 24 seats has replaced the Social Democratic and Labour Party (down to 18 seats) as the largest nationalist party, while Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has overtaken David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). Having increased their number of seats by 10 to 30, the anti-Good Friday Agreement DUP is now the largest party in the Assembly, and Paisley's refusal to countenance any dialogue with SF indicates at least a temporary hiatus in the path to devolved government.

These elections were due to be held in May this year, although the assembly had been suspended in October 2002 to satisfy Trimble's demand that the IRA surrender more arms. In this Trimble was being heaved from behind by the anti-agreement UUP leader-in-waiting, Jeffrey Donaldson.

In May, Tony Blair decided not to risk calling the elections for fear it would deliver a strong anti-unionist vote but instead extended British direct rule for another six months.

After intensive talks in October between the British and Irish heads of government, Blair and Ahern, the UUP and SF, a settlement was agreed whereby SF would deliver substantial decommissioning by the IRA to facilitate the holding of elections. General De Chastelain, head of the International Commission for Decommissioning, announced on 21 October that a third and significant act of decommissioning – bigger than the two previous ones – had occurred. Trimble, in an astounding volte-face, stated that he wouldn't accept the decommissioning without details of what had been destroyed.

This was a cynical and self-defeating ploy to pose as the hard man of unionism in



the hope that it would stem the drift of support away from the UUP towards the DUP while still reaffirming the UUP's commitment to the Good Friday Agreement signed in 1998.

Commentators have referred to this election as two elections: a unionist election and a nationalist election. To a certain extent this description fits as the battle in constituen-

cies was to a large degree between SF and the SDLP on the one hand and the UUP and the DUP on the other. However, in an election run by proportional representation the question of transfer votes had major significance. In several of the multi-seat constituencies, the contest for the sixth and final seat was between nationalists and unionists.

Sinn Féin has been gaining steadily in

support at the expense of the SDLP over the last few years and their success in the election followed a very energetic campaign. They had an army of young canvassers and set up advice centres all over the North stocked with leaflets and posters. The huge, presidential Gerry Adams poster was everywhere.

SF's biggest problem will lie in their inability to make headway in the face of DUP intransigence, thus opening them up to further criticism from hardline republican elements. The difficulty for the IRA or SF lies in destroying enough weapons to satisfy Paisley and his followers without stoking dissent in the IRA rank and file on the one hand, and avoiding De Chastelain's resignation from the ICDC on the other.

Meanwhile, dissident republicans wait on the sidelines. The Continuity IRA accused Gerry Adams of "surrendering NI to the British government" having gone close to "success" a few days before with a massive bomb. They called for a boycott of the elections as did the Real IRA and the handful of diehards left in the INLA.

The SDLP worked hard in the election campaign to gain ground lost to SF, but to no avail. They have lost some key players such as John Hume, Seamus Mallon and Brid Rogers. The current leader, Mark Durkan, in trying to portray a vibrant party image, was hampered severely by the fact that the SDLP had no part in the October meetings with Blair and Ahern, calling their relevance as representatives of nationalist feeling into question. In the run-up to the election, they got support from Fianna Fail in the South, a party ever mindful that SF has been steadily gaining in the Southern elections.

With the UUP's reduced haul of 25 seats, David Trimble's position as leader has become decidedly precarious, despite his insistence that he will carry on. Anti-agreement dissidents in his party such as Jeffrey Donaldson, David Burnside and Martin Smyth, have had their hand strength-

ened by the result. Donaldson has already thrown his hat into the ring of a future leadership challenge: "If a vacancy arises, I will consider putting my name forward."

The election platform of the DUP, true to type, was firmly anti-agreement. Their bigoted leader, Ian Paisley, was on the election trail, but increasingly he is being marginalised within the party – he's 77 – by Peter Robinson and Nigel Dodds. Nearly all the TV appearances and interviews were by the latter two. While Paisley rants about never negotiating with "Sinn Féin/IRA", the others know that dealing with SF is inevitable. After the last election, the DUP refused to attend ministerial meetings, but nevertheless held ministerial positions in a government that had within it SF ministers.

Also, it should not be forgotten that the DUP has worked with SF on the Belfast City Council for 20 years. As Alex Maskey, former SF mayor, pointed out, "There isn't a committee both parties isn't [sic] on. They operate the d'Hondt system for rotating chairmanship. We've been to China together and we've been to Tralee." For the moment, however, Robinson has placed himself squarely behind Paisley in refusing to co-operate with SF in the Assembly.

Adams has called on Blair to reconvene the Assembly while the DUP has called for the Good Friday Agreement to be renegotiated. Neither will happen in the short term. Months of wrangling lie ahead but what is certain is that in due course Blair will use the shift to the DUP within unionism to mount further pressure on Adams and Sinn Féin/IRA for further measures to placate the loyalists.

The problem is that the DUP will accept nothing less than the full and unconditional surrender of the IRA prior to any major political concessions on police reform for example. And that will be very difficult for Adams to deliver, as much as he no doubt would like to.

Say no to the European constitution

By John McKee

The European Union is debating a new constitution or, to be more precise, the leaders of EU governments are debating it. The people of the Europe will, if they are lucky, be given a "take it or leave" it referendum on the final document.

Former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing wants the new constitution to be taught in schools, to be accessible to the "intelligent teenager". Young people should certainly know what their rulers are up to. If the d'Estaings of this world have their way teenagers will be able, within a few years, to join a European army and die in some foreign field fighting in the interests of the Euro-bosses.

Why does the EU need a new constitution now? Because it is about to expand from 15 member states to 25, to include states like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The dominant states in Europe, Germany, France, Britain, realise that the old institutions and structures, if left in place, could produce paralysis in an expanded EU.

The current "constitution" developed in a series of treaties, at Maastricht, Brussels and Nice, gives the smaller states considerable powers to delay and obstruct decision making. Since the big European imperialist powers recognise the need to strengthen their position in relation to an increasingly unilateralist US superpower, a constitution that ensures the EU can act as a single force in world politics is a must.

It is no surprise then to find that one of the key changes involves creating a more powerful Presidency. At the moment this is rotated every six months amongst members of the Council of Ministers (this is the body representing state governments and the real holder of power in the EU – as opposed to the largely toothless European Parliament). The constitution proposes a President appointed by the Council for two and a half years, renewable to five years. The President will be assisted by a new powerful post of Foreign Minister, which will roll two existing posts, external affairs commissioner and foreign policy representative into one.

A new voting system is proposed in the Council of Ministers limiting the ability of the smaller states to obstruct policies decided on by the bigger powers in the EU. "Double majority voting" will ensure that a proposal will go through if supported by a majority of the states representing 60 per cent of the EU population.

The aim is to develop a single foreign policy for the EU and to link this to the development of a European military force and a unified military intervention policy. As the constitution puts it: "Member states shall actively and unreservedly support the Union's common foreign and security policy in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall comply with the acts adopted by the Union in this area. They shall refrain from action contrary to the Union's interests or likely to impair its effectiveness...". The long-term aim is to prevent situations arising, as in the run up to the

Iraq war, where the EU was split and Britain, Spain and Poland stuck two fingers up at EU policy by siding with Bush at the UN.

These proposals have opened up again the ongoing battle within the British ruling class between the "atlanticists" and the "Europeans", between those who believe Britain's imperialist interests are best safeguarded by remaining a faithful sub-imperialism of the USA and those who recognise that the growth of the EU as a major world economic and political bloc must involve being able to stand up to the USA both economically and, in the long term, militarily.

Predictably, the proposed constitution provoked howls of outrage from the Tory dominated press in Britain. This in turn has led Blair and Jack Straw to blather about drawing "red lines" around Britain's right to control its own defence and foreign policy, while at the same time quietly doing deals with the French and Germans. The US has backed these anti-European forces up by denouncing any proposed European defence force that rivals NATO. The US imperialists certainly want Europe to massively increase their military expenditure and capabilities to carry the burden of imperialist interventions in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Macedonia etc, but they insist this is done within the US dominated command structure of NATO.

The EU governments have tried to camouflage the real purposes of the new European constitution – increasing the political and military clout of the EU – in a welter of blather about

"European ideals" "democratic discussion" and "historic documents". The so-called convention which drafted it was very different from the conventions of the American and French revolutions which established the basis of democratic government for the bourgeois era. Giscard d'Estaing's "convention" was handpicked by the EU governments and Commission. It has come up with a constitution that is fundamentally undemocratic.

Anywhere in Europe where workers and "intelligent teenagers" are given the right to vote on the document they should throw it out. We should say "No to a bosses Europe, no to any European military force, get out of NATO now!". The European Union must be made accountable and democratic – "Out with the unelected bureaucrats of the Commission, down with the Council of Ministers. Elect a European convention to establish a directly elected European parliament with sovereign powers!"

But no constitution for Europe, however democratic, will bring an end to militarism, wars, attacks on employment and welfare rights, neo-liberal privatisations and anti-immigrant racism. Real power will continue to rest in the boardrooms of the bankers and the multi-nationals – the real beneficiaries of attacks on workers' rights and imperialist adventures. Their power must be broken, their armies and police forces smashed, through workers' revolution – Forward to the United Socialist States of Europe!

French far left electoral bloc shows the need for a new workers party

By Mathew Roux

The week before the European Social Forum met in Paris, the two principal French Trotskyist organisations, Lutte Ouvrière and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, agreed to run joint lists in next year's Regional and European elections. This produced alarmist articles in the world's press as journalists fretted over the idea that revolutionary politics was regarded as a viable option for a quarter of the French electorate.

On one level, the journalistic excitement is difficult to explain. For a start, this is hardly a new development. The last time the regional and European elections took place, in 1998 and 1999, there were also joint LO-LCR lists. The results, while impressive for organisations that are seen

as being revolutionary (a few dozen regional councillors and five Euro MPs), hardly made the French bourgeoisie quake in its boots.

Furthermore, their joint programme was not aimed at mobilising the masses for the destruction of capitalism. Sure, it mentioned the need to transcend capitalism but passed swiftly on to a set of demands, which did not exceed those put forward by every left-reformist. Moreover, there was absolutely no connection between the two.

The need for mass working class direct action, for workers' control of production as the key to defending workers' interests and destroying capitalism were deliberately excluded from a programme that both organisations shaped to fit

what they judged was the traditional consciousness of French workers, who hitherto always voted for the Communist Party or the Socialist Party.

This time around, the vote for a joint LO and LCR list could do far better. Opinion polls have suggested that up to one third of the French electorate might vote for the LO-LCR lists.

If this were to happen, LO-LCR would get around 25 Euro-deputies, and in the regional elections would gain large numbers of seats, even holding the balance of power in many of the extremely powerful regional assemblies.

Coupled with a possible simultaneous growth of Le Pen's Front National, this could paralyse many regions through a four-way second round

of voting and result in stalemate in the assemblies. Moreover such a strengthening of the "extremes" at the expense of the centre would indicate a sharp polarisation of political in France.

Despite the fact that the LCR has changed its main public figure from veteran '68er Alain Krivine to Olivier Besancenot, a dynamic young postal worker, the politics of the LCR are fundamentally the same. LO, on the other hand, rejoices in being the still point in a turning world. It has changed neither its politics nor its figurehead, Arlette Laguiller. Yet the relationship of the French working class to its political party has indeed changed massively over the last few years.

Turn to the class struggle



The present situation in France holds enormous potential for workers and youth. There is a real opportunity to create a new mass working class party, rooted in the workplaces, in working class and immigrant communities, in the schools and colleges.

Given the disintegration of Stalinism and the weakening of social democracy it is possible to build it on a democratic basis. It could be a party of class struggle, which could challenge the French bosses not merely (and not mainly) in the voting-booth but on all the fronts where people suffer exploitation and oppression, and fight back.

So how does the LO-LCR slate help with this? Obviously it helps that the very idea of an alternative, from organisations that call themselves revolutionary, is now on the agenda for millions of workers. Unfortunately the actual programme with which they will approach the working class electors does not live up to this.

Firstly there is LO's debilitating mixture of passive propaganda for socialism and chronic sectarianism which transforms all that it touches into lead. Fighting Le Pen's racism by lively exposure and denunciation, let alone by mobilising on the streets and in the communities, is totally unnecessary for LO. Racism, Chirac, Le Pen... it's all just capitalism you see. Get rid of capitalism and you'll get rid of racism. No problem.

The same know-nothing ignoramus approach is shown vis-à-vis the anti-capitalist movement. Globalisation? It's the same old capitalism! Altermondialistes? Just the petty bourgeoisie! ESF? Waste of

time, send a paper-seller!

In 1995, following their (then) record-breaking score of 5 per cent at the presidential elections, LO called for a new workers' party and organised meetings around the country, collected signatures etc. Then their semi-clandestine apparatus and their cultish leader, Hardy, grew fearful and called the whole thing off, declaring it to have been "merely propaganda", of course.

The LCR, have a much more impressive record of opportunism and have recently grown substantially (unlike LO) they have a better track record in terms of building united front structures (assemblies, co-ordinations) in the working class. However, their orientation is fundamentally towards the remnants of the PCF and their entourage. Their actions in and around the ESF, in which they have consistently backed the now predominantly Stalinist leadership of Attac demonstrate this.

Furthermore, the 80 per cent majority of the LCR's conference in favour of the alliance with LO was above all a vote of convenience: all factions are aware that this is the best way of getting seats, irrespective of their general disdain for LO and its posturing "orthodoxy".

Thus, they did not insist on a positive attitude to the anti-capitalist movement and the issues it raises, a vigorous anti-racist programme, nor raise the general strike slogan against Chirac's assaults on the social gains.

This means that the platform is the lowest common denominator between the two organisations with a heavy tilt towards LO's passive propagandism.

LO, too were prepared to swallow their correct criticisms of the LCR for voting for Chirac against Le Pen in 2002; their paper-thin "orthodox" dismissal of the LCR's worked-out opportunist orientations have been dropped simply for the sake of getting some more seats.

At the same time the LCR has issued a call for building a new "anti-capitalist" party and announced a series of meetings across the country culminating at the end of 2004. This is clearly related to its building of the European Anti-capitalist Left - a bloc with Rifondazione Comunista, the Scottish Socialist Party, various Portuguese and Danish red-green blocs and the SWP-Socialist Alliance.

The EAL is obviously the embryo of the "new International" the Fourth International pledged itself to build at its congress earlier this year. But it is not a new International, not a step forward from the historic gains of the other four. It is a step backwards towards Stalinism and social democracy - a three-and-a-half International - when what is needed is a step forward, a Fifth International.

Of course dressed up with a little colourful anti-capitalist rhetoric the programme of this bloc too is left reformist, bereft of transitional demands, let alone a perspective of revolution. No wonder the LCR removed the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" from its programme. No wonder it pledges itself to more and more classless "democracy" and pluralism. And just as the capitalist class shows its tiger claws ever more clearly.

LO of course will not touch the "alter-

PCF and PS in steep decline

The electoral misfortunes of the two traditional workers' parties have plumbed new depths. In Spring 2002, in the first round of the presidential elections: the PCF was easily beaten by the joint score of LO and the LCR's separate candidates, while the PS saw its candidate, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, pushed into third place and right out of public life. Both parties seem headed for oblivion.

The PCF can no longer rely on its two historic allies - the Soviet and the CGT trade union bureaucracies. The former is long dead and the latter has severed the historic link to the party. The PCF has in its own terms "mutated" towards social democracy, only succeeding thereby in becoming a fifth wheel on the carriage of the PS.

The PCF now controls no more than a handful of town halls in working-class areas and even in its once mighty bastion, the so-called "red belt" around Paris, it cannot present a united face. It is now confronted by a decisive and potentially fatal choice: either join forces with the PS and save its seats but lose its social base to the left; or go it alone, lose its seats and perhaps retain a small part of its support.

The PS, which enjoys far greater electoral support and has more substantial control of local and regional government, continues drifting rudderless, indeed it is effectively leaderless, following the Jospin's humiliating withdrawal from politics in the wake of his failure in 2002.

The PS is generally - and correctly - seen as a technocratic party which puts the interests of the bosses before those of the working class. Even its flagship

mondialistes" with a barge pole and so the electoral pact has no future - no new workers' party could conceivably come out of it.

Only the working class vanguard itself, the young militants of the struggles of the last few years, can shake up the sclerotic political methods and ingrained opportunism of both these centrist organisations. Centrist because, whilst their propaganda still talks of revolution, the policies they offer workers are reformist. Above all the magnificent class struggles of 2003 must be relaunched. A vigorous counterattack against Chirac and Raffarin may be the last thing that the LCR and LO leaders are looking

"reforms", such as the 35 hour week, were implemented in order to aid French capitalism (in this case by subsidising the bosses and by increasing the flexibility of the working week) at the expense of workers' conditions of work.

As the 2002 presidential election showed, the PS can no longer rely on the support of an important part of the population. Growing numbers of people are attracted to speakers that put workers' needs first, and they are prepared to show it, at least electorally. They may not agree with, or even know much about, the politics of LO and the LCR, but they know they hate the PS, the mutated PCF, the right and the bosses.

Above all, in the earlier part of this year these same workers showed their rejection of the traditional paths of reformism on the streets, through the massive wave of strike action against the government's "reform" of the pension system and its attacks on teachers.

That explains why press rooms round the world started to panic when news spread of how many people were considering voting LO-LCR. Of course neither the politicians nor the commentators think that revolution is just around the corner. Indeed the "hot" autumn, which many, like José Bové, predicted would follow the upheavals earlier in the year, has not materialised.

But there is a very real possibility that a key safety valve for the bosses - the mass pro-capitalist workers' parties safely channelling working class dissent into the electoral arena - may have begun to fail.

for as they focus on elections.

A decisive intervention by workers taking action will also highlight the complete inadequacy of the "emergency" programme put forward by LO and the LCR. It will show instead the need for a revolutionary programme, based on workers' action and workers' control, on co-ordinations and mass assemblies. Only such a programme linked to the methods of struggle appropriate to imposing it (such as the general strike, the factory occupations, the workers' defence guard) could enable a new workers' party to chart the road from protest to power.

Iraqi workers must lead the resistance

As the US prepares the "Iraqification" of its occupation, Iraqi workers must lead the national struggle, argues *Keith Harvey*

Nothing better symbolises the failure of US imperialism to stabilise its rule in Iraq than George Bush's 153 minute visit to the country in the final days of last month. So unsure of the security arrangements, Bush left the White House in disguise to be secreted onto a plane and flown half way around the world to serve Thanksgiving dinner to US troops.

He refused to meet any Iraqis while there or visit anywhere outside the US military base; he was on his way back before the world's media was told he had gone.

Two weeks earlier it had been the turn of Paul Bremer, the US diplomat in charge of the occupation, to be summoned back to Washington for a crisis cabinet meeting. The meeting was spurred by a sharp intensification of the guerrilla campaign from late October, coinciding with the advent of the holy month of Ramadan.

The danger posed by the new offensive was underlined on 12 November, when 27 people (including 18 Italians) were killed by suicide bombers crashing two vehicles into a building housing the Carabinieri in the southern Iraqi Shi'ite city of An Nasiriyah.

There had been almost no assaults on US or other occupation forces in the southern part of Iraq since the start of the guerrilla war. The ability to strike blows outside the Sunni Triangle and the potential for destabilising the Shi'ite majority areas underscored the need for a strategic rethink by the US administration.

The failure of the Bush team to either forestall the guerrilla war or defeat the insurgents unravelling the US game plan. In Iraq, Bush hoped to demonstrate decisive military power to impose a sense of hopelessness on radical Islamists around the world. But the last six months have proven the opposite: an extended guerrilla campaign can over time force unacceptable political damage on the USA.

Up to mid-November, the Bush policy was to deny the significance of the guerrilla war and outline a political settlement that kept the US politically and militarily in the driving seat for several years.

In the immediate aftermath of the war the United States set up the Iraqi Governing Council as a pliant tool for establishing an indigenous government in due course. Bremer set out a seven-stage plan. He was to run Iraq until it first had a new constitution and then an elected government, not expected until 2005 at the earliest. Meanwhile, the US army would be "invited" to stay on and help the new government.

At the war cabinet on 11 November that plan was torn up. First, the IGC has proven a complete failure. Many IGC members are exiles, who returned home only after Saddam Hussein had been ousted, and have little popular support.

The 25-member IGC is made up of Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'ites with differing agendas; it has proven difficult to make decisions and impossible to implement policy. More importantly, only a fraction of the council actually represents substantial constituencies in Iraq. The Pentagon's stooge, Ahmed Chalabi, is widely hated.

So the new plan will effectively junk the IGC and reverse key planks of the former strategy. Bremer has been told to transfer



sovereignty to a new, broader governing provisional government by the end of next June, which itself will be effectively chosen by local tribal and religious leaders. A constitution and elections for a government can wait.

Washington will seek to base the future government on key Shi'ite leaders and a rapprochement with the Iranian government (who back the Iraqi Shi'ites). Bush hopes this will solicit the essential social support for the US domination of the country that is presently lacking. In a statement, circulated in An Najaf at the beginning of November, Iraqi Shi'ite leader Muqtada al-Sadr shifted his stance on the US occupation, calling Americans a "peace-loving people" and saying US forces are "guests" in Iraq.

While fighting the guerrilla war against a coalition of Sunni Ba'athists loyal to the ousted regime, jihadists and militants associated with al Qa'ida, the United States needs a partner it can rely upon to help maintain stability, gather and share intelligence, and

stabilise and legitimise the US occupation.

The new alignment with Iran also constitutes a reversal of White House policy. In May and June the policy for dealing with Iran was to show what an overwhelming display of US power in Iraq could achieve; Iran's government was told to keep its nose out of Iraq. Now Washington needs Iran's help. On 17 November Iranian President Mohammad Khatami announced that Iran recognised the Iraqi Governing Council in Baghdad and backed Bremer's new plans for a hand over of power to a broader selected assembly – something that will increase Iran's leverage in Iraq.

In return the White House hopes to keep the Shi'ite majority away from supporting the still largely Sunni guerrilla movement.

Crucially, Bremer's new plans entail taking US troops out of the firing line as quickly as possible. The current 131,000 US troops deployed in Iraq would be cut in half and mainly withdrawn to barracks. Meanwhile, the brunt of the guerrilla war will be borne by the

new Iraqi army and police force now in training. Bremer has announced that Iraq's total security forces should number 200,000 in a year's time; plans are also underway to revive large elements of Hussein's old intelligence services – a complete abandonment of the earlier policy of total "de-Ba'athification" of the Iraqi state.

Bush hopes this will allow the final few months of his re-election campaign to be blessed with "success" in Iraq; no more body bags, Iraqis in control of their own lives, and \$18.6bn of US reconstruction money beginning to have some visible effect on the lives of ordinary Iraqis.

Having failed to get European Union, Russia and the United Nations in October to sign up to sending more troops and money to help the US pacify Iraq, George Bush realised that an urgent switch of track was needed to halt the slide and stem the resistance.

But the new plans are no more progressive than the first Bremer plan. The new plan

envisages that the IGC and local councils appoint representatives, who would in turn choose members of a national assembly, which would then select a provisional government, which would exercise as much sovereignty as Bremer allows them.

As the Economist notes: "Some Iraqis however suspect the Americans will simply hand-pick a national assembly made up of carefully screened pro-American notables and will then go on pulling the strings. That would be no more a model of democracy than in Iraq's neighbours, such as Iran and Jordan."

"Some Iraqis" are right!

The only force that can bring about a progressive, democratic Iraq is the Iraqi working class in an alliance with the poor peasants. And its first and overwhelming task is to force the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US, British and other foreign imperialist troops, diplomats and business executives. As long as they are in place there can be no genuine self-determination for the Iraqi people, no real freedom to choose their own representatives.

Bremer's office decides what newspapers can be published, which clerics are allowed to preach, which mosques are deemed to be "anti-American". The US army locks up those it suspects of anti-American activity. In short it chooses who shall represent the Iraqi people – figures such as Chalabi. Most of the Sunni and Shi'ite leaders have now reconciled themselves to the extended presence of the US; all merely hope that Bremer's new proposals will give their cliques, tribes and local religious sects more power.

That is why it is urgent that the struggle to oust the occupying armies and their administration must become a mass struggle. Trade unions, women's organisations, unemployed unions – even, in the oil city of Kirkuk, a workers' council – have already emerged to fight for economic and social rights. Now, they need to build mass demonstrations and organise a popular militia to fight against the US and British troops, who are the principle obstacles to gaining these rights.

As the first, toothless municipal elections have revealed, Iraqis are hungry for democracy. Again, the mass organisations of the working class and the poor must lead the struggle for the convening of a revolutionary constituent assembly in Iraq – to be made up of elected representatives from every town and village, including the north in Iraqi Kurdistan. No ban, no proscriptions on who can stand; there must be no approval by clerics or tribal elders before people can stand. No barriers to women and youth must be paced in the way; all those of working age must be allowed a vote.

Only such an assembly, convened under the auspices of the workers' organisations and guarded by a workers' militia, can democratically deliberate on the shape of Iraq's future constitution – whether it should follow the dictates of Sharia law, as some clerics insist, or be "broadly compatible with Islam", as others suggest, or, as socialists and revolutionaries will argue, embed a commitment to full gender and national equality, separation of mosque and state, and enshrine the overthrow of the rule of private property and safeguard the national resources under the control of a workers' and poor peasants' government.

Paying too high a price?

By the end of last month US military forces had suffered 185 killed since the war was declared "over" in May by George Bush.

The Ramadan offensive since late October saw the number of attacks increase, the targets broadened and a greater degree of sophistication as shown with the downing of two US helicopters last month.

Lieutenant-General Ricardo Sanchez, the USA's top soldier in Iraq, admitted that attacks on his troops had risen from six per day five months ago to between 30 and 35 a day now.

A CIA document circulating in the Bush administration has confirmed that the Iraqi guerrilla forces are "broad, strong and getting stronger", with numbers estimated at 50,000.

Bush never expected it to be this way. A swift dose of "shock and awe" would be followed by pacification and reconstruction. But the Iraqis clearly didn't read the script.

The success of the guerrilla operations in part flow from their long-term planning, and their use of personnel from the old regime. But it also depends on a growing pool of disaffected Iraqis who have borne the brunt of the ruthless "search and destroy" missions of the US troops.

The US military has signally failed to improve their intelligence on the guerrilla movement to be able to forestall attacks and arrest members of the movement. Instead they responded to the Ramadan offensive with a version of their "shock and awe" tactics. Coinciding with the

meeting of the war cabinet on 11 November, the US army in Iraq launched Operation Iron Hammer. Disused buildings have been flattened by gunships and heavy artillery, destroyed it is claimed because they were used to help prepare guerrilla actions.

Of dubious military value, the attacks are designed to deter Iraqis from supporting the guerrillas and more importantly to get US casualties off CNN and Fox News and have these reports replaced by scenes of US forces "acting tough".

The wave of guerrilla actions cannot defeat the US militarily, but they can make the political price to be paid by Bush for the continued occupation too high. Hence the accelerated "Iraqification" of Bush's military and political strategy.

Revolution brings down Georgian government

By Helen Watson

It was one of those great moments of TV history, worth having BBC 24 for. Eduard Shevardnadze stands at the podium opening the Georgian parliament when suddenly the doors are torn off the building and masses of demonstrators pour into the chamber. At first Shevardnadze looks stunned, then scuttles out the back door surrounded by security guards. Demonstrators storm the podium, banging the gavel to keep the parliamentarians in order. This is what a revolution looks like!

The parliamentary building had been besieged for four weeks by demonstrators demanding Shevardnadze's resignation. By the end there were 50,000 on the streets, with police and armed forces refusing to restrain them. Shevardnadze, who resigned shortly after the storming of parliament, said "I looked at the huge crowd - I saw in their faces it would be impossible to calm them, that they were not afraid of anything, and I knew there would be bloodshed".

The protests were sparked by the fraudulent governmental elections on 2 November. Shevardnadze's "Bloc for a new Georgia" had won the largest number of seats. Opposition parties, international observers and ordinary people all recognised that this was due to "spectacular voting irregularities" as the European monitors reported. The President himself was not up for election, but control of parliament was key to his continued power.

Widespread poverty and corruption underlay the protests. Georgia, once the wealthy "fruit basket" of the Soviet Union, has lurched towards economic disaster since winning independence. From 1990 to 1994 production plummeted by 70 per cent, and even now is only 40 per cent of 1989 levels. Half the population lives below the poverty line, one in five are unemployed, and recently the government has failed to pay out the meagre monthly pension of \$6. The country is deeply divided along national lines, the Abkhazia region effectively



Riot Police confront anti-government demonstrators in the Georgian capital Tbilisi

independent following bloody civil war in the early 1990s, and South Ossetia and Ajara threatening secession. Poverty, national tension and corruption have led to a haemorrhage of 300,000 people to Russia.

Set to take over the presidency in planned new elections is Harvard-educated Mikhail Saakashvili, leader of the opposition National Movement Party (NMP), who worked in New York before returning to Georgia as Shavardnadze's justice minister in October 2000. He later resigned in protest at government and bureaucratic corruption. Eighteen months ago he set up the NMP with former allies of the President, calling for an end to poverty and corruption.

The party quickly recruited 20,000 members, and earlier this year set up a youth organisation, Kmara (Enough). Party leaders visited Belgrade to learn how the opposition had ousted Milosevic, and members of Kmara and the NMP were trained by Serbians in the techniques of political

activism and street protest. "As Lenin said, to have a successful revolution, you need organisation, organisation, organisation," said Levan Ramishvili, director of the Liberty Institute, who helped train young Kmara supporters after consulting with the Serbs.

The US government denies direct involvement, but did fund programmes "to support the building of independent democratic institutions" in Georgia. Despite their other pressing problems, the US is keen to interfere in the politics of this distant country. Georgia, lying between Russia and Turkey, is of major importance to both the US and Russia. The oil reserves in the Caspian Sea are a crucial resource, and the US is desperate to keep access to them. Shevardnadze negotiated a massive investment deal for the US to build a pipeline from Baku, through Georgia to Ceyhan in Turkey. Instability in Georgia could threaten this link.

Georgia is also of military and political

importance. A military base here would be ideal to influence events in Turkey, Russia and Iran. US Special Forces are already in Georgia training counter-terrorist forces. Russia claims that Georgia harbours Chechen guerrillas and is keen to retain Georgian permission to go in and crush them.

Until recently Shevardnadze, former right-hand man to Gorbachev, was the darling of Washington, seen by many as key to the end of the Cold War and as a major reformer once in power in Georgia. Georgia came second only to Israel as a per capita recipient of US aid. But in recent years Shevardnadze's old Stalinist ways have become an obstacle to further democracy.

He retains close links with Moscow and did not stand in the way of Russian attempts to increase control over Georgia's energy industry. He failed to tackle corruption or to stem the break-up of the country along national lines. The US clearly decided that

he was not the man to run a stable Georgia and decided to back the situation.

Tens of thousands of workers and students took part in the protests that saw Shevardnadze, united by their disgust at the rigged elections and the corruption of the regime. Having forced the resignation of the president, the protesters have gone home, encouraged by their new leader. Interim president, Nino Burdzhanaia has said she was proud at the discipline of the protest which was both organised and then disbanded. There was no violence, looting or damage, and shops and businesses have now reopened after almost a month.

But what has really been won? What new government made up of pro-American neo-liberals solve the problems of poverty and unemployment? If the Georgian workers had examined and learnt from their Serbian brothers' and sisters' ousting of Milosevic they would have seen that a revolution on the streets was squandered by passing power to the bourgeois party. While the interim government in Georgia has promised elections in January, the opposition parties have agreed that they will support Saakashvili. One rigged election is about to be replaced by another.

To effect real change in Georgia, workers, small farmers and students who took to the streets need to bust up this agreement between the bourgeois parties. They should use their organisation that mobilised to oust Shevardnadze to form a new workers' party, one that fights for the interest of all the oppressed, the poor and the downtrodden. The presidency should be abolished and all power vested in a constituent assembly. The regions should have as much autonomy as they choose. The right to split from Georgia if they decide to do so. The great wealth of the region's oil, its agriculture can only be tapped for the good of the majority if a workers' farmers' government is established, not only in Georgia but in a socialist federation of the Caspian region.

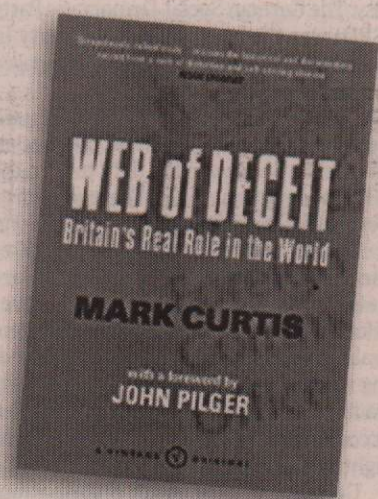
Britain's real role in the world

Rachel Hosford reviews *Web of Deceit* by Mark Curtis, published by Vintage Books 2003

Mark Curtis' recent book, *Web of Deceit*, will make uncomfortable reading for anyone who let themselves believe the official story about Britain's "humanitarian" and "anti-tyranny" interventions in Afghanistan or Iraq. Curtis makes it impossible to swallow media and state propaganda that claimed that Britain's role in the War on Terror was either a brave attempt to make the world a safer place or even a much needed voice of reason to modify Bush's rampant quest for revenge.

While the British media encourages the view that the Blair government's worst war crimes were to tell isolated lies about Dr David Kelly, or to follow the US lead a little too uncritically, Curtis exposes Blair's role in the war on terror as the latest episode in a long history of imperialism, aggression, manipulation and exploitation of states that are further down the economic pecking order.

Using recently declassified government documents, Curtis reveals, as the book's subtitle promises, Britain's real role in the world, giving examples from successive governments since the second world war. But he goes further than merely giving a descriptive, historical account, attempting also to highlight media and academic "com-



plicity" in accepting and circulating the official version of events, and looking at the reasons why even previously available historical facts seem not to have found their way into the public sphere or to have influenced the generally held view of Britain's international influence and motives. Curtis sets out to show that "violating international law is as British as afternoon tea".

Section one of the book gives a useful outline of Britain's role in the War on Terror, not as a stabilising force balancing

Bush's overwhelming lust for justice at any price, but as enthusiastic "junior partner... colluding to shape the global economy" to its interests and those of its master the USA.

Section three goes on to place this international role in a historical context - not as the result of current New Labour policy decisions, but as a consequence of the economic imperatives facing Britain as an imperial power. Examples include:

- MI6's role in organising the 1953 coup to overthrow the popular government in Iran and install the Shah.
- The seldom mentioned human rights atrocities committed in Kenya in the 1950s by British forces (where 150,000 Africans died as a result of British policy).
- Britain's role in setting the pattern for future US interventions in Latin America through their heavy-handed political manoeuvres in British Guiana, where British troops and warships were sent to overthrow a popular, leftist government whose interests conflicted with those of the British sugar multinational, Bookers; here elections were banned on the grounds that "the same party would have been elected again".

Curtis also points out the British government's complicity in the slaughter of a million people in Indonesia in 1965, and in the Rwandan genocide. The list goes on

and on, and, with economic and military interventions bringing greater impoverishment, devastation and inequality all over the world, Curtis will have to update the book regularly.

These are unusually detailed and useful accounts of Britain's "real" role in these episodes, and this makes it an invaluable read for anyone who wants to understand the ways in which Britain has shaped the world - and get some clues about why. Curtis rightly believes that the task confronting himself and his readers is not just to understand this role, but to change it. So what are his suggestions for doing so?

Britain should end its special relationship with the US and instead pursue a policy of "strategic non-cooperation". Instead of supporting elites around the world Britain should support "more liberal and democratic groups who offer development prospects for their people". Britain should convert its military industry to "primary civilian use" and stop training the "militaries of human rights abusers". Curtis sees democratic control as the key to bringing about these changes in local institutions and workplaces. We must set about "transforming national governments and international institutions into genuine democracies".

Curtis concedes that such changes will require "massive public pressure" and points

to the important development of the capitalist movement in building international opposition to militarism and neo-imperialism. He understands nothing will be achieved without dismantling the control of big business and the secrecy that surrounds military interventions and government decision making.

But he does not connect any of this to the very nature of the capitalist system under imperialism. Nor does he draw realistic conclusions as to how such a state can be broken and superseded. The matter is that the bankers and multinationals will use every force at their disposal to hold onto their power and their profits. All the methods used around the world by British imperialism that Curtis describes in his book - military force, corruption, police repression, repressive legislation, torture - will be used against a movement that really threatens this power. The multi-millioned working class and the oppressed is the only force which can be organised into a mighty determining movement, smash this state and its system for good.

Despite his excellent exposure of British imperialism's crimes Curtis, the radical liberal, has no real grasp of how to overthrow it. Read the book for its critique not for utopian conclusions.

The first youth

In the global movement against the war in Iraq, young people have taken to the streets in their hundreds of thousands. Yet, on the official organisational committees of the anti-war and anti-capitalist movement they are a tiny minority. In response, many young people are starting to discuss the need to build a new youth international. *Jeremy Dewar* draws the lessons we can learn from the first youth international

In Britain, when only a handful of workplaces took strike action on the day the war started, tens of thousands of young people walked out of schools and colleges, blockaded roads and brought many city centres to a standstill. In many cases they had battles with the police who tried to deny them their right to demonstrate.

In every revolution, from the French revolution in the late 18th century through the revolutionary struggles against apartheid in the 1980s to the recent revolts that have brought down governments in Argentina and Bolivia, it has been young people who have been at the forefront of these struggles.

This is why laws have been created to bar young people from political activity and deny them any control over their lives. In Britain today, under-18s are denied the right to vote and teachers are not allowed to teach revolutionary politics to school students. Young people who fight back against oppression and exploitation are told to "grow up" or patronised and told, "it's only a phase".

Marxists, in contrast, have always stressed the need to organise young people, defend them from the specific oppression they face, and guarantee them maximum control over their own lives and struggles. Young people rebel against injustice precisely because their outlook has not been tainted by years or decades of disappointment and defeat. They do not accept that bureaucratism, routinism and piecemeal reform is the best that can be achieved. They are not weighed down by family responsibilities that discourage them from giving everything in the fight for justice.

Revolutionary parties have always been overwhelmingly young. In 1907, 60 per cent of the Bolsheviks were under 25 and a fifth of them teenagers, while only one third of the Mensheviks were under 25 years old and 5 per cent of them teenagers. Defending his party against the charge that the Bolsheviks had no experience in its ranks, Lenin quoted Frederick Engels: "Is it not natural that youth should predominate in our party, the revolutionary party? We are the party of the future and the future belongs to the youth. We are the party of innovators, and it is always the youth that most eagerly follows the innovators. We are a party that is waging a self-sacrificing struggle against the old rottenness, and youth is always the first to undertake a self-sacrificing struggle."

The first socialist youth organisation

The first socialist youth organisation, Young Guard, was founded in Ghent, Belgium in 1886. While Young Guard was formally independent of the Socialist Party, members of the latter took the lead in setting it up and giving it material and moral support. Over the next 20 years, socialist youth organisations blossomed all over Europe: in Holland, Austria, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Germany and elsewhere.

As capitalism spread into every sphere of life, young people were drawn, in ever greater numbers, into production. Through

the apprentice system, they became a source of cheap labour, undercutting the wages of "adult" workers.

The capitalist states developed secondary and university education, teaching working class and middle class students to read, write, do basic maths, and consequently formulate and express ideas. This aided the emergence of a vanguard of critically thinking youth.

The nation state rapidly transformed itself with a huge military and repressive apparatus to fight its interests in the struggle for raw materials, market share and territory against rival capitalist nation states. The standing armies also played a powerful disciplining role on the working class. Young people suffered particularly badly when conscripted into military service.

The economic struggle to protect young workers, the education of youth in socialist ideas so they could further the fight for political rights and the battle against militarism formed the basic diet of the early socialist youth organisations. And in these activities, the youth showed characteristic courage, imagination and energy.

The Belgian Young Guard developed a number of weekly, monthly and quarterly papers and magazines aimed at different groups.

Their papers, *The Conscript* and *Baracks* were both aimed at young army recruits and sold about 60,000 copies each, in both French and Flemish. *Vanguard* was directed at a student audience, while *Socialist Youth* and *Youth is the Future* were more general journals and enjoyed circulations of around 5,000.

Anti-militarist propaganda was systematically mailed to every recruit and handed out in streets, bars and cafés – wherever soldiers frequented. Postcards with anti-army discipline jokes were sent off, along with songbooks and a pamphlet called *The Soldier's Catechism*, which on its own sold 100,000 copies in France and Belgium.

But they did not just want young people to read about socialism: they wanted to fight for it. Although they campaigned against conscription, the Belgian Young Guards did not refuse to join the army. The organisation maintained contact with its members once they were called up and helped them organise soldiers' unions.

At the height of this work, 15 separate but federated unions existed in the army, sometimes having up to two-thirds of the soldiers in a unit in their ranks. These unions campaigned against the brutal system of army discipline and called on soldiers to refuse to fire on strikers or protesters when they were ordered to. As they were marched off into the army, demonstrations and rallies were held under the slogan, "You will not shoot!"

The Czech socialist youth staged mock funeral processions – with the support of the soldiers' mothers – headed by symbolic red coffins to remind the young recruits of their class background before they were posted to the barracks. The Swedish young socialists also waged a successful joint campaign with the Norwegians against the threatened war to annex Norway by call-



Anti-war and anti-militarist agitation helped build the first youth international

ing on soldiers "to ignore mobilisation orders, if such are issued, and should they have to use arms, to desist from turning them on the Norwegian people".

The success of this work can be measured by the following. First, the authorities were very harsh in handing out sentences to anti-militarist agitators; some received sentences of up to three years' jail. Soldiers found guilty of anti-militarism were so badly punished that the duty of administering the torture was itself used as a deterrent for officers who stepped out of line. On the other hand, officers trying to prevent young socialists from handing out leaflets in the streets were also sometimes set upon by older workers.

Secondly, the socialist youth organisations did have a huge effect on army morale and discipline. In his famous pamphlet, *Militarism and Anti-militarism*, (which earned him 18 months in prison in 1907-8) the German socialist Karl Liebknecht wrote:

"On 3 May 1905, 61 men of the 10th Company of the 32nd Infantry Regiment simply left the barracks for a place nearby because of bad food and ill-treatment. In September 1906, the soldiers arranged a demonstration in connection with a suicide of a reservist in the Compiègne garrison, sang the 'Internationale' and insulted the officers. NCOs leaving the infantry school at Saint-Maixent expressed anti-militarist ideas [to the French War Minister!] and explained that they were remaining in the army in order to win over adherents to their ideas. Above all we must draw attention to a number of strikes – for example at Dunkirk, Le Creusot, Longwy and Montceau-les-Mines – when the soldiers called in to intervene declared their solidarity with the strikers."

Finally and most importantly, the anti-militarist campaigns won the socialist youth enormous support from the working class as a whole, and led to a huge influx of youth into their ranks.

The first youth international

The youth did not just echo the political line of the Social-Democratic parties; they joined in the debates. The Russian Revolution of 1905 had a lightening effect on the youth, drawing their organisations to the left. Crucially, they also fought for their right to independence and to form their own socialist youth international. Twenty delegates from the socialist youth organisations of 13 countries founded the International Union of Socialist Youth Organisations (IUSYO) in Stuttgart, Germany in March 1907.

The fight for independence was not so easy. The German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) was the most influential party in the Second International. But it was engaged in a battle between left and right.

A powerful right-wing, led by Eduard Bernstein, took revolution off the "socialist" agenda and began the fight to turn the SPD into a reformist party. These reformists were particularly strong in the trade unions.

The left, led by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin, fought the right-wing – over reformism, work among women, the general strike, the fight against the impending world war. The "centre", around party leader Karl Kautsky, often sided with the left at conferences but invariably acted with the right in practice.

German socialist youth organisations faced even more draconian anti-socialist laws than the SPD itself. In 1904 Liebknecht first called for a German youth organisation. By 1906 two socialist youth groups were formed: the Association of Male and Female Workers of Germany (Prussia) and the Union of Free Youth Organisations of Germany or ZJD (Bavaria). Under Prussian law, under-18s were not allowed to join political organisations at all, while Bavaria strictly limited them to "non-political" activities.

Nevertheless, both organisations carried

out energetic and fruitful activity in the workplace that brought in many working class members, who were then educated in Marxist politics. Eventually, these activities brought the youth organisations into conflict with the bureaucratic trade union leaders and the state.

At the founding conference of the IUSYO, Ludwig Frank from the ZJD and Karl Liebknecht himself were elected onto the International Youth Bureau. A year later in 1908 the Prussian laws were extended across Germany, thus outlawing the ZJD. What would the SPD do?

Robert Schmidt, a right-wing trade union leader, was not going to wait to find out. Eight weeks after the passing of the law, he spoke at a union congress against the need for a separate youth organisation. Schmidt argued that youth should spend their time "eating good sausages" not reading "bad magazines"! If nothing else, the youth learned that the right wing will cooperate with the capitalist state to stitch you up.

While he was in prison Liebknecht penned a defence for the youth, Working Youth. But it was to no avail. The SPD conference closed down the ZJD and replaced it with "local youth organisations of an apolitical nature that are run with the agreement of adults". Membership naturally stagnated, then fell. Two years later, the SPD withdrew support for the IUSYO, having manoeuvred Kautsky's supporter Robert Dannenberg into the youth leadership.

Alongside the Western European socialist youth organisations, young people were entering the fray in Tsarist Russia – but in very different circumstances. Effective socialist and trade union activity was illegal. The youth, as ever, were more repressed than most. However, the Bolsheviks did not sideline youth work. Far from it. The party directly participated in the IUSYO and organised young workers and students in struggle – recruiting the best and swiftly placing them in positions of responsibility. In 1917, the majority of the St Petersburg leadership of the party were under 30 but, as one commentator pointed out, collectively they "had been arrested a total of 44 times and exiled 11 times – proof that they were experienced revolutionary leaders."

Nevertheless, no separate youth organisation was set up. As a student in 1907, Nicolai Bukharin did attempt to build one, but police repression ended the experiment quickly. Throughout this period though, according to historian Pierre Broué, Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya "hoped to see an organisation of young revolutionaries directed by youths themselves, that could risk committing its own errors, which she saw as preferable to seeing it strangled under the tutelage of well-intentioned 'adults'."

At first sight, Lenin's approach to special work among youth appears contradictory. On the one hand, he says to a new group of school students: "Concentrate your efforts on self-education as the main purpose of your organisation, in order to develop into convinced, steadfast and consistent Social-Democrats. Draw the strictest pos-

international



The socialist youth group Revolution issued a call to build a new youth international at this year's ESF meeting in Paris

sible line of demarcation between this extremely important and essential preparatory work and direct political activity."

Lenin also argued that university students – who were often the first section of society to launch militant political protest against Tsarism – should not ignore the differences on the left. In advice which could still act as a guide to students today he wrote: "[Students] are the most responsive section of the intelligentsia, and the intelligentsia is so called just because they most consciously, most resolutely and most accurately reflect and express the development of class interests and political groupings in society as a whole. Students cannot be an exception to society as a whole – however unselfish, pure, idealistic, they may be – and the task of the socialist is not to gloss over this difference but, on the contrary, to explain it as widely as possible and to embody it in a political organisation."

On the other hand, Lenin was also aware of the special role that youth would play in a revolution: a vanguard role. During the 1905 revolution, he urged the Bolsheviks to discard "propaganda circle" methods of party work and go directly to the newly active youth:

"All we have to do is to recruit young people more widely and boldly...without fearing them. This is a time of war. The youth – the students and still more so the young workers – will decide the issue of the whole struggle... Do not fear their lack of training, do not tremble at their inexperience and lack of development... events themselves will teach them in our spirit."

In particular, Lenin ordered the Bolsheviks not to limit themselves to organising young party members. The natural instinct of youth to take the boldest line of advance in revolutionary upheavals meant that they had to be drawn into the revolutionary movement as quickly as possible:

"Their mood of protest and their sympathy for the cause of international revolutionary social-democracy in themselves suffice, provided the social-democrats work effectively among them."

Whereas the SPD leaders feared that the youth would bring the workers' movement into a violent confrontation with the state machinery, Lenin saw them as essential for this reason. Even an experienced

revolutionary party like the Bolshevik Party could hesitate when the moment for insurrectionary activity approached. The 1905 revolution was sparked by a massacre in January that year. Lenin wrote despairingly to party organisers in October: "It horrifies me – I give you my word – it horrifies me to find that there has been talk about bombs for over six months, and yet not one has been made! And it is the most learned people who are doing the talking... Go to the youth, gentlemen!... Let them arm themselves at once as best they can, be it with a revolver, a knife, a rag soaked in kerosene for starting fires, etc."

The Bolsheviks' specific contribution to socialist youth work can be summed up in these three strictures.

- First, concentrate on Marxist education and involve the youth in all the main political debates of the day, including the disputes between the various tendencies on the left.
- Second, do not restrict youth work to the minority who will all at once accept the party's programme, but seek out a path to the masses.
- Finally, allow events to teach the youth by encouraging them to take the boldest actions against the class enemy – actions which older revolutionaries might shrink from.

The outbreak of war in 1914, the collapse of the Second International and the 1917 Russian Revolution were to fuse these methods with the tradition of mass youth organisations in the west and lay the basis for a new kind of revolutionary youth movement.

The socialist youth organisations were the first to reorganise after the historic betrayal of August 1914, when nearly all the socialist parties of the belligerent countries voted to support "their own" side in the first world war.

In April 1915 the IUSYO held an international conference in Bern, Switzerland. Fourteen delegates from nine countries, representing 34,000 members, attended.

The main debate at Bern was over tactics against the imperialist slaughter. Led by the delegates from Switzerland and Scandinavia, where the adult parties had taken a pacifist stance, the conference voted to campaign for "recognition of the demand for disarmament in the programme of the workers' movement of their countries". Only the Pol-

ish and Russian delegates voted against this, preferring the revolutionary defeatist position: turn the imperialist war into a civil war. As a compromise the final resolution aimed to "compel the ruling classes to conclude peace through the resumption of the class struggle by the working class".

The IUSYO also performed a valuable role in resurrecting the socialist movement. Eleven issues of its journal, *Youth International*, were produced before the end of the war, providing the main forum for all the left – including Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky – to debate the main issues of the day. By the end of the war, the IUSYO had been won over to the revolutionary position on war, away from pacifism towards "revolutionary defeatism" and support for colonial uprisings.

Of equal importance, during this period the youth sections effectively became independent political organisations. The Russian Revolution of October 1917 spurred the youth across Europe to split from the Social-Democracy. In Austria, the Socialist Young Workers split and renamed themselves the Communist Young Proletarians. The French Committee for Autonomy, the left wing of the socialist youth, split and later formed the kernel of the Communist Party. The Italian Socialists refused to recognise their own Socialist Youth Federation (FGSI) after left winger Amadeo Bordiga had won it to a defeatist position. And in mid-1918 the German ZJD split, with the left wing becoming the Free Socialist Youth (FSJ). After the war, demobbed soldiers joined the FSJ in droves, many of them going on to found the German Communist Party (KPD) and play a leading role in the failed January 1919 insurrection.

At its first conference after the war (held in different locations across Berlin in November 1919 to avoid being broken up by the police), the IUSYO changed its name to the Communist Youth International (CYI) and affiliated to the Communist International (Comintern). As the Comintern itself recognised, the youth sections had "acted as the vanguard in the revolutionary struggle".

The early years of the CYI were marked by two big debates: one political, one organisational, but both intimately connected. Most of the youth had received their political education in revolutionary struggles. It was this which attracted them to the Bol-

shevks and the Comintern in the first place. But as the revolutionary tide ebbed across Europe a new perspective and new tactics were needed.

At its Third Congress in July 1921, the Comintern called for a turn to the masses: "The Communist youth organisations can no longer limit themselves to working in small propaganda circles... In conjunction with the Communist parties and the trade unions, they must organise the economic struggle."

Inevitably, many of the best youth saw the turn to mass work as a retreat to reformism. They saw preparation for insurrection as always the order of the day. In 1920, for example, at the height of the Turin wave of factory occupations, the FGSI had only two kinds of organisation: military squads and discussion circles. They had no trade union or workplace cells. That contributed to the communists' failure to win their strategy among the working class.

In March 1921, the German working class suffered an even greater defeat, when the mass of workers refused to heed the KPD's call for a revolutionary advance.

In the end the youth organisation of the Comintern was convinced that they needed to be more than just discussion and propaganda circles of young people and that a turn to organising and agitating among the working class was not a retreat towards the reformism they fought against in the Second International.

Over the next couple of years, the CYI sections involved themselves in a wide range of activities that ensured the French, Italian and German youth sections all led non-party youth in mass struggles. The French Young Communists (JC) even led a miners' strike in late 1922 and launched a mass campaign against the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. The FGSI was at the forefront of the anti-fascist struggle.

Youth and Stalinism

Proof of the vitality of the internal life of the youth sections can be found in the Russian youth organisation, the Komsomol. While the Komsomol's main work was in the Red Army during the civil war, in mass educational and cultural work among the peasantry and the working class and in constructing the new society, the Komsomol also took a lead in protecting young work-

ers' wages and conditions.

Consequently, the Komsomol was drawn into the struggle between the growing Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia and the Trotskyist opposition to it. In December 1925 *Pravda* reported a meeting of 400 party youth complaining against growing bureaucratism that the "party consisted of 40,000 members with hammers and 400,000 with briefcases". A month later when nine members of the Komsomol leadership accused Trotsky of "dragging the question of the youth by the hair into factional disputes, eight leading Komsomol youth publicly rallied to his defence."

Unfortunately, the CYI did not survive the Stalinist degeneration of the Comintern. Tens of thousands of Trotskyist youth were expelled from the Komsomol in 1926. The youth sections – and even the Pioneer movement which organised 10 to 13 year olds – were ruthlessly used in the battle against "Trotskyism". In 1926, the Yugoslav Trotskyist sympathiser Vujo Vuyovitch was dismissed from his role as secretary of the CYI and suspended from the party. The CYI became a Stalinist plaything losing its independence.

Trotsky and the revolutionaries went on to forge the Fourth International (FI) never lost sight of the importance of the youth. And in their efforts to build a youth movement – despite the terrible persecution and isolation they suffered – they handed on to our generation an understanding of the key things needed for success in this decisive sphere of revolutionary work:

- The need for adult socialists to consciously prioritise youth work, with special tactics and organisations.
- The need to allow youth to make their own mistakes and to decide their own practical priorities and as such have their own independent organisation.
- The need to educate young workers and students in socialist politics without patronising them or stifling their tendency to question everything.
- The need for youth cadres who can take the party's politics into the wider layers of working class youth, explaining why not every compromise is a betrayal, why not every retreat is a disaster, and why winning a battle is not the same as winning a war.

The history of the socialist youth organisations of the Second International also provides us with many lessons for today.

Young people are the future. It is from their ranks that the tomorrow's revolutionaries will come. Socialist youth organisations can have powerful radicalising effects on the wider working class and play a leading rôle in the fight against reformism and bureaucratism.

Any attempt to limit their political and organisational independence only serves the interests of reformism and reaction and as such we must be champions of the rights of young people to have their own independent organisations.

We can see from history that young people can aid the formation of a new workers' International and mass revolutionary parties.

Just as the international workers' movement needs a new International to organise the struggle against capitalism on a global scale, the youth of the world need a new youth International, too. The socialist youth group Revolution issued a call to build a new youth international at the ESF in Paris. It is a call that every socialist and revolutionary should support and do all they can to aid its formation.

As David Blunkett prepares new attacks on asylum seekers including taking their kids into care and deporting unaccompanied asylum seekers, we say

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Hands off the children!

Asylum seekers are this government's scapegoats. The hostility and hatred towards one of the most vulnerable groups of people in the world never ceases. As Blair tries to fashion a populist platform to cement the support of reactionaries at the next elections, he is not going to relent without a fight.

Contrary to the racist lies churned out by the tabloids, people who flee torture, persecution, war and poverty arrive in Britain to face one of the toughest asylum processes in Europe. Section 55, which was brought in by the government in January 2003, has forced many asylum seekers to sleep rough on the streets in make-shift camps, without access to food and water or any benefits.

Blunkett's new immigration and asylum legislation announced in the Queen's Speech is set to make things even worse. The new bill is nothing but a despicable racist attack on society's most vulnerable people.

Although not included in the bill, David Blunkett has made it plain that he is prepared to take children away from asylum seekers who refuse to take a free flight "home". This use of blackmail is designed to force already terrified families out of the country without a second thought for what might happen to them if they return back into the hands of the torture and poverty that they originally fled from.

And Blunkett is telling us this will be for the good of the children! These children have already suffered the pain of leaving their home, school, friends and seen things that would give adults nightmares. Now Blunkett wants to further traumatise them by wrenching them away from the one thing they have left in the world - their families!

But not content with taking children away from their parents, Blunkett wants to start forcibly repatriating unaccompanied young asylum seekers. Children and young adults up to the age of 18 are currently given exceptional leave to stay if they come into the country without any parents, family or guardian. Under legislation being prepared by the Home Office, and revealed by the *Independent on Sunday* at the end of last month, a list of countries has been drawn up which the government believes is safe for young asylum seekers to go back to. This list is made up of such "safe" countries as Kosovo, where nearly 30,000 UN troops are stationed as part of a "peace keeping" force; Sri Lanka, where a state of emergency was recently declared; and poverty-stricken Bangladesh.



Also, government officials plan to interview unaccompanied young asylum seekers without a lawyer or an advocate being present - a situation open to abuse by unscrupulous immigration officials.

Both plans have been condemned by refugee groups and human rights campaigners and it was branded "crypto-fascist" in the House of Commons.

The third major proposal in the bill will involve reducing the current two-tier legal system to a single body that will be named the Asylum and Immigration tribunal. This will mean that if your asylum claim is refused you won't be able to appeal.

The Law Society has said that this is unjustifiable considering the poor quality of decision making at the initial stage. The bill will also propose a limit of five

hours for the amount of legal aid granted.

Other proposals include:

- A maximum two-year jail sentence for people who are believed to have destroyed their papers on their way here and an automatic presumption against the credibility of their case. Airlines would be forced to make copies of passengers' passports and travel documents before they travelled to the UK;
- Electronically tagging asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected. These will be used within around 12 to 18 months;
- Immigration officers will have new powers to arrest people without a warrant on suspicion of bigamy, fraud and theft.
- And the bill will make it easier to deport asylum seek-

ers who claim asylum in a "safe" country before coming to Britain.

Writing in the *Guardian* Blunkett says that the new bill is good news for the left! He says "the more that the failures of our asylum system are dealt with, the less ammunition there is for the extreme right to fire. The BNP and the anti-immigration groups rub their hands with glee when we fail."

So Blunkett's solution to the growth of the far right is to beat them at their own game and attack asylum seekers before they do! What Blunkett fails to mention is that these attacks on asylum seekers play right into the BNP's hands by legitimising the racist claims the BNP makes. This new bill reinforces the belief that most asylum seekers are trying to cheat the system so they should not have access to housing, benefits, legal aid and should be punished. It also reinforces the belief that the government is spending a lot of money that could be spent on hospitals and education on asylum. There is no mention of the millions spent on killing innocent Iraqis in the war for oil.

In the BNP's successful election campaigns earlier this year, Labour's attacks on asylum seekers helped the BNP to convince people that they were the party that could provide answers to a town's problems. By demanding that the (minimal) resources set aside locally for asylum seekers be redirected to services for "local people" they drew people in behind their racist goal of a "white Britain".

What Blunkett's new bill will do is make it even more acceptable to blame asylum seekers and will do the opposite to what he says...it will give more ammunition than ever before to extreme groups like the BNP.

It's now more crucial than ever to step up the campaign against the attacks on asylum seekers. It's no good turning up in communities a few months before elections to try and counter the arguments of the BNP. What is needed is consistent work in local communities to counter the myth's around asylum and direct action to stop deportations and children being taken into care.

Also in areas where physical attacks on asylum seekers occur we need to form self-defence teams that can protect them. This can only be done effectively by building social forums in local areas that bring together local people, refugee groups, anti-racist groups and linking the issue in with other campaigns such as those against the occupation of Iraq and the anti-privatisation campaigns.

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