

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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an injury to one is an injury to all

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Bosses predict three million jobless by 2010. Stop these job cuts!

CUT WORK HOURS, EXPAND PUBLIC SERVICES!



BY GERRY BATES

According to the bosses' Confederation of British Industry unemployment will reach 2.9 million by 2010 — an unemployment rate of about 9 percent — up from 1.8 million now. That is nearly as high as the figure reached under the Tories in 1982 and 1992.

At the end of 2006, New Labour politicians were still boasting about their record of keeping unemployment low. In fact, even the million-odd people claiming Job-Seekers' Allowance then was still a huge number, and the real jobless total was higher still. Now, job losses are multiplying, as the bosses seek to make workers pay for the economic crisis.

The labour movement should not accept this. Our demands should be the right to a decent, well-paid job for everyone who wants one, and

decent benefits for those who can't work. We should fight for the bosses and the rich to pay, by cutting their profits and through higher taxation.

That means rejecting the politics of most of our trade union leaders, who think workers and bosses have interests in common, see unemployment as inevitable and ask for, at most, a bit of tinkering to soften the blow.

It means fighting every job loss. This may mean tactics like occupying workplaces set for closure. We should demand that firms making mass lay-offs while also making a profit should be nationalised without compensation under the control of their workers.

We need an end to the crazy situation in which some of us are forced to work harder and harder, while others are denied a job altogether. The unions should demand a maximum 35-hour week for all workers to create jobs for the unemployed. Shorter working hours but with no loss of pay: profits, not pay, should be cut to reduce the working week and create new jobs.

At the same time, we should demand the government taxes the rich and business to fund a programme of rebuilding public services and to create millions of secure, well-paid, socially useful jobs. To take one example: we cannot tolerate ten of thousands being homeless or in temporary accommodation, and the dwindling number of council houses fall apart at the seams — at the same time that thousands upon thousands of building workers are thrown on the dole!

The threat of three million unemployed is an urgent warning to working-class activists of what we face if we do not rally our movement to fight.

www.workersliberty.org/workersplan

BABY P

Why the business model didn't work

Until 2006 Pauline Bradley worked as a social worker for Haringey council, whose social work department has been in the news over the death of "Baby P". During her time at Haringey Pauline saw the tragic death of Victoria Climbié, the inquiry into her death by Lord Laming, and the subsequent reforms made by the government. Here Pauline, who now works in Dumbarton, explains why she thinks the social work system can fail children like "Baby P".

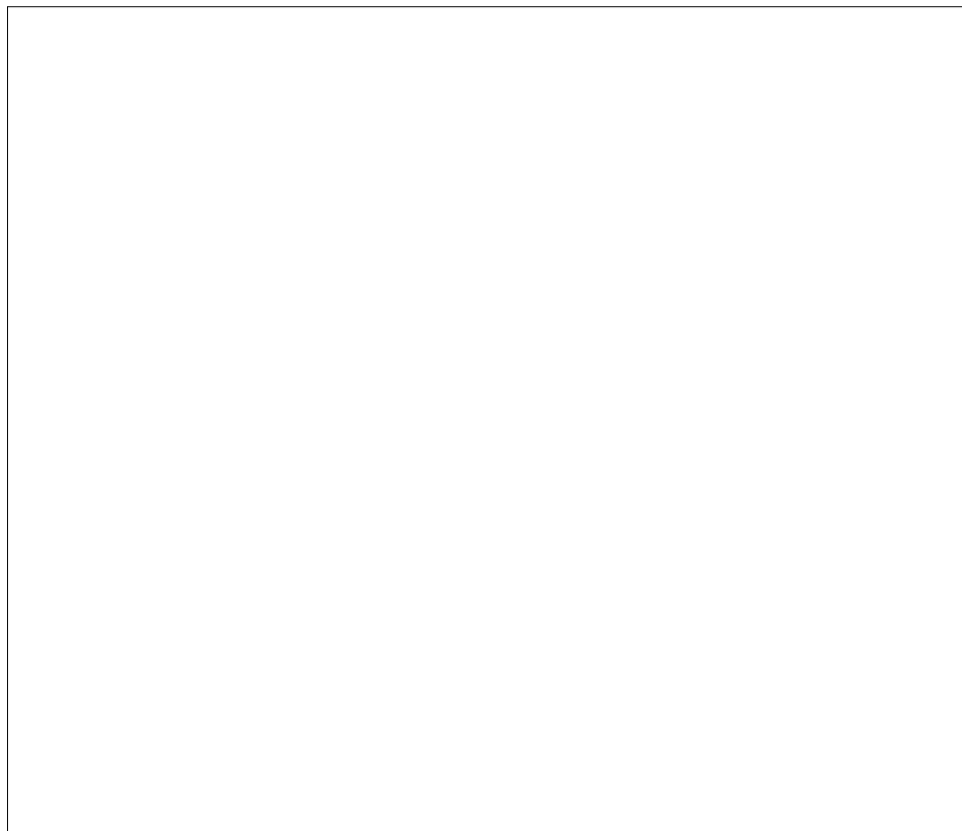
The Lord Laming Inquiry made 108 recommendations, to do with tightening up procedures and communication in child protection. Updated computer systems were introduced which made it easier for social workers, occupational therapists and other professionals to record visits and communicate with each other. These systems varied in places and had teething problems too.

Not all Laming's recommendations were implemented by central government, particularly the ones regarding how social work departments communicate with politicians and other agencies. Initial assessments, core assessments and other practices were implemented and should have been standardised throughout England and the UK.

The government was closely watching Haringey, so they pushed the changes through with vigour there to try to prove that all was different and better. The council changed their logo to "Better Haringey" to show a change from the bad old past.

The press had called the social worker involved with Victoria Climbié "incompetent". Haringey Council wanted to prove they'd got rid of all the "incompetent, bad" social workers who were employed at the time of Victoria Climbié's death.

But the new management regime were not qualified social workers! Anne



Why did the social work system fail Baby P?

Bristow, the new Director of Social Services, had many qualifications in management and marketing. David Derbyshire, the Children's Director wasn't a qualified social worker either. But the politicians seemed to think that was what was needed.

Our union, Unison, had for years complained that the social workers in Haringey were the second lowest paid in London. Overnight the new management regime (who came in after existing managers had suddenly left, before the Victoria Climbié story hit the press) put up the pay of children's social workers by as much as £8,000. (But not learning disability, older people's or physical disability social workers). They introduced bonuses and enhancements such as the "golden handcuffs" (£500 for staying for two years), or a fast track up the spinal column pay scale.

They advertised for people to work in Haringey straight from college. They wanted people they could mould, not experienced social workers like me who might disagree with management decisions on cases. They got a full complement of staff very quickly, draining social workers from other boroughs.

Haringey was a special case after Laming. Other councils could discuss, debate and decide how best to implement changes without the same pressure

It may be that some councils didn't implement them all — as long as they met their performance and inspection targets, they could be flexible elsewhere.

The problem with the regime at Haringey was that it deprioritised the human element to social work, which cannot be measured and which you only get through life and social work experience. For instance the skill and confidence to challenge a parent who you think is lying — to say "you look as though you have taken a drug, have you?". Or in the case of Baby P: "Wash his face, I want to see his face clean".

Parents will react, get angry, etc., but you have to stand your ground, because that's what saves children's lives. And the system, your manager, etc. have to

back you up. If you know they won't back you then you'll be reluctant to say what your guts are telling you.

On reports I heard that a legal team had said there was "not enough evidence" to take baby P into care ten days before he died. If the social worker dealing with the case knew that, she'd be less confident about challenging his mother.

It is very basic to social work to assess the truth and veracity of an adult's claims. But Haringey had become a borough where the management and politicians did not base themselves on social workers' abilities but on the idea of a process for everything. If you followed all the procedures everything would be okay. Haringey had a business model of targets and form-filling. That does not protect children. We need a welfare model.

There is starting to be a debate about whether it is better to leave children with their parents or take children into care. At least in care they survive and don't die (usually). Every case is different and must be seen for its own merits.

In Scotland, where we see a child at risk or in need, we try to engage the parents/carers as much as we can. We literally throw resources at them if it will improve their and their children's lives, e.g. nurseries, after school clubs, counselling, parenting classes, money for heating or food (but not drugs, we have to be vigilant with that one; supervised shopping may be needed), drugs rehabilitation, addiction services etc. If the parents engage, then there's a chance to keep the family together with these supports. These resources are crucial.

If they don't engage, if they lie and avoid us, then we're more concerned. We may need to take the case to a child protection case conference for more vigilant measures, or to the Scottish Children's Reporter's System for a hearing and a legal order.

The Scottish Children's Reporter's System is outside of social services and is a welcome check and balance on the local authority. It was inspired by Lord Kilbrandon in 1968, who wanted to

focus on young criminals and their "needs not deeds".

Any child who comes to the attention of authorities, e.g. police, schools, youth clubs, nurseries, etc., can be referred to the SCRA. The SCRA is run by lawyers who have specialised in children's law. An SCRA reporter then writes to all agencies in that child's network and asks them for a report. They write to social services and we go out and meet the child, family, etc., and write our report for the SCRA with our recommendation.

When the SCRA have received all the reports, they decide if a children's hearing is needed. If it is, they call one and the child, parents, social services, school etc are invited to attend.

There are three panel members (not all of the same sex) who are members of the community and trained up to be SCRA panel members. They talk to the child and everyone else present, then decide on whether a legal order is needed. They are advised legally by a SCRA Children's Reporter.

When they make a decision, in my experience they usually go with the social workers' recommendation. If a supervision order is ordered, it is the social worker's job to visit the child and family every month without fail and more often if necessary. The case gets reviewed at intervals, decided at that hearing; it may be one month, three months, six months, eight months, a year, etc.

Social work managers meet SCRA reporters regularly for "case progression meetings". I feel that their being outside of local politics and local spending decisions makes them a welcome check on social work departments. They will kick up if they're told "Child A can't go to this resource as the local authority can't afford it."

There should be no limit on the amount of money that can be spent on children's welfare. Remember Gordon Brown's unlimited war chest? How about an unlimited child welfare budget? A welfare system should be implemented with no illusions that the market place or businesses can help us in that.

There should be no witch hunts of social workers (the *Sun* is running a nasty campaign to sack all social workers in the Baby P case).

It is complicated for the labour movement to have an effective campaign in the area, as all the cases are different. The media loves heads to roll, but I don't feel that helps us; we need to get to the truth and prevent it from happening again.

There were mistakes made with baby P by individuals, just as the man who threw his cigarette down led to the Kings Cross fire, and the man who didn't close the bow doors on the Herald of Free Enterprise led to that ship sinking. We have to look at the whole story and improve things from for the future. The social worker involved is said to be suicidal, and I know Lisa Arthurworry is still suffering eight years after Victoria Climbié's death.

But there might be a few slogans for us: no witch hunts of social workers; unlimited spending on child welfare services; a nursery place for all children; no waiting lists for support services; pupil support services in every school; a Guidance Teacher for every child

And how about this: a welfare system for children based on the Children's Act? "The welfare of the child is paramount."

Articles on our website

www.workersliberty.org

The capitalist crisis and the working class socialist answer — An AWL online pamphlet
Articles from Solidarity and Workers' Liberty explaining the meaning of the current capitalist crisis, and what the working-class response should be.
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/11457>

Marx on capitalist crisis
A survey of Marx's writings on capitalist crisis and their relevance to today.
<http://www.workersliberty.org/crisisnotes>

The first black president of the USA
A barrier-breaking election. But where now for anti-capitalist politics in the USA?
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/11542>

POLITICS AND THE CRISIS

Fight for a workers' government!

The “workers’ plan for the crisis” published in our last issue (see page 16 for a short version) concludes by calling on “activists to build — through the trade unions, Trades Councils, and other working-class organisations — a movement for independent working-class representation in politics, as the basis for a new workers’ party.

“Its aim should be a *workers’ government*, based on mass working-class mobilisation and accountable to the labour movement — a government which serves our class as the Tories and New Labour in power have served the rich, and reshapes society in the interests of people, not profit”.

What does the slogan, “workers’ government”, mean?

The two main debates at the conference on 15 November of the Labour Representation Committee (a group led by Labour MP John McDonnell, but sponsored by six unions, two of them not Labour-affiliated) were instructive on this point.

One main debate was about policies for socialists to advocate in the crisis. The conference backed fairly radical policies, including many of the points in our “workers’ plan”. A few speakers, notably Jon Rogers, who was the left candidate in the last election for Unison general secretary, claimed that such policies were too ambitious, but the big majority voted for the policies.

Broad-brush radical policies can and should inform and guide us in the smallest of struggles. It may be a while before the crisis stirs up a proper firestorm of revolt, and in the meantime it is the duty of socialists to seek for and cherish every spark of resistance, however scattered.

But demands such as for full public ownership and democratic control over the whole of high finance are, inescapably, demands for government action.

What sort of government? The LRC conference was instructive on the dilemmas raised by this question.

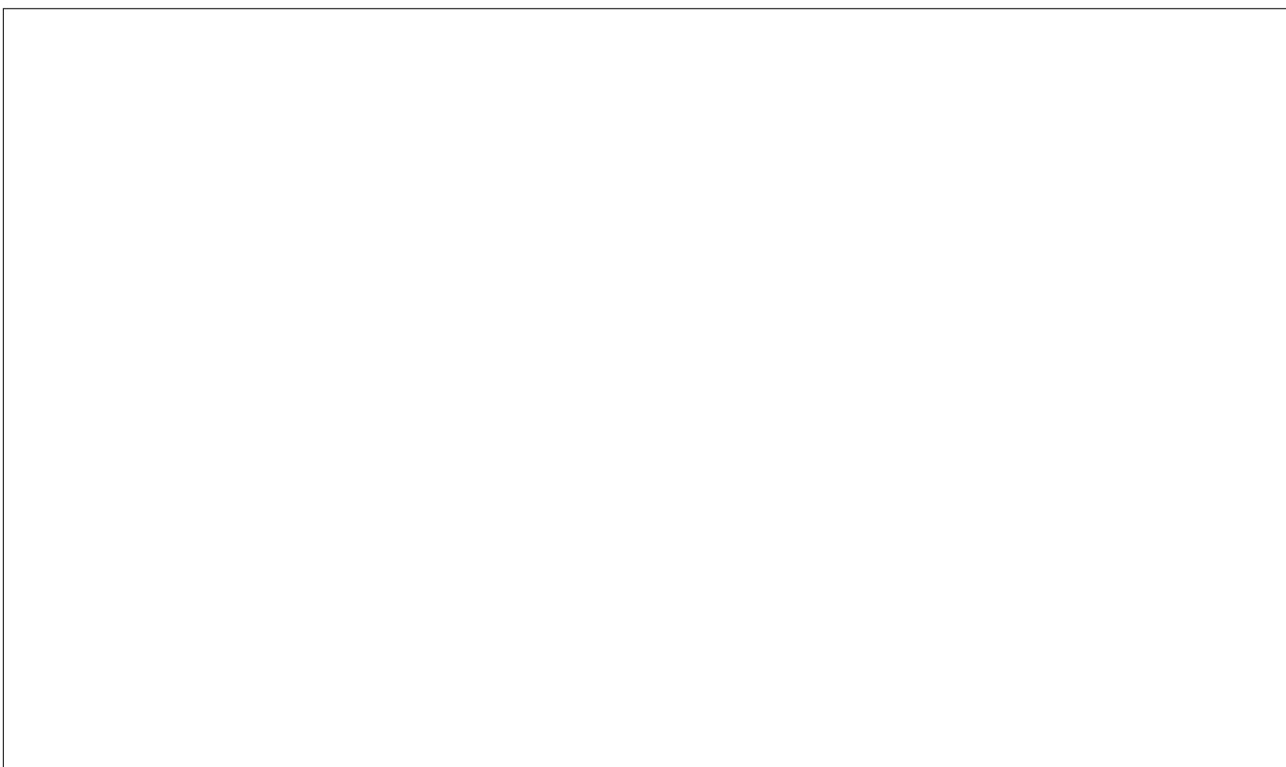
The AWL motion on the lines of our conclusion to our “workers’ plan” (as above) was vehemently attacked by many speakers who had supported the radical policies. Some speakers threatened to disaffiliate their organisations from the LRC if the motion was passed.

By opening the way for the LRC to back local labour-movement electoral candidates which are not official Labour, they said, the motion would cast the LRC out into the cold. The Labour leaders would respond to it by expelling leading LRC figures, and that must be avoided at all costs.

The Labour leaders might or might not respond that way. At last year’s LRC conference Bob Wareing, a leftist Labour MP, was loudly applauded when he announced his intention to run in the next general election as an independent against the New-Labourite pushed in to replace him as official Labour candidate. The cries of pious horror on 15 November at the very idea of backing non-Labour candidates were overdone.

But, in any case, remain in the “warm” of official Labour... to do what, positively? In previous years, the answer would have been clear: to use the levers and channels of the Labour Party to push the policies — maybe to push the Labour government, in any case to rally those decisive sections in the working class which found their political expression in the Labour Party.

No-one suggested that, or anything else positive.



John McDonnell MP at the Labour Representation Committee conference on 15 November. After debate the conference voted for radical policies to respond to the crisis but was split on workers’ representation.

It is impossible to push the policies at Labour Party conference because since 2007 both unions and local Labour Parties have lost the right to push political motions at the conference.

The nearest thing any of the Labour-loyalists could suggest was an appeal for a *recall TUC congress*. It is possible to get political motions on to the agenda at TUC congress; but that begs the question of what the TUC (or, more realistically, the more lively and combative unions) should then do to translate the policies into *political* action.

The call for a workers’ government is a call on the organised working class to rally itself to win political representation and to fight for those political representatives to take power and form a government which will carry out working-class policies.

The mechanics of it now are manifold: building socialist organisation, building local Trades Councils, encouraging unions affiliated to the Labour Party to come out openly against Brown and Darling, urging unions to sponsor local labour-representation conferences and to support broadly-backed worker candidates coming out of them... All the small details are tied together by the overall aim. Right now it is mostly a matter of painstaking detail work. We don’t know at what stage it may become possible to take big, qualitative leaps forward. But we start preparing, clearing the road, mapping out the way, *now*.

The formula “workers’ government” originates in a discussion in the Communist Parties around the fourth congress of the Communist International in 1922, the last pre-Stalinist congress. Then, it mainly meant that big Communist parties should approach big worker-based Social Democratic parties to propose joint action for coalition governments of the workers’ parties to carry through at least a basic “workers’ plan” for the crisis then. It was a keystone to the approach argued by Lenin and Trotsky over the previous year or so, the “workers’ united front”.

After the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist Parties, Leon Trotsky reformulated the “workers’

government” in these terms: “Of all parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name, we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers’ and farmers’ government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time, we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should in our opinion form the program of the ‘workers’ and farmers’ government’.”

In the USA of 1946, where the workers had no party that spoke in their name, and were tied instead to the Democratic Party, Max Shachtman readapted the idea as follows:

“The workers need a party of their own to issue the Declaration of Independence of the working class. It is the first big step in breaking from the capitalist parties and capitalist politics, and toward independent working-class political action.

“However, it is only the first step. The formation of an independent workers’ party acquires great significance only if it proclaims the objective of a Workers’ Government.

“What would be the program and purpose of a Workers’ Government? Would it simply be to put the workers in the offices now occupied by capitalist politicians and bureaucrats? [No]. A Workers’ Government must have a basically different principle if it is to discharge its great obligation to those who placed it in power. To the evils of capitalism, it must oppose social progress and human welfare. To the interests of a ruling minority, it must oppose the interests of all humanity”.

Today in Britain Shachtman’s adaptation is the most relevant. If any of our talk of a workers’ plan in the crisis is to make any sense, we must fight for the creation of a political agency opposed to Brown and the New Labour Party. But each move to independent workers’ representation “acquires great significance only if it proclaims the objective of a Workers’ Government”.

Teaching Assistant in a Secondary School working in a maths lesson with year 11 students (15 years old). Girls are doing their make up and helping each other look good by removing unwanted hair on the upper lip.

TA, (who happens to have rather a lot of upper-lip hair herself): "Come on you lot. Get some work done"

Student: "Miss, do you want me to do yours while we are here?"

TA: "No thanks. I'm rather fond of my moustache. It has taken me all my life to grow it".

Student (puzzled pause): "Miss. You're the man!"

TA: "Thank you".

The moral of the story is that TA's should role model not being worried about appearance to teenagers who are taught in all other walks of life to be utterly fixated by it and who are subjected to large amounts of bullying because of it.

The management at St, Paul's Way school should take a leaf out of the TA's book. It's not what we look like that matters, but how we enable students to get through their lives in as happy and learned way as possible.

A rather hairy TA

EDUCATION

Defend Adrian Swain!

By a UNISON MEMBER

Maths Teacher and NUT rep Adrian Swain, who works at St. Paul's Way community school in East London, is being disciplined by his Headteacher for failing to follow the dress code imposed without any consultation. He wears trainers and tracksuit bottoms to school and has done so for the last 17 years. Suddenly it is an offence.

Adrian is refusing to back down and over the last week several of his colleagues in both his union, the NUT, and in the support staff union, Unison, have been turning up in trainers. There are to date 22 people under warning for failing to wear the correct clothes to school.

It is a well-known fact, of course, that if you put trainers on your feet, your brain turns into scrambled eggs. If unscrupulous teachers start doing this, children's education will suffer.

This reason aside, the management's motivation for picking on Adrian at this moment is probably that they want to create a good image of the school. St. Paul's Way is in serious trouble. The governing body has been shut down and the running of the school taken over by the Local Education Authority. The Head is an interim appointee until the New Year when a new one will be in place to oversee the complete rebuilding of the school under the Building Schools for the Future plan.

An attempt was made at the end of the last academic year to raise the possibility of redundancies. That has now been put on the back burner. But anyone leaving the school at the moment is not being replaced. Consequently, the staff who are there are hugely over worked.

This, more than anything, one would think, would affect the image of the school. The Head could have chosen far

more important things to pick a fight about than the maths teacher's dress sense.

Behaviour problems amongst students at the school are also a big issue and management will be using the argument that teachers should be setting a good example. But that's just an argument for putting staff into a uniform. It's not how a teacher looks when working with young people that matters, so much as how well we relate to them and how well we teach them.

The major issue for the workers in the school is having the time and the resources to do that without being rushed off their feet and without heavy handed management imposing rules from above.

• Please send messages of support to: Adrian Swain. NUT. St. Paul's Way Community School, Shelmerdine Close. London. E3 4AN

Metronet threat

In October, engineering workers employed by Tube contractor Metronet were told that they would be transferred back to London Underground Ltd by December. This seemed like a victory: effective nationalisation, bringing the workers and the work back in-house.

The devil, however, was in the details, which have now emerged. The workers will be transferred back into LUL, but the work they do will stay in the private sector, offered to private contractors. The LUL, ex-Metronet staff will be left with no work to do, and management will have a perfect reason to make them all redundant.

This looks like an elaborate plan to get rid of one of the most militant and well-organised groups of workers on the Underground. Metronet workers will not stand for this. They will be building towards one final strike ballot before the transfer, to insist they can continue their jobs under public ownership.

How Solidarity Can Change the World

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GENERAL SECRETARY ELECTION

Rumpole of the Amicus?

Jerry Hicks is one of the three Amicus members — apart from the current General Secretary, Derek Simpson — seeking nominations to contest an election to be held next year for the post of General Secretary of the Amicus section of Unite. In the last issue of Solidarity we interviewed Hicks about his candidacy. We cover the other candidates, Kevin Coyne and Laurence Faircloth, in the next issue. Here Dale Street gives a critical response to Hicks's platform.

Hicks was union convenor at the Rolls Royce Bristol plant until his victimisation in 2005. Of the four potential candidates for next year's election, Hicks not only has the best record as a rank-and-file activist but also has the most left-wing platform.

Hicks calls for: election of all union officials, repeal of all anti-union laws, restoration of the link between earnings and pensions, an extension of public ownership, and more council housing. If elected, he will take only an average skilled worker's wage.

At first sight, it might appear that Hicks is the natural candidate for the left to support.

In fact, some left-wing Amicus members find the idea of backing Hicks problematic. Some, such as members of the SWP, have already decided not to back him.

This is because of Hicks' readiness to use the Certification Officer (to challenge Simpson's intention to stay in post until December 2010 and year after he was due to retire), his apparent threats of further legal action against the union, and his lack of involvement in the organised left in Amicus, Unity Gazette.

The Certification Officer is a government-appointed official with powers to intervene in the internal affairs of trade unions. Socialists want to keep him out of unions, not invite him in to pass judgement. Calling for rank-and-file

control of trade union organisation, as Hicks does, is not compatible with appealing for help from the Certification Officer.

Hicks does not even see going to the Certification Officer as a matter of the last resort. In referring to Simpson's decision to lodge a complaint with the Certification Officer in 2002, Hicks writes: "Derek Simpson did the right thing in 2002. That's why I, and others, gave him our full support."

In any case allowing Simpson to stay on until December 2010 was part of the rulebook which was voted through at the time of the merger between Amicus and the TGWU.

Hicks says only a small minority of union members voted for the rulebook, and they were not necessarily voting for Simpson to remain in office until December 2010. Had members been aware of this illegal provision in the rulebook, they would have voted against it.

That argument could equally serve as a licence for the right to abandon provisions in the rulebook which do not suit them, on the grounds that members were "really" only voting for the merger rather than for every, likewise possible illegal, dot and comma in the rulebook.

Hicks has also said that as a result of his decision to involve the Certification Officer, "it is possible that Joint General Secretary Tony Woodley would also be forced to stand down, which could then open up an election for a new General Secretary for all 2.1 million members of Unite."

How so? The nearest Hicks comes to an explanation on his website is his claim that an election for a single General Secretary of Unite would need to be held because the separate sections of Unite (i.e. Amicus and the TGWU) were to be scrapped on 1st November.

But this is not what has actually happened. And it was unlikely ever to happen. Instead, an emergency meeting of National Executive of Unite voted in

early October to put the merger "on hold", pending the staging of an election for the post of Amicus General Secretary.

Hicks has now threatened further legal action. In a statement he said:

"Any decision to suspend the rulebook will be successfully challenged and at some point either before, during, or after the election it will be declared invalid and so immediately trigger the need for a further election... Mr Hicks will stand as a candidate for a new General Secretary despite the fact it (the election) may well have to be re-run."

So Hicks triggers an election by going to the Certification Officer. When an election is called, he declares that the election is illegal – but he will still take part in it. And because the election is illegal, due to the decision to suspend the rulebook, another election will have to be held. This will be triggered by another legal challenge by Hicks.

This is not a programme for rank-and-file control of the union. It is a recipe for reducing the membership to an audience watching another series of "Rumpole of the Bailey".

Unity Gazette has decided to back Laurence Faircloth, who has a well-established record — as a right-winger. The first and only meeting of Unity Gazette to have been attended by Faircloth is the one which decided to back his campaign for General Secretary.

That Hicks does not have support from Unity Gazette is not necessarily of decisive importance. Unity Gazette is not overly left-wing.

But Hicks' failure even to attempt to win support from Unity Gazette certainly does make his decision to contest the election (assuming he wins the requisite number of nominations) look more like the action of a maverick than like a thought-through initiative to build an organised left in the Amicus section of Unite.

If it is too harsh a verdict, then there are a lot of things Hicks need to clarify.

CANCELLED STRIKES

Public sector pay: lessons for the left

BY COLIN FOSTER

The decisions by the PCS civil service union and the National Union of Teachers not to strike over pay in November mark a setback.

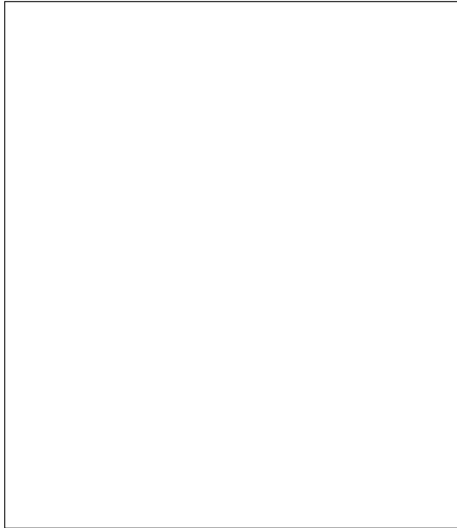
The Government has imposed a two-and-a-bit per cent pay rise limit, a limit which *cuts* real wages. Over two pay rounds now, public-sector union leaders have put out vast volumes of talk about united union action to beat that limit. Both pay rounds have passed without any serious such joint action being organised.

We should take stock both of the condition of the left in the unions, and of the effects of the economic crisis on the labour movement.

The NUT's decision not to strike was pretty unavoidable given that its ballot result represented a large winding-down of the pay campaign from its strike in April. Strike action could only have been a token, with little effect except for the NUT losing members to other, non-striking, teacher unions.

In the PCS case, the ballot majority for strike action was not much better, but represented essentially a beginning of an across-the-board (rather than section-by-section) fight on pay, and could possibly have been built on to raise confidence with selective action. The union called a strike, but then called it off, without any concessions, after activists had already invested big efforts into preparing for the strike day.

There were also common factors. Both unions are now left-led, in contrast to the other big public services union, Unison. Both had talked a lot about joint action. The long lead-up to the ballots before these strikes meant it would



have been easy to time strikes on the same day. Most activists in both unions assumed NUT and PCS would do this. In fact PCS and NUT timed those ballots so that their strikes, if they had happened, would have been on different days.

In neither union has the leadership explained this contradiction between words and deeds. In any case, activists could only conclude either that their leaders were incompetent beyond belief; or that, since their loud talk about joint action had been insincere, probably anything else they say should not be trusted either. Not good for a "yes" vote.

Both union leaderships have promoted, as their main "model" of action, one-day strikes followed by long "wait for the leadership to decide what's next" pauses.

The NUT held a well-supported strike over pay in April. But the ballot before that had been only for a one-day strike. So, instead of building on the

momentum, the union went quiet for half a year before returning to the members with... another ballot. This time it was for discontinuous action, but without any indication of what might follow a first one-day strike.

PCS has held lots of one-day strikes in various sections over recent years. Almost always they have been followed by pauses. Under pressure from activists within the union, this time the leaders spelled out some next steps: sectoral rolling action, and then a second one-day strike.

But neither union has ever offered its members a plan of action *designed to win*, a plan of action which can be rationally presented as able to force the Government to back down. Actions are always essentially token actions, plus a tentative hope that they may later be built on to create something more than token. Again, not good for a "yes" vote.

According to insiders in both unions, another big factor in the poor "yes" votes was the economic crisis. Workers may be angered by the chaos which capitalism has brought on them, and by the Government's measures, but also persuaded that such stormy times are not the moment to embark on the risks of a big industrial dispute.

We should recognise that fact; but also that it is neither set in stone, nor all-enveloping. With some workers, at some times, the anger will win out over the caution. Socialists cannot prescribe when any more than the union leaders can. We can be alert for every move.

"Alert" means we approach them with hard-nosed strategies, designed to *win* — which, on the evidence of these last two years, means breaking from much of the dominant culture of the mainstream left in the unions as it is now.

campaign which would escalate after the initial strike. The evidence from regions and associations indicated that no escalation would be possible. And London Executive members did not support the idea of calling a strike there in the first instance

- The risk of losing members was very high whereas the possibility of an effective programme of action on the result achieved was very low.

The decision of the Executive was, therefore, that the pay campaign would continue without at this stage involving further industrial action. The union continues to oppose the imposition of multi-year below-inflation pay awards and will continue to work with other public sector unions to campaign on the issue. The TUC Conference called for a national demonstration against the Government's pay policy which we will be pressing them to organise.

Why the fall in support for action? Three factors stand out.

- First is the general economic situation.

Continued on page 6

WORKERS AND THE CRISIS

Build unity around demands

Matt Wrack is general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). He spoke to Martin Thomas at the Labour Representation Committee conference on 15 November.

The main policies need to be based around defence of the working class — rejection of privatisation, defence of jobs and wages. We need to put on the agenda a genuine nationalisation of the banks and financial institutions.

These demands require government action. But we face a New Labour government which is plainly not going to do anything like that, and a Labour Party conference where the unions can't even put down motions...

I don't think there's any easy answer. There's a whole range of views: reform the Labour Party, create a new organisation... I do think it's possible to build some unity around demands which could be put to people in elections to decide if they're worthy of support.

The rail union RMT has called a conference on working-class political representation for 10 January. What's your view on that conference, and what would you like to see come out of it?

I am aware of the conference. Officially, we have not had any discussions in any detail within the FBU yet. We are disaffiliated from the Labour Party, so clearly we'd have a lot of things to discuss in relation to that conference, but I'm not in a position to give any official response from the FBU.

Personally, I think it's an opportunity to start a debate. My concern is that I don't think that there is any easy answer, like the immediate creation of a new party. I think there needs to be a broad discussion, and a broad strategy, finding points of agreement between people who have very diverse views.

NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS

Why the teachers didn't strike

BY PAT MURPHY, NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS EXECUTIVE

In a recent ballot organised by the National Union of Teachers for discontinuous strike action, 29.7% of eligible members took part and of these 51.7% supported strike action with 48.3% voting against. At an Executive meeting on 6 November we were provided with regional and association (branch) breakdowns of results. In my opinion this made our decision a lot clearer. Together with all but three Executive members I voted to accept the recommendation that we do not proceed to call action. Here are the main reasons why:

- The majority for action was marginal. There are circumstances where we could take action with such a mandate e.g. if this had been our first ballot in the pay campaign and we could hope to build on it, or if other school unions were planning to take action alongside us. Not so here.
- The turnout was down on the April

ballot (33% then). We had agreed that the previous turnout would be a benchmark for this ballot. While we were not absolutely required to reach it, we would be looking for a convincing yes vote. We didn't get that.

- Compared to April 18,000 less members voted for action and 12,000 more voted against.

- There was not support for action across all the regions. The London result was significantly better, but this just served to highlight the lack of sufficient support in many other areas.

- The association results showed that a call for national action could lead to a divided response which would detract from the impressive demonstration of unity and support on 24 April. It would also make it much harder to return to action in future if circumstances changed.

- Some of us considered action short of a one-day strike which would trigger the start of the discontinuous action — such as a London region strike, a half-day or even one hour walkout. But that only made sense as the start of an action

WORKERS AND THE CRISIS

The unions must channel the anger

By JOE MARINO, GENERAL SECRETARY BAKERS' UNION

It is very clear that the political consensus put forward by the major parties over the last 20 years has been blown out of the water and has been shown to be a sham. And I think that will be seen to be the case far and wide. People know if they can find the money for the banks they can find it for pensioners and other social concerns. People will have questions.

It is the role of the trade unions to channel the anger, and we now have a great opportunity to do that.

We need to campaign on several areas. We will see the return of wage militancy, we've seen that from our members recently. We need to go back to the important issues such as the anti-union laws. People are joining unions.

Our campaigns need to focus around several areas. If taxpayers' money is being used to bail out banks, why not to do something else, for example to stop house repossessions? This is especially important where there has been a process of mis-selling. We also need to call for building more council homes, not only so there are more homes but so there are building jobs.

If the banks want our money they need to know it is under tough conditions. Similarly if any ex-public service industry wants our money, then that industry needs to be under the control of the workers.

Is there going to be a party to replace Labour soon? I'm not convinced. But the feeling that we need an alternative is increasing.

The people who talked about the death knell of socialism were talking too early. This is an opportunity to explain what is wrong with capitalism and to put forward an alternative.

CIVIL SERVICE UNION

PCS backdown was mistake

By CHRIS HICKEY

The PCS National Executive Committee's decision to "suspend" the national civil service one day strike planned for Monday 10 November was at best a dreadful mistake. Or it may be a prelude to abandoning the action, possibly on the pretext of some relatively minor concession.

Branch representatives were offered a letter from Gus O'Donnell, head of the civil service, in explanation. The suspension "allows" PCS and central civil servants to "take forward" "talks" following "constructive discussions". In other words the Government has not made one single specific offer of improvement than the union can rely on - just "constructive talks" to go forward.

The Ministers and their Mandarins are not stupid. They know full well that it will be a lot harder for PCS activists to gear up members up again if the talks fail.

And fail they will in terms of the PCS's demands for:

- Each member to receive a consolidated basic pay increase at least equal to the retail price index (and this is supposed to be a demand for more than one year, opposed as it is to Brown's ongoing 2% public sector pay policy);
- the removal of pay progression costs from budgets for increases;
- reduction in the number of separate pay negotiations;
- an end to pressure for regional pay;
- additional funding to remedy equal pay problems;
- an end to links between pay and performance appraisal.

In the press of the Socialist Party, the dominant element on the Executive and the organisation whose members and fellow travellers make up an ever increasing part of the full time officialdom of PCS, John McNally, National Vice-President of PCS, wrote on 29 October: "Our members understand that campaigning works and action gets results. A settlement in this dispute is achievable and if we stick together and

build for effective action we are capable of applying the type of pressure that can secure meaningful talks aimed at securing a fair and reasonable agreement."

Note the tortuous language. For the SP, the strike was at best to "secure meaningful talks", talks that would not necessarily deliver were just "aimed" at securing our demands.

In the same article: "This is the first stage of a national campaign to apply pressure to secure serious negotiations with the government to resolve the long-running dispute over pay."

A campaign of industrial action should never be seen as a way of "applying pressure" to "secure serious negotiations" but instead as a way of securing concessions.

Serious negotiations in this sense can take place whilst industrial action is happening and indeed are much more likely to happen in that situation.

In a press statement all the General Secretary was able to say was, "Our national industrial action has been suspended for 28 days. I welcome the dialogue and hope an agreement is possible."

In truth the PCS leadership has been extremely nervous about launching a national pay strike for years and the Socialist Party leadership clearly doubts that the union can win a proper settlement on its own. Frankly it is desperate for an offer of some sort from the Government.

The PCS ballot result, 54% in favour of strike action on a 34% turnout, was clearly affected by the credit crunch. But it is also reasonable to believe that the stop/start — "we need action, let us have a one day strike"/ "negotiations are now going really well" — approach of the NEC over recent years affected membership confidence.

The ballot result was by no means great but it was good enough, with effective leadership, to launch a strong campaign. Activists need to campaign amongst the branches to get the dispute relaunched.

We need to fight for a PCS industrial and political strategy that will genuinely

shake Brown. Although the suspended NEC strategy was an improvement on its previous strategy of a one day strike with no clear idea as to what it would do next (a development that reflects the pressure and critique of the Independent Left), the fact is that two or three one day strikes, and an overtime ban, over the five month period November to March, would not force Brown to guarantee our living standards now and the coming years and restore national pay.

We need:

- A fighting fund levy to help place us on a war footing. The PCS leadership has resisted this call for years but in a union with many low paid members, and where the industrial muscle varies enormously, a levy can play a vital role in supporting members and action;

- a campaign of national, sectoral, and selective action — to keep the Government on the hop and hit it hard;

- a clear message as to what will happen after the first day's strike. PCS members and Brown alike need to know that the PCS leadership is serious about winning;

- straight and prompt reporting of all national negotiations so that we are not suddenly presented with a fait accompli deal that does not deliver on our demands;

- a special pay conference;
- a campaign to force the TUC to implement its decision to call days of "action", including a national demonstration against the government's pay policy.

- a campaign to link with activists of other unions to develop a Labour Movement political response to the present economic crisis.

Calling for "fairness" is pitiful. Activists must fight in the movement for a workers' alternative plan that will answer the most immediate concerns of workers - repossessions, mortgage costs, job losses, maintenance of living standards. Our aim should be to defeat Brown industrially and to assert the labour movement on the governmental level as an alternative to both New Labour and the Tories.

Why the teachers didn't strike

From page 5

My experience from meetings, not only in Leeds but in other West Yorkshire associations, is that many members have re-ordered their priorities in the light of the credit crunch and recession. There were worries about public support and concern that protecting jobs and pensions was becoming more important. Where we were able to visit schools or speak to members at local meetings these fears could be, and were, addressed. (The yes vote in West Yorkshire was better than the national figure.) But we were not able to do that in enough places to sustain a sufficient national mood for action at this stage.

The second and critical reason for this turnaround was self-imposed. We

should have made the first ballot a vote for discontinuous action. There was an Executive decision to do this last year which was then overturned. If we had kept to that decision the union would have had much greater control over the pay dispute. We could have built quickly on the momentum of 24 April. We could have taken action alongside our support staff colleagues in Unison in July. We could have followed this up with regional, selective or further national action early in the autumn and/or held back from action in the light of members' reaction to the economic crisis. We would have the flexibility to manage and calibrate our own pay dispute depending on the circumstances.

Thirdly, we should not forget, there was little or no movement from a whole

swathe of other unions whose members faced the same pay cuts but whose leaders chose to do nothing. None of the other teacher unions threatened action and Unison made a token gesture in local government but did nothing to defend their health service members. Despite two years of "good policy" the TUC didn't lift a finger to co-ordinate public sector action on pay.

The fact that the NUT and PCS were willing to mobilise a fight on pay ahead of other unions and give a lead is to their credit. However strategies based on occasional one-day national strikes with huge gaps in between and no action that could really hope to involve members was always likely to fail. Both unions should hold fast to the idea of collective industrial action but think through the need to develop strategies that can win.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

What will come from the G20 summit?

BY COLIN FOSTER

The 15 November meeting in Washington of leaders from 20 governments representing 85% of global output will have little effect on the tsunami of job cuts and home evictions already heading for us.

In the wordy text agreed at the Washington meeting, measures "to stabilise financial markets and support economic growth" are invoked, but vaguely.

The most specific commitment is a negative one. For the next 12 months, at least, all the governments promised not to raise "new barriers to investment or to trade in goods and services, impose new export restrictions, or implement WTO-inconsistent measures to stimulate exports".

Even that bit of text is double-edged. It proves first of all that the governments already feel big pressures for protectionist and beggar-my-neighbour moves.

At a recent AWL London forum, however, I spoke on the economic crisis together with Simon Mohun, a Marxist economist noted for his work on the US economy. Out of this crisis, Simon Mohun suggested, may come a world looking much more like that of 1945-73 - much more economically regulated.

Unlikely, I said. No, replied Simon Mohun. The capitalist governments really are angry about the way the financial markets have plunged their affairs into chaos. They really want to do something about it.

Capitalist governments can and do act, in the interests of capital in general, against quite big individual capitalists or sections of capital. But will that happen now in so coordinated a way as to create a global new regime? I have several reasons for scepticism about the "new Bretton Woods" theory.

One: the strength of the resistance to any scheme of re-regulation. George W Bush, for example, after the 15 November meeting, made a point of repeating what seems to him "the simple fact": "the best way to solve our problems... is... economic growth. And the surest path to that growth is free market capitalism".

Second: even if the big capitalist governments had a clear plan for re-regulation and were pursuing it intently, it would be very difficult - short of conditions of cataclysmic economic collapse - to push "back into the bottle" the elusive, constantly proliferating, constantly self-transmuting global financial markets which have developed over the last 30 years as a twin of the globalisation of capitalist production chains and floating exchange rates.

Third: the invocation of the Bretton Woods conference of 1944, which established some of the parameters of the post-1945 world economic order, highlights the difficulties. Although 44 countries were represented at Bretton Woods, the USA had such overwhelming strength that it could decide and all the others knew they could at best persuade.

The governments involved were wartime governments, confident about overruling sectional interests. They were responding to a decade of catastrophic

economic dislocation before the start of World War Two, and the memory only 25 years old of the economic chaos and revolutionary disruption that followed the end of World War One. They were geared up for drastic decisions.

Fifth: no influential figure in government circles, as far as I know, even has a "Bretton Woods 2" plan worked out, let alone the ability to push it.

Sixth: such is the dynamism and the inherently chaotic character of capitalism that the best-laid plans rarely play out straight.

The Bretton Woods scheme was designed to tame the recurrent balance-of-payments crises which had crippled economic policy and development. In fact what did that much more, and enabled the Bretton Woods scheme to succeed after a fashion, was nothing predicted or provided for at Bretton Woods, but the vast outflow of dollars in the Marshall Plan and in the USA's overseas military spending, especially in the Korean and Vietnam wars.

It's better to wonder about how capitalism may "shake out" from this crisis than to imagine a tidy planned reconstruction. There are signs that it may "shake out" as *more different* from Bretton Woods than today, rather than *more similar*.

The government bail-outs of banks have deflected the sharp point of the crisis so that now it aims more at governments. And it is hitting middle-ranking countries, which had depended heavily on the previous global regime of easy credit, hardest of all. Net financial flows to what they call "emerging markets" are projected to fall from \$602bn in 2007 to less than \$300bn in 2009.

The governments of those countries are scabbling around for credit, and can't get it in the global markets. Some governments are going to the IMF, because a deal with the IMF eases their way to further credit.

But it's not the IMF, or the USA, which holds the deep reservoirs of credit. Today China and Japan have the world's biggest foreign-currency reserves. China, Japan, Russia and India between them hold half the world's total. China's are seven times the IMF's. The USA holds less than one per cent of the world total.

Sovereign Wealth Funds based in the Emirates hold nearly \$1000 billion in assets; those based in China, over \$600 billion; Saudi Arabia's, over \$400 billion.

Since the early 1970s people have written about the decline of US power, and it hasn't been true. But with this crisis, and the debacle in Iraq, it may be becoming true. The fact that the Washington meeting was of the G20 (20 governments, including China, India, etc.) and not of the old G7 is symbolic.

An important Marxist book on international finance which I consulted for this article, published in 1983 by Teddy Brett, was titled "The Anatomy of Global Disintegration". It was wrong then: the 25 years have seen the world more integrated, with the mediation of deep global financial markets centred on the USA, than ever before. But it may become right.

Demonstration in Bologna, October 2008

ITALY

Students and Alitalia workers unite

HUGH EDWARDS REPORTS FROM ITALY

On 15 and 16 November 3,000 delegates, representing 200,000 students from all over Italy, who the day before had taken part in the massive university teachers' / researchers' demonstration in Rome, gathered for a "national assembly" at la Sapienza University. They met to debate and agree a manifesto/constitution incorporating a series of demands and proposals opposing the draconian education reform which will mean comprehensive and ruthless cut back in all sectors of the Italian educational system, the encroachment of capitalist business into the higher education system, and a massive programme of redundancies.

The manifesto spelt out a comprehensive plan for a systematic and radical overhaul of the Italian university system and its hierarchy of overaged and over-privileged all-powerful professorial "barons".

In an opening speech to the assembly a young philosophy student, Tania, described the significance of this movement that has, almost from nowhere, begun to change the face of Italian popular struggle and politics.

"We are a movement that no longer accepts to be represented by anyone but ourselves. We are seeking to bring about radical change, and we know that to do so it cannot be delegated to others. It has to be brought about by the self-conscious, self-organised action of ourselves in struggle.

"The provocative attempts by the fascist block of students to infiltrate and manipulate our marches has been rejected — this movement is explicitly and unequivocally anti-fascist! But not only that. We recognise that while our struggle and claims are specific to our dispute, we need to open to all the forces of society in struggle, to widen the substance of that struggle and the mobilisa-

tions which together can give rise to newer and higher forms of self-organised action. We are in the front line against the Berlusconi government. But without the workers we cannot win."

On Friday 14th the strike and mass mobilisation in Rome of the university sector from the main confederation union CGIL brought the city to a complete halt for hours. As well as teachers and researchers and students from across the whole education sector, there were workers from other struggles.

In particular, among the participants were workers from one of the militant "Base" confederation unions whose members — ground staff, air hostesses, pilots — have been scandalously sold out and left isolated by the "tops" of the main unions, CGIL, UIL and CSIL, in the sell-off of the bankrupt Alitalia airlines.

The airline was bought for a pittance by a selected gang of Berlusconi's cronies, debts to be charged to the public purse, and wholesale sacking, semi-feudal work conditions and salary cuts were imposed on all. The bureaucrats signed the deal on which the base unions were not even invited to negotiate.

The latter will bear a larger brunt of the sacrifices as they have courageously resisted against the pressure of lying media, and despite the conniving silence of the "left" Veltroni Democratic Party. The base unions demanded nationalisation under workers' control of Alitalia, a demand fully in keeping with the mood of the students' "we will not pay for your crisis".

The secretary of the airline workers' Base union was invited to address that section of the Friday mobilisation involving school and university students. He said that their slogan "we are not paying for your crisis" applied equally to his fellow workers — you have no future within the system against which your rebellion is just; so too with us, where the new conditions being

Continued on page 8

CONGO

Warlords fight for mining riches

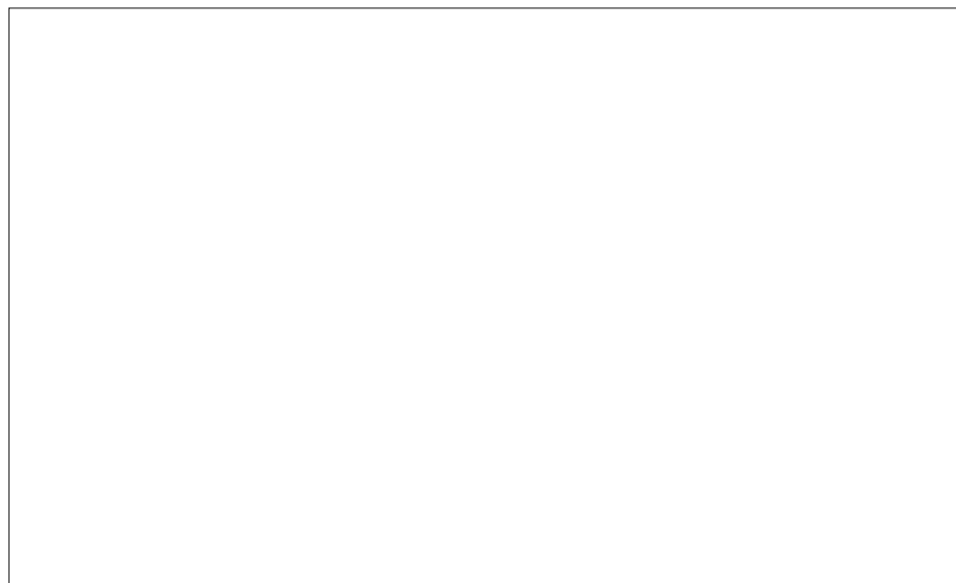
BY CATHY NUGENT

On 16 November Congolese “rebel” leader Laurent Nkunda — self-declared protector of the minority Tutsi population in Congo — agreed to a ceasefire with Joseph Kabila’s government. This ends weeks of fighting in eastern Congo between Nkunda’s group, the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), and the central government army backed up by UN troops. 250,000 have fled their homes, to makeshift shelters and camps away from the fighting. They are now at risk of death from diseases such as cholera.

This recent round of fighting is rooted in the historical and ongoing conflict between Rwandan and Congolese Tutsis and the Hutu militia responsible for the genocide in Rwanda, and the civil and regional wars this sparked off after 1997. The Congolese wars have by 2008, according to some estimates, caused the deaths of 5.4 million people from the fighting and from the disease and hunger which follows.

Laurent Nkunda says he wants to track down the Rwandan Hutu militia who now harass and murder Tutsis in Congo; these people fled to the Congo, along with many other Hutu people, when the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front took power. When most ordinary Hutus returned to Rwanda, the hardcore militia, people still wanted for war crimes, did not. However this recent conflict and the wars which preceded it are about at least four other things.

1. The Rwandan and Ugandan governments backing proxy militias in order to pursue their own internal enemies. Rwanda’s goals are relevant here — they back Nkunda. The fact that they want to pursue the former genocidal Hutu militia, is on one level reasonable.



Laurent Nkunda

The Hutu militia reduced to around 7,000 fighters, is now called the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). From the south Kivu province it has attacked the Rwandan border and native and (long-time) migrant Rwandan and Burundian Tutsis. It is responsible for looting, killing and raping.

The Rwandans and Congolese Tutsis have the right to defend themselves. But the Rwandan government have backed this latest offensive because they are annoyed with the Congolese government stopping its own offensive against the FDLR; they believe the government is supporting the FDLR.

That the Rwandan government pursues its own goals is one thing. That the actions of its proxy leads to a quarter of a million people terrorised to flee their homes is quite another.

2. The militia and political organisation of Laurent Nkunda is a reactionary

force. Nkunda is, as one journalist put it, a “well-armed megalomaniac”. He is a 7th Day Adventist who calls himself a Rebel for Christ; a man who has created a cult around himself. For Nkunda tracking down Hutu the militia is an excuse to also terrorise, and more to the point to establish a warlord’s quasi-state in eastern Congo. Among other things he uses child soldiers to fight his cause.

3. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is misruled by an entrenched political elite. When Joseph Kabila was elected President in July 2006, this was seen as progress in the west — a more or less democratic election had taken place. But Kabila, like his father who ruled before him, is more concerned to make and break political alliances in order to save his own position in power than build democracy and prosperity. He wants to keep his cronies happy, and this feeds rivalries between the various political factions and militias.

Kabila’s current conflict with Nkunda is partly explained by Kabila breaking ranks with Tutsi business people. It is Nkunda’s de facto control in the North Kivu province of DRC, a rich area that concerns the central government.

4. Everyone, central government, the various militias, the Congo bourgeois and western corporations, wants a piece of the action in the eastern provinces of South and North Kivu. That is access to the mining and trade in minerals including coltan (used in the electronic circuits of mobile phones) and gold.

The armies that involved themselves in the First Congo war (on the side of Rwanda and on the side of the central government) were in engaged in a scramble for these minerals. Coltan is mined in quarries often by adolescents and sometimes by young children who struggle everyday to earn a living for their families. They dig out very small amounts of ore for very little money.

People in the interior of Congo make a lot of money out of the trade. The militias finance their wars with the trade. Western businesses and western governments would like to see the trade continue, in more stable conditions for their profits, not in safer conditions for the people who work the mines. That is what concerns David Milliband when he went on his recent mission to Africa.

Socialists in the Europe need to know more and care more about what is happening in the Congo. We need to use our knowledge to make solidarity, not least with the Congolese community in Europe.

• A extremely effective film about the links between coltan extraction and the militias – Blood Coltan – can be found here:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4473700036349997790>

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Students and Alitalia workers unite

From page 7

imposed upon us mean poverty and insecurity. A warm applause and then a spontaneous mass chorus to the tune of Guantanamera, “we are all fliers now”.

However the teachers and researchers of the university sector of CGIL assembled in Piazza Navona, and were addressed by the general secretary of the CGIL union Guglielmo Epifani. A cautious clever bureaucrat in the time-honoured tradition of all union leaders whose roots go back to the Stalinist Communist Party of Italy, Epifani has suddenly found himself, through no merit of his own, pitched into an open confrontation with the Berlusconi government.

Like his fellow bureaucrats of the smaller, more conservative and bureaucratic CISL and UIL Epifani bears complete responsibility for what has happened in Alitalia. He fits naturally into the role of “lightning conductor” of social protest among the workers.

In the depths of a profound economic crisis in Italy Epifani, along with his fel-

low bureaucrats, would have instinctively searched for compromise and retreat, under the banner, no doubt, of “we all must make sacrifices in the national interests”. But the emergence of the students’ and teachers’ protest in the university has raised the temperature of the struggle and emboldened more and more sections of workers to believe that they can indeed force the Berlusconi government to retreat.

Following a split in the union confederation two weeks ago, when UIL and CISL signed a secret deal with the Berlusconi government for their public sector members, Epifani now stands alone. He has been forced to take the initiative and call a one-day general strike on the 12 December for all the unions. Immediately the metalworkers’ union FIOM announced they would strike, and simultaneously the Base confederation unions, for the first time, announced that they would strike on the same day. The students will also be there. The scene is set for a growing challenge to the Berlusconi regime, notwithstanding Epifani’s efforts to find compromise.

Regrettably, within the workers’ movement and the left in general there has not emerged any force capable of offering an independent concrete political strategy. Such a force, taking its cue from the slogan “we will not pay for your crisis”, would offer a root and branch challenge to all and every aspect of the economic, social and political crisis at hand.

A strategy that must start from defence against all attacks of the government and employers, but at the same time pose the need to challenge the fundamentals and source of all inequality, social injustice and oppression within capitalist society. At the apex of such a programme must be the demand and the struggle for a workers’ government in Italy.

Such a situation may be some way off, but there is no doubt what the students have set off promises, for the first time since 1968, a movement open to rediscover the great revolutionary traditions of the heroic period of Bolshevism, a tradition long buried in a country most in need of it. Speed the day!

FRANCE

Planning for a new revolutionary party

Cathérine Ayme is an activist in the French socialist youth organisation JCR (Revolutionary Communist Youth, linked to the LCR, Revolutionary Communist League) in Lille. In London for the Workers' Climate Action gathering on 15-16 November, she talked to Martin Thomas about the efforts of the LCR and JCR to launch a broader anti-capitalist party in January 2009.

M. After long years of discussion about the possibility of creating a new anti-capitalist party by a coalition with other formations, the LCR eventually made the decision to try to build such a new party from below. Can you tell us the steps accomplished since that decision, and the steps that remain to be taken?

C. It was decided that the basis of the new structure would be local committees. LCR activists should set up committees in the different cities of France and draw in new activists.

We began to discuss collectively, in the new committees, the structure of the new party. We provisionally took NPA [Nouveau Parti Anti-Capitaliste, or New Anti-Capitalist Party] as the name.

There are about 500 or 600 local committees, with an average of maybe 15 members. Then local, regional, and national leaderships have been formed.

On 25/26 June we had the first meeting of the national coordination. It went well. There were a lot of people there, very keen to set up the new party.

We have discussed the fundamental texts for the new party which are going to be voted on at the founding congress on 30/31 January 2009. Each local committee can put its amendments.

On 8/9 November there was the second meeting of the coordination.

M. Since the beginning of the "new party" process, we have seen the development of a capitalist economic crisis such as we have not seen for decades. How has this marked the discussions in preparation for the new party?

C. It's interesting to see how the texts we are discussing have changed as the crisis has developed. Now we have lots of people wanted to put the financial crisis upfront in the texts. That has caused quite a lot of discussion in the national meetings, with people saying that it is not judicious to base everything on this particular period and to talk only about

the crisis in the first lines of the party's basic texts.

But anyway, we have talked a lot about the crisis, and it has brought a lot of new people into the party. We have used it a lot as a lever in our leaflets and in talking to people.

M. Are there other organised political currents besides the LCR participating in this project?

C. Yes. For example there is the Lutte Ouvrière [minority] faction [now expelled by LO] called L'Étincelle and the Gauche Révolutionnaire [group in France linked to the Socialist Party in England].

Unfortunately I'm not sufficiently briefed to talk about the new organisation launched by [Jean-Luc] Mélenchon [and Marc Dolez: left-wingers in the Socialist Party who have split to form a new group announced on 13 November as the Parti de Gauche (Left Party)] or the attitude to it of [Christian] Picquet [leader of a minority in the LCR who rejected the project of a new party on revolutionary lines as too narrow].

M. Can you give some figures?

C. The 500 or 600 committees mean that the numbers are about double those of the LCR and JCR. But we don't have the membership cards in yet from all the local committees. We'll see more exactly in January.

M. Tell us a bit about how things have gone in your area, in Lille.

C. There are three local NPA committees in Lille. At the start there was only one, but when it got up to about 70 people we divided it into three. And then there is a youth committee. Each local committee has about 25 people.

In the youth committee we have about 15 members, where the JCR had five members before. Not a lot of young women, unfortunately.

In the local committees there are more men, too, and often older, sometimes over 40, the average around 30 to 40 years old.

The new youth are mostly people who have no previous political experience. Sometimes they come from families with a bit of a leftist tradition, but usually around the Socialist Party rather than the Communist Party. We've got some people from the alternative-globalisation milieu who want to get more politicised, but mostly that milieu keeps its distance

because they see us as too political. A few people from an anarchist background.

Socially, the widening-out is in the same social milieu as most of the LCR: white-collar officials; a lot of teachers; a lot of social workers, and so on. Not so many industrial workers.

In the youth committee, it is mostly students, mostly from universities, from subjects like law, philosophy, history, geography, and so on.

There are some high school students. Some are very active, but others give less time, because it's hard work in high school. The youth committee makes efforts for them, for example holding meetings at 4pm instead of 8pm so they can come straight from school and participate without getting shouted at by their parents.

It is difficult to get through to the industrial working class, or to young people doing apprenticeships. But we are making efforts.

Each committee fixes its meeting routine, but the norm is for committees to meet fortnightly. For now, LCR cells are still meeting, in the alternate week. But it varies. For example, at Lille, where there are few JCR in the youth committee, we don't have the JCR circle meetings any longer. We do everything through the committee.

M. There have been three big examples in Europe in recent years of attempts at broad left parties, Rifondazione in Italy, Die Linke in Germany, and the Scottish Socialist Party in Scotland. What are the discussions in the NPA movement about these models?

C. For me personally, it would be a big mistake to follow that sort of model. In one of the committees in Lille, someone proposed for the name of the new party "La Gauche" [French equivalent of "Die Linke" in German or "The Left" in English]. You could see a lot of more clued-in activists rolling their eyes.

M. The NPA defines itself pretty clearly as revolutionary. It also defines what it is against. It is anti-capitalist. But it is less clear on what it is for. In the texts there are passing references to "a government at the service of the workers" and an "anti-capitalist government", but very little explanation of what sort of government and what sort of state the NPA fights for.

C. That's being discussed. There are some people who want the term "workers' state" in the texts, and some who say no. Then there were people in one meeting who said that they didn't want a state, but at the same time they wanted democratic centralism. The job is to work out a clear project with a whole lot of people who come from different backgrounds.

M. The documents reject some alternatives to capitalism — those of the old USSR and Mao's China — models which no longer exist. But they say nothing about the models which still exist today, Cuba or so-called "21st century socialism" in Venezuela.

C. We're setting up an international commission which is putting this sort of question on its agenda. I went to the first meeting of this international commission, and it was very interesting. It's going to divide up into groups to cover different regions — Europe, Latin America, Africa, etc. — and work groups on particular subjects, too. There are illusions around about Venezuela, Cuba, etc.; there is a lot of work to do there.

M. There is just one place in the three draft texts where it speaks of the lessons of the 20th century. That is in the statutes, where it says that "the balance-sheet of the 20th century, in particular of Stalinism" indicates that the party should be organised democratically.

The problem in the Stalinist USSR, China, etc. was not one of revolutionary workers' parties which chose bad methods of organisation. Stalinism was a social question, a question of a different social formation. Is there any discussion on this?

C. No, there hasn't been time to dig down into that sort of question. The passage in the statutes serves to differentiate us clearly from an organisation marked by bureaucracy. We haven't got into a precise and deep analysis to show the subtleties of the question — the fact that it is about context and not just organisation as such. The passage in the draft statutes is about rejecting a certain vision of organisation. It may be that on the theoretical level it is false to put the question of Stalinism only in the statutes. I don't know.

• Longer version of interview and more: www.workersliberty.org/lcr-mpa

Ninety years since the German Revolution

November marks the 90th anniversary of the German Revolution. In the first part of a two-part article Stan Crooke tells the story.

The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) had been founded in 1875. After a period of illegality it began to expand dramatically in the opening years of the twentieth century and by 1914 it numbered a million members and was the largest political party in the world.

Its share of the vote in elections and its number of seats in the Reichstag (German parliament) likewise steadily increased. In 1898 it won 27% of the votes (56 seats), in 1903 31% of the votes (81 seats) and, in 1912, 34% of the votes (110 seats). On the eve of the First World War the SPD was the largest faction in the Reichstag.

Scarcely any less dramatic was the growth of the German trade union movement. In 1892 237,000 German workers were unionised. By 1907 the number of union members had risen to 1,800,000. By 1912 the figure had increased to 2,600,000 — a more than tenfold growth in the space of two decades.

Yet the SPD and the trade unions were operating in a profoundly hostile environment.

In 1871 Germany was dominated by an alliance of feudal Junker landowners and industrial “barons” which exulted in militarism, authoritarianism and unqualified hostility to socialism and the labour movement. But the growth of the SPD in this semi-absolutist state brought with it the seeds of political degeneration. The Marxism of the party’s founders was steadily eroded in favour of a mechanical and evolutionary view of history. Capitalism would perish not as a result of class struggle but under the weight of its own contradictions and the remorseless growth of the labour movement. For the party confrontation with capitalism was subordinated to, and ultimately displaced by, a commitment to preserving the structure of the labour movement, as an end in itself.

Such a view was openly espoused by SPD theoreticians such as Eduard Bernstein (“The final goal — whatever it may be — means nothing to me, the movement, everything”).

The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 confronted German Social Democracy with the crucial test. Would it stand by the principles of international solidarity and anti-militarism to which it still paid lip-service, even if it meant open confrontation with the state, or would it throw in its lot with the ruling classes and rally to “defence of the fatherland.”? On 3 August the SPD’s Reichstag fraction met to decide whether or not to vote for war credits. The opposing views were summed up in an exchange between Hugo Haase and SPD leader Friedrich Ebert:

Haase: “You want to approve war

credits for the Germany of the Hohenzollern [the imperial family] and the Prussian Junkers?”

Ebert: “No, not for that Germany, but for the Germany of productive labour, the Germany of the social and cultural ascent of the masses. It is a matter of saving that Germany!... We cannot abandon the fatherland in its moment of need. It is a matter of protecting women and children.”

With only 14 votes against, the SPD fraction voted to approve war credits. In the Reichstag the following day the parliamentary representatives of a party who had been founded under the slogan of “not a man, not a penny for this system” voted unanimously in favour of war credits.

Whilst the SPD leaders talked of the need to “protect women and children,” the real war aims of German imperialism were listed by the Reichschancellor von Bethmann Hollweg in a memorandum of September 1914:

“We will create a central European Economic Union which, although apparently guaranteeing members equal rights, will in fact be under German leadership and must guarantee German economic rule over central Europe. The question of colonial acquisitions, which first and foremost concerns the creation of a centralised Middle African colonial empire, will be examined later.”

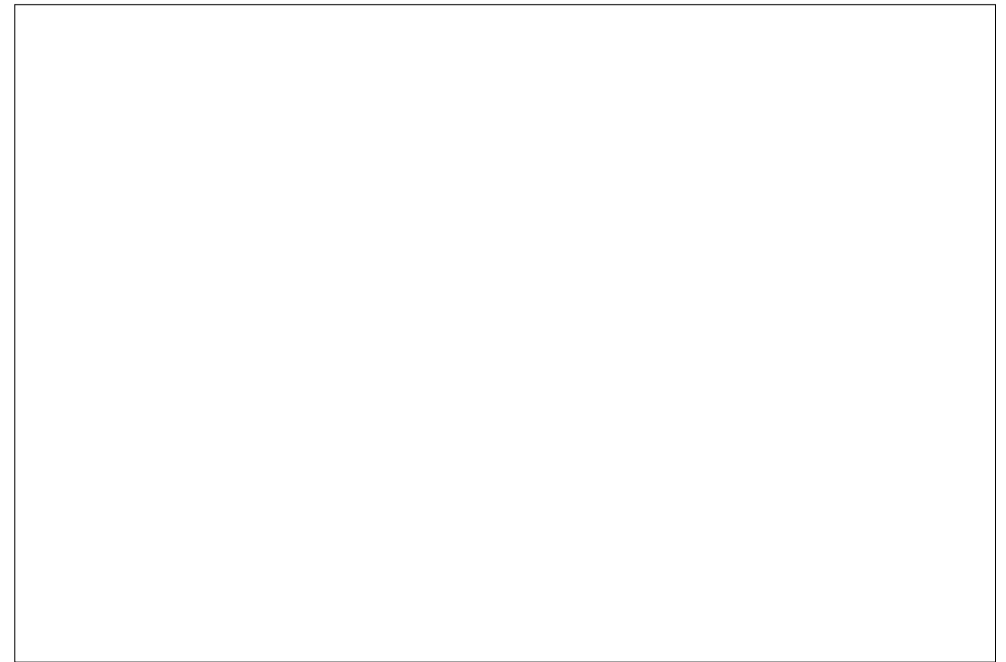
The unions signed an agreement with the employers’ federation to “freeze” all social conflicts for the duration of the war. The SPD pledged itself not to oppose the government’s policies.

The war brought huge profits for the industrial barons. Protective labour legislation was suspended and the working day increased from 12 to 13 hours. The women brought into the factories to replace men who had been drafted into the army were paid only half the previous male wage. Forced labourers from Belgium and Northern France were paid no wages at all. The ever rising prices paid for foodstuffs saw a doubling or trebling of the Junkers’ income.

The war also strengthened the position of the military and reinforced the authoritarian character of the German state. By 1916 it was military commanders such as Hindenburg and Ludendorff who governed the country not the civilian government in Berlin.

Nine million workers were conscripted into the German army. By the end of the war nearly two million of them had been killed and almost four million of them wounded. At home food and fuel shortages cut swathes through the civilian population. By 1915 the mortality rate amongst civilians had increased by 10%, by 1916 by 14% and, by 1917, by 32%.

Between August and December 1914 there were virtually no strikes. In 1915 there were 140 strikes involving 13,000 workers. In 1916 125,000 workers took part in 240 strikes. In the first four months of 1917 over 400,000 workers



Food shortages helped drive the anti-war mood. 1918 food riot.

took part in more strikes than occurred in the whole of the preceding year.

On May Day of 1916 Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht took the lead in organising the first public display of protest against the war. Ten thousand workers rallied on Potsdamer Platz in Berlin to demonstrate their opposition to the war, engaging in running battles with the police for over two hours. A month later 55,000 munitions workers went on strike in Berlin, with solidarity strikes being staged in Braunschweig and Bremen as well. Drastic cutbacks in rations provoked another strike wave in April 1917. In Berlin alone over 300,000 workers went on strike, demanding an immediate peace without annexations, an end to censorship and the state of emergency, release of all political prisoners, improved food supplies, and a democratic franchise throughout Germany.

In the summer of 1917 sailors in the North Sea Fleet mutinied against the feudal discipline to which they were subject and against the privileges enjoyed by officers. Two of the mutiny’s leaders were executed and another 53 sentenced to long spells in prison.

1918 opened with a new wave of strikes in support of peace, democratic reforms and an end to hunger. A million workers struck in 20 different cities. In Berlin alone 500,000 workers went on strike. Briefly, the military situation at the front eased and food supplies for the home population improved. But by August a new wave of strikes unfolded, led by miners demanding an eight hour working day. At the same time an organised political opposition to the pro-war policies of the SPD and trade union leaders emerged.

THE TIDE TURNS

In December 1914 Karl Liebknecht — who had voted for war credits on 4 August only out of a misplaced loyalty to party discipline — abstained in a new vote on war credits. In December 1915 20

members of the SPD paramilitary fraction abstained. In March 1916, the 20 voted against war credits and were expelled from the parliamentary fraction.

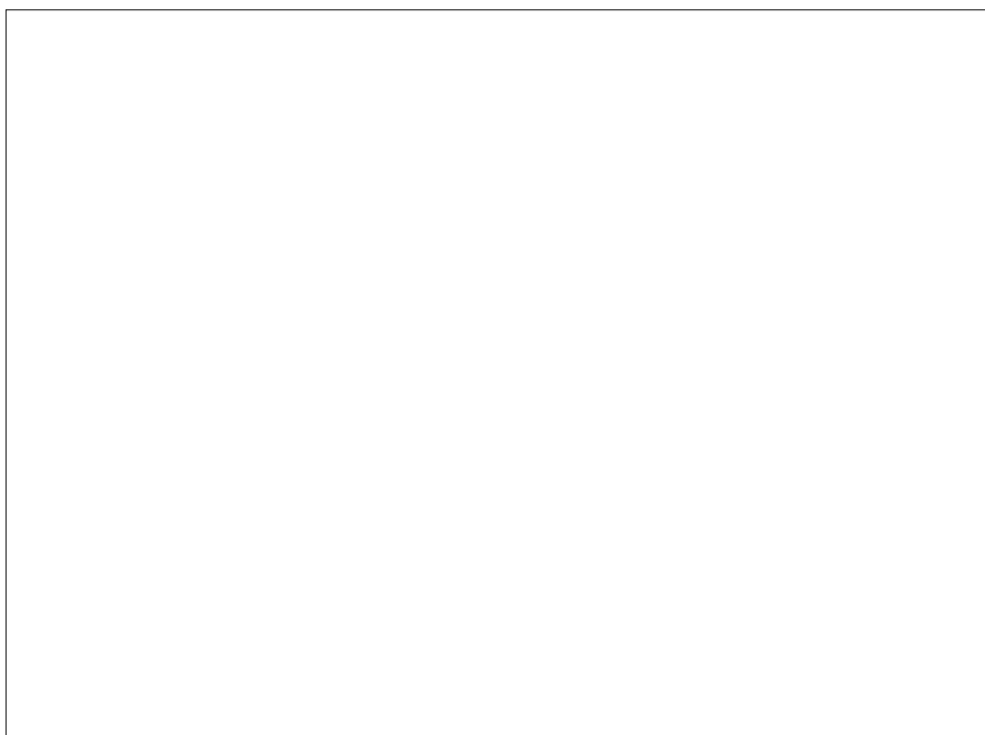
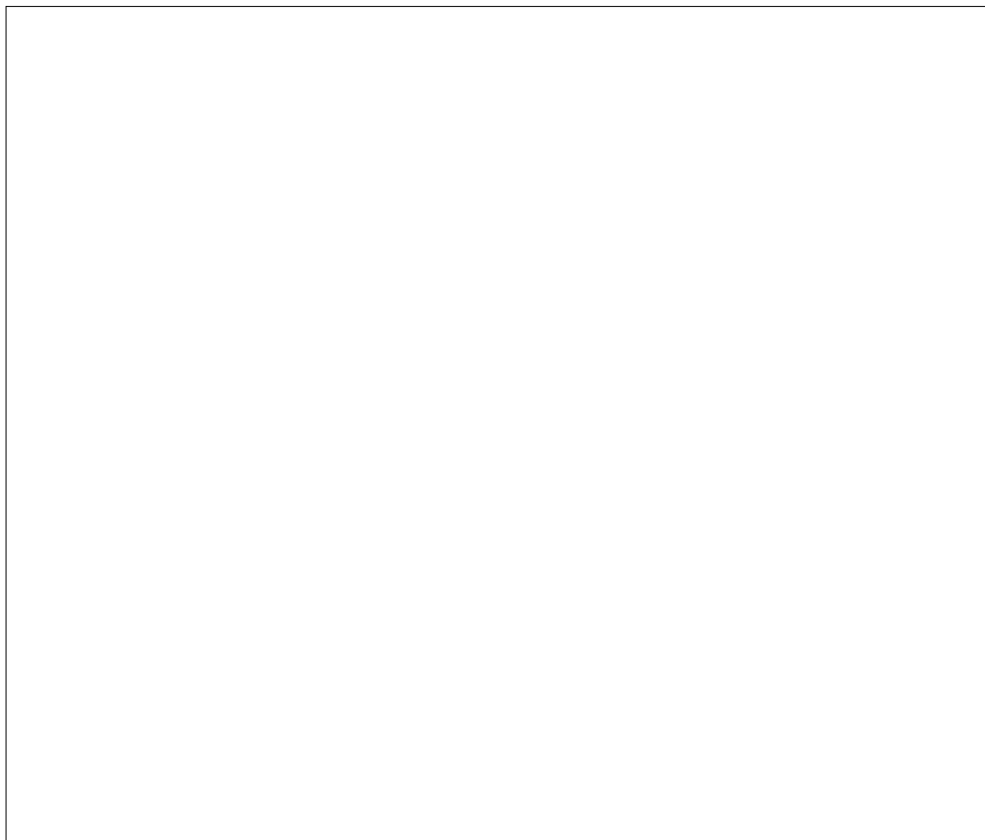
In the spring of 1915 the magazine *Die Internationale*, edited by Luxemburg and the SPD veteran Franz Mehring, was published for the first time. Its contributors attacked the SPD’s pro-war policies. On New Year’s Day 1916 the Gruppe Internationale (better known as Spartakus), was officially founded.

Three months later Spartakus convened a conference in Berlin to draw together the forces of the far left. Delegations were present from most of the industrial areas. The Socialist Youth organisation, which had held its own underground conference only a few days earlier, also rallied to Spartakus.

In the North of Germany opposition to the war and the SPD’s class collaboration was led by the Left Radicals, also known as the International Socialists of Germany (ISD). Based in Bremen, Hamburg and Cuxhaven it published the weekly paper *Workers’ Politics*. Although the Left Radicals worked closely with Spartakus, it tended to be more standoffish towards the workers’ movement when pursuing tactical issues.

In April 1917 SPD dissidents who had been expelled in January of that year convened a conference in Gotha to found the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD). The conference was attended by 143 delegates, including 15 members of the Reichstag.

The new party was “centrist” and heterogeneous grouping. It included a revolutionary wing, with which Spartakus sought to make common cause — Spartakus joined the USPD, organizing themselves openly as a faction. Many of the USPD’s leading figures, such as Bernstein and Kautsky, had played a leading role in the political degeneration of the SPD from which they had now broken away.



Top: returning soldiers of a defeated army. Bottom: armed members of Spartakus

The strike wave of April 1917 and January 1918 led to the formation of the Revolutionary Shop Stewards, consisting of representatives from the workplaces which had played a leading role in the strikes. The Revolutionary Shop Stewards maintained close ties with the USPD, despite the fact that the latter's leaders had denounced the strikes of April 1917 as "socialist experiments" which Germany could ill afford.

By the summer of 1918 the German ruling classes faced the threat of military defeat in the war. They now wanted an armistice as quickly as possible. On 2 October 1918 the leaders of all parties in the Reichstag were informed that the Supreme Army Command had felt obliged to admit defeat.

Germany's defeat in the war would expose the sufferings, starvation and misery of the past four years as a meaningless sacrifice. A new wave of working-class unrest would inevitably be provoked. In order to contain such unrest the German ruling classes looked again to the leaders of the SPD. As the industrialist Robert Bosch put it: "When the house is burning you may have to put out the fire with water from a cesspool, even if it stinks a bit afterwards."

An invitation to join the government was discussed at a meeting of the SPD's parliamentary fraction on 4 October. Philipp Scheidemann, second only to Ebert in the SPD hierarchy, opposed it as a trap. It would mean involvement in

a "bankrupt enterprise" and the SPD being made a scapegoat for the mistakes of those who had been in power. But Ebert successfully insisted that the invitation be accepted, in the name of "Volk und Vaterland". Ebert assured his parliamentary colleagues that a social revolution could now be avoided and the monarchy saved.

However, as Paul Frolich put it: "The death agony of Wilhelmine rule began. As usual in such instances, the up-and-down fever which had seized the old order produced a panic-stricken mood among the authorities, who hastily enacted the most contradictory measures in an attempt to save the regime by reforms. Each new measure, each act of violence, and each concession led to the future disintegration of the old power. The ice was broken. No more holding back!"

THE REVOLT BEGINS

On 28 October the German Admiralty ordered the North Sea Fleet to put to sea, in order to save the "honour of the navy" by engaging in a final battle with the overwhelmingly superior British fleet. On 3 November the shops' crews mutinied, forcing the fleet to return to port.

The following day the unrest spread to the docks and factories of Kiel. The government despatched Gustav Noske, an SPD parliamentarian, to try to contain the unrest, but to no avail. The

Governor of Kiel was forced to resign, and control of the town passed to a Workers' and Sailors' Council. By 7 November the revolution had spread to other parts on the North Coast. The local organs of power collapsed. Real power — at least temporarily — lay with the councils of sailors and workers. On the evening of 7 November the Bavarian monarch was overthrown and a Socialist Republic of Bavaria proclaimed.

Meanwhile Ebert discussed the unfolding revolution with General Groener, Ludendorff's successor as head of the armed forces. If the military chiefs could persuade the Kaiser to abdicate, suggested Ebert, the SPD would support the continuation of the monarchy as an institution, and would work in alliance with the army to preserve the social order.

The next day Ebert met with Prince Max von Baden, the recently appointed Reichskanzler and cousin of the Kaiser. "If I succeed in persuading the Kaiser, do I have you on my side in the struggle against social revolution?" Ebert replied: "If the Kaiser does not abdicate, then social revolution is inevitable. But I do not want it, I hate it like sin."

On 9 November revolution swept throughout Berlin. Hundreds of thousands of workers, including armed detachments, converged on the city centre in a series of huge demonstrations. Troops stationed in the city abandoned their barracks and rallied en masse to the demonstrators. As one of the participants later recalled:

"On the way to the city centre the police were disarmed by the demonstrators and some police stations occupied. There was no resistance from the police anywhere. Their weapons fell into the hands of the workers. Our job was to link up with the demonstrations from Moabit and Charlottenburg and to win over the barracks at Lehrter railway station for the revolution.

"The gates of the barracks were closed. The masses called out: Brothers, do not shoot at us! Put an end to the war! Peace! Down with the Kaiser! Our negotiators convinced even these soldiers and, to the jubilation of the workers, persuaded them to join the demonstration."

By midday the revolution had conquered Berlin. From a balcony of the imperial palace, now occupied by revolutionary sailors, Liebknecht proclaimed: "The rule of the Hohenzollern is over. Through these gates will enter the new socialist freedom of workers and soldiers. Where the imperial banner once flew we will raise the red flag of the free republic of Germany.

Von Baden announced that the Kaiser had abdicated (although, in fact, he had not yet made any decision) and that Ebert was the new Reichskanzler (although von Baden was not empowered to appoint his successor). Ebert's first act was to appeal to the masses to leave the streets. His priority, he explained, was "the maintenance of law and order."

The SPD promised a "revolutionary government" which would "carry out a socialist programme". But this was empty rhetoric. In the words of Luxemburg: "The SPD is a creation of the workers' movement and the class struggle. It has transformed itself into the most powerful instrument of bourgeois counter-revolution. Its essence, tendencies, policies, psychology, methods — all are thoroughly capitalist. Its banners, apparatus and phraseology are the only remnants of its socialism."

In the evening of 9 November the Revolutionary Shop Stewards (RSS) occupied the Reichstag and issued a call for the election of workers' and sol-

diers' councils. The following morning — a Sunday — workers turned up in their factories to elect their representatives, whilst soldiers voted in their barracks.

But the SPD caught the mood of the masses with its appeal for working-class unity. Instead of fighting between themselves, argued the SPD leaders, the organisations of the workers' movement should work together to defend the gains of the revolution. Appealing for "parity of representation" SPD members who had been physically driven out of the factories the previous day for opposing the uprising were able to secure election to the workers' councils.

In the elections for the soldiers' councils, where the SPD was confident of a large majority, there were no calls for "parity of representation." In the night of 9 November and early hours of 10 November Otto Wels, a member of the SPD Executive toured the barracks to ensure that only soldiers loyal to Ebert would be elected.

At midday on 10 November almost 3,000 delegates from the soldiers and workers' councils which had been elected in the morning met in the Zirkus Busch. Playing again on the mood of the masses for unity to defend the revolution, Ebert announced that the SPD and USPD had reached agreement to form a provisional coalition government. The congress elected a Council of People's Deputies, consisting of three SPD members (Ebert, Scheidemann and Landsberg), two USPD members and one representative of the RSS.

At the insistence of the RSS an Executive Committee was also elected. The RSS hoped that the Executive Committee would keep the Council of People's Deputies under control. But the SPD easily outmanoeuvred the RSS. Half the seats on the Executive Committee went to delegates from the soldiers' councils (almost all SPD) and 50% of the other half of Executive Committee places went to the SPD on the basis of "parity of representation". In the evening of the same day Ebert was phoned by Groener who offered Ebert his "loyal co-operation" if he agreed to resolute struggle against "Bolshevism" and the chaos of the councils, a speedy return to law and order and the convening of a National Assembly. Ebert agreed without hesitation.

On 12 November the workers returned to the factories with the SPD press proclaiming the victory of the revolution: "The revolution has been brilliantly carried through... A victory made possible because of the unity and determination of all who wear the workers' shirt."

Luxemburg summed it up differently: "The 9 November revolution was a revolution full of inadequacies and weaknesses. What we experienced on 9 November was three quarters more a collapse of the existing imperialism than the victory of a new principle. The moment had simply arrived when imperialism... had to collapse. What followed was a more or less chaotic and unplanned movement lacking in consciousness."

An armistice had been proclaimed on 11 November. The monarchy, despite Ebert's efforts, had collapsed. And universal suffrage had been introduced. But the old state apparatus had been left untouched. As Groener's phone call to Ebert demonstrated, the military could still lay down conditions for supporting the government. The estates of the Junkers had not been expropriated. The banks had not been nationalised. The capitalists remained the masters of the factories.

MARXISM

The life of Rosa Luxemburg

By ROSIE WOODS

Rosa Luxemburg was born in Poland in 1871, the fifth child born into a Jewish family. The family settled in Warsaw where the young Rosa attended school. Luxemburg was politically active by the age of 15, one of her first acts being to help organise a strike.

This early political activity began a schooling in covert socialist activity, as the strike was savagely repressed and four of its leaders shot and killed. Luxemburg along with other Polish socialists met and organised in secret, firstly in the Proletariat Party and later the Polish Socialist Party.

Luxemburg fled Poland in 1889 to escape imprisonment for her political activity. She went to Zurich, where she was able to study at one of the few European universities to admit women at that time. Here she met and discussed with fellow socialists from Poland and Russia; during this time important theoretical differences on the question of the right of nations to self determination emerged between herself and other leading socialist theorists including Lenin.

Poland had been the subject of violent partition in 1795 and Warsaw was part of Poland subject to autocratic Russian rule; the rest of the Polish nation was divided between Germany and Austria. The subjugation of Poland pushed the Polish Socialist Party into a strong nationalist stance, arguing that a victory for Polish independence was crucial in destabilising the Russian autocracy.

Luxemburg reacted strongly against the nationalist tendencies within the PSP, denouncing them as harmful in the struggle against capitalism. She believed that the struggle for national independence could not succeed and would ally working-class forces with the national bourgeoisies. To the right of nations to self-determination Luxemburg counterposed the direct struggle for working-class socialism. Although she would write that national oppression roused greater revolt than any purely economic question, she argued that proposing anything more than autonomy for Polish section of the Russian realm was diversionary and in practice she downplayed the significance of the national question. She remained intractable on this point.

Lenin and other leading figures in the international left felt Luxemburg's position reflected an overreaction to national chauvinism inside the PSP. But her position formed the basis of her criticism of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and their policy of allowing subjugated nations the right to secede from Soviet Russia; it was also the issue over which she split from the PSP.

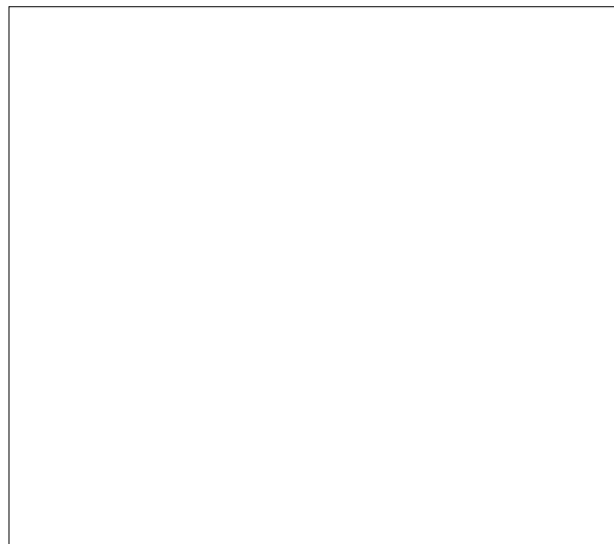
In 1893, along with Leo Jogiches, Julian Marchlewski and Adolf Warszawski, Luxemburg founded the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (the Marxists of the time called themselves Social Democrats). This remained a small organisation until 1917 after which it was transformed into the Polish Communist Party.

Despite living in Germany from 1898, Luxemburg remained a leading theoretician for the Polish socialists and returned to Warsaw in 1905 during the first Russian revolution, as it spread to Russian-ruled Poland too. She was jailed there.

Along with the Bolsheviks, Luxemburg wanted the leadership of the revolution to be taken by the working class and was deeply inspired by the mass political activity of the workers' movement in 1905. She wrote about the mass strike in order to try and to turn the German Social Democrats (SPD) from their more cautious approach towards potentially revolutionary mass political activity.

Luxemburg was the first left figure to openly oppose Karl Kautsky — the German socialist leader known as "the pope of Marxism" — and polemicised against him and August Bebel on this issue, emphasising the role of working-class mass action in developing a revolutionary movement. She argued such movements have a spontaneity. They cannot necessarily be called into being or controlled by leaders of a movement, nor should they be measured against schemes sketched in advance. Luxemburg was scathing of those with a "pedantic conception which would unfold great popular movements according to plan and recipe" (*The Mass Strike*, 1906).

Lenin would later praise Luxemburg's prescience: "Rosa Luxemburg was right. She realised long ago that Kautsky was a time server". Her consistent positioning



of herself against more right-wing elements in the German socialist movement marked out Rosa Luxemburg as such an important political figure.

Luxemburg first established herself as a notable figure in the Germany movement in 1900 with a polemic against Eduard Bernstein. Bernstein wrote a series of articles which set out the case for the achieving socialism through reforms and argued against the need for revolutionary change. This provoked debate throughout the German socialist movement; in 1900 Rosa Luxemburg wrote *Reform or Revolution* as a polemic against Bernstein, arguing that:

"The opportunist theory in the Party, the theory formulated by Bernstein, is nothing else than an unconscious attempt to assure predominance to the petty-bourgeois elements that have entered our Party, to change the policy and aims of our Party in their direction. The question of reform or revolution, of the final goal and the movement, is basically, in another form, but the question of the petty-bourgeois or proletarian character of the labour movement." (*Reform or Revolution*, 1900).

Through the early 1900s Luxemburg was engaged in a continuous struggle from the left against a reformist current in the German SPD; she was concerned about bureaucratisation and control by right wing elements of the trade union movement. She was allied in the SPD with revolutionaries such as Karl Liebknecht and Clara Zetkin.

Zetkin was the key organiser of the Party's women's movement, which organised hundreds of thousands of working class women in political activity. The SDP produced a women's paper, *Die Gleichheit*, and was responsible for organising the first ever international women's day on 8 March 1911. Whilst Rosa Luxemburg supported the women's section, speaking at rallies and meetings and writing on the question of working women's suffrage, this was not a predominant part of her political activity.

It has been argued that Luxemburg saw the work of organising a women's movement as a distraction from the struggle for socialism. However, it is more likely that this was simply not her main sphere of interest, and that her time was taken up with other matters.

To the world the German Social Democratic Party looked a mighty force, and under the leadership of revolutionaries like Luxemburg it might have proved to be so. But the advent of World War One put the leadership of that movement to the test, one which they failed miserably.

The leadership, apologised for in the end by none other than Kautsky, voted in Parliament to support financing the German war effort. Luxemburg's writings on this question illustrate what a deep blow this was to her and to the prospects for the German workers movement.

"Violated, dishonored, wading in blood, dripping filth — there stands bourgeois society. This is it [in reality]. Not all spick and span and moral, with pretence to culture, philosophy, ethics, order, peace, and the rule of law — but the ravaging beast, the witches' sabbath of anarchy, a plague to culture and humanity. Thus it reveals itself in its true, its naked form.

"In the midst of this witches' sabbath a catastrophe of world-historical proportions has happened: International Social Democracy has capitulated." (*The Junius Pamphlet*, 1915)

In response Luxemburg continued to organise, founding the Spartacist League alongside Liebknecht and Zetkin. Luxemburg wrote *The Junius Pamphlet* from prison, a founding text of the Spartacist League.

In 1917 Luxemburg welcomed the Russian revolution wholeheartedly. Still imprisoned at the time, she recognised the need to spread the revolution and continued to organise with this aim in mind.

Much has been made of Luxemburg's criticisms of the Bolshevik Party in relation to issues such as removing the right to vote from the rich, the dissolution of the constituent assembly, the right of nations to secede, the distribution of land to the peasants, and democracy. Her name has been used to support the arguments, including by anarchists, of those who would oppose much else or everything about the Russian revolution.

Rosa Luxemburg did make criticisms, some of which are still debatable. But on the national question, for example, she was plain wrong.

Luxemburg never once questioned the validity of the revolution or considered Lenin and Trotsky as anything but socialist comrades. She wrote: "Lenin and Trotsky and their friends were the first, those who went ahead as an example to the proletariat of the world.... This is the essential and enduring in Bolshevik policy. In this sense theirs is the immortal historical service of having marched at the head of the international proletariat with the conquest of political power and the practical placing of the problem of the realisation of socialism.... In Russia the problem could only be posed. It could not be solved in Russia. And in this sense, the future every where belongs to Bolshevism."

In 1918, as the First World War ended, Germany was thrown into turmoil and revolutionary revolt. Workers' councils spread throughout Germany and on 19 November 1918 came the proclamation of the German republic. The SPD formed a government. Luxemburg, released from jail, set about building the German Communist Party (KPD). This time she found herself in conflict not with right-wing elements but with ultra-lefts who did not want to participate in elections to the newly promised national assembly. Luxemburg emphasised the need to win the majority — including in the countryside — and not just a revolutionary minority. That meant not only fighting the class struggle in workplaces and communities, but building support through elections.

1919 saw strikes and mass protests. Sections of the KPD and other leftists wanted to stage an uprising in January 1919. Luxemburg argued against such a move, believing it to be premature. The so-called Spartacist uprising was brutally repressed by the government of Friedrich Ebert, leader of the SDP, and the Freikorps, far-right paramilitary groups. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were arrested and on 15 January 1919 they were murdered.

Rosa Luxemburg remains one of the key political figures in socialist history for many reasons. She was an independent critical thinker, a committed Marxist and an unshakeable revolutionary committed to working class democracy and socialism.

She showed courage and tenacity in the face of the worst obstacles and opposition. She was fully engaged in the struggle for ideas, and many of her writings have value today. Rosa Luxemburg was an inspirational woman and words from one of her last pamphlets ring as true today as they did then

"Out of all this bloody confusion, this yawning abyss, there is no help, no escape, no rescue other than socialism... Down with the wage system! That is the slogan of the hour! Instead of wage labour and class rule there must be collective labour. The means of production must cease to be the monopoly of a single class; they must become the common property of all. No more exploiters and exploited!...

"In place of the employers and their wage slaves, free working comrades! Labour as nobody's torture, because everybody's duty!...

"Only in such a society are national hatred and servitude uprooted. Only when such a society has become reality will the earth no more be stained by murder. Only then can it be said: This war was the last.

"In this hour, socialism is the only salvation for humanity. The words of the *Communist Manifesto* flare like a fiery mene-tekell [biblical sign of impending doom] above the crumbling bastions of capitalist society: Socialism or barbarism!"

MUSIC

Mama Africa: singing the truth

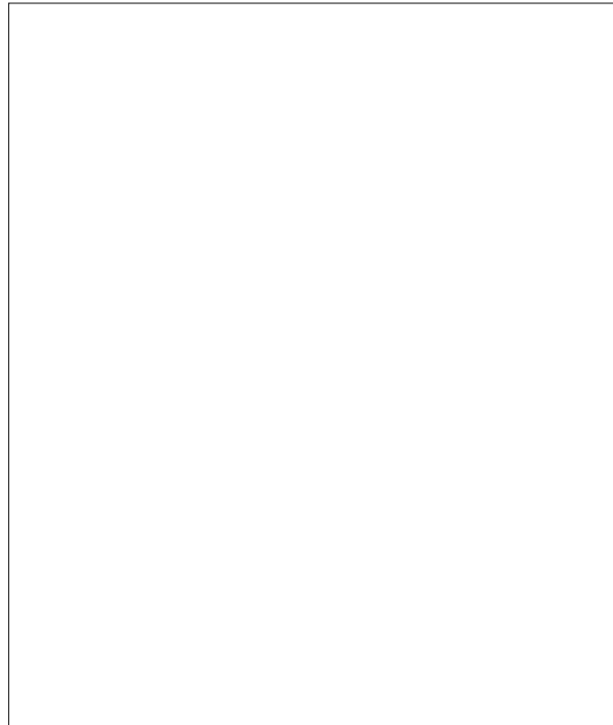
Bruce Robinson looks at the life of the South African singer Miriam Makeba, known as "Mama Africa" who, died of a heart attack aged 76 in November.

Perhaps more than any other musician, Makeba popularised South African music around the world and became widely identified with the struggle against apartheid.

Born in Johannesburg and singing from an early age, Makeba first became well known in the early 50s when she teamed up with the popular close harmony singers, the Manhattan Brothers. This was a time of Black cultural resurgence in the ghettos of Johannesburg and Cape Town. Makeba became prominent in this, recording with her own female vocal group the Skylarks in a style that drew on both traditional African music and jazz. She took the central role in the popular musical *King Kong* which was one of the first pieces to bring township life to international audiences.

Makeba left South Africa in 1959 to promote the semi-documentary film *Come Back Africa*, revealing the realities of apartheid (and in which she appeared as a shebeen singer), at the Venice Film Festival. She was not allowed to return until after the release of Mandela in 1990. Her first place of exile was the US, where she quickly became known with the help of singer and activist Harry Belafonte, appearing on TV and at a concert for President Kennedy. This was a period of a growing folk scene in the US and her music initially became more focused on presenting songs in a traditional African style.

This was also a period when, following the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, there was a growing international awareness of the situation in South Africa. In 1963 she made the first of three appearances before the UN Special Committee on Apartheid. While in the mid 60s she had international hits with songs such as 'Pata



Pata' and 'The Click Song', her stay in the US became increasingly uncomfortable for political reasons, as her then husband trumpeter Hugh Masekela stated:

"I think that there is nobody in Africa who made the world more aware of what was happening in South Africa [in the 60s] than Miriam Makeba..."

"The American government were very upset but couldn't do anything about her fame. Because they were allies of South Africa...we were under surveillance by [the FBI] while we were in the States... It cost her a lot... she bit the bullet when she was at the most

lucrative stage in her career."

Bookings began to dry up and things got particularly difficult after she divorced Masekela and married the Black Power leader Stokeley Carmichael. Eventually in 1968 they left the US for the African state of Guinea where she lived for over ten years.

Makeba was to become involved in a different kind of political controversy when she took part in Paul Simon's "Graceland" tour in 1987. Simon was accused of having broken the official cultural boycott of South Africa by visiting the country and recording with (Black) musicians there. The arbitrariness of a blanket boycott regardless of conditions became clear when well known opponents of apartheid such as Makeba and Masekela were themselves accused of breaking the boycott by appearing with Simon, though their concert in Zimbabwe was blasted into South Africa by massive loudspeakers to thousands of South Africans who stood cheering.

While Makeba's recordings came to incorporate modern African and Western styles, she always retained a South African focus in her repertoire. I saw her in 2004, still looking fantastic in bright African dress. She was full of energy, encouraging her young musicians from across Africa, though I think touring was getting hard for her, as she took a break in the middle of her set and seemed to be feeling the effort. She wished to retire in 2005 but ended up touring to the end.

Her last performance was in support of campaigners against the Camorra (the South Italian equivalent of the Mafia) who had recently killed a number of African immigrants and in support of a journalist who campaigned against them. The concert itself had been threatened. Though she sometimes denied she was a political singer, she qualified that by saying "what I sing is not politics, it is the truth" and she remained both a campaigner and a performer to the very end.

MUSIC

Dubya

ROSALIND ROBSON REVIEWS W

Having spent his career documenting American post-Second World war history it was perhaps inevitable that Oliver Stone would want to make a film about George (Dubya) Bush. But the film feels more like a duty than a pleasure — work undertaken to "make the record", to get printed on celluloid a representation of this at once ridiculous and very dangerously powerful man.

Well, how to tell the story without going over very old ground, without being yet another satire on Bush's gaffes and Texan folksiness? Stone deals with the problem sensibly and competently by opting for a mix of psychological insight and great impersonations by the cast of Bush's cronies — from the other-worldly Donald Rumsfeld to goody two-shoes Condoleezza Rice. Stone succeeds in making not a fascinating or surprising film, but an interesting and enjoyable one and on balance it's a good thing that Stone didn't go for his usual bombastic liberal condemnation.

Like many on the left, I suspect, I wasn't sure I wanted to see a film about George Bush, but the little bits of insight and fly-on-the-wall style drama made it worthwhile. For instance a scene between Blair and Bush, set in the run up to the Iraq war, was very funny. When Bush tells Blair some crackpot military tactic he has dreamt up, Blair struggles with his desire to be obsequious towards the 43rd President of the United States and his not-to-be-denied default snobbishness.

How did Bush get to be the 43rd President? Stone's somewhat lightweight explanation of it, as a mix of accident, the power of Christian conversion and (mostly) nepotism, plays down the dirtiness of the American bourgeoisie's way of doing politics.

The Pen/Sword Prophecy

BY DANIEL RANDALL AKA THE RUBY KID

The Ruby Kid fronts a hip-hop band based in Sheffield. Along with three of the other four members of the group (Max Munday, Louise Gold and Heather Shaw), he is a member of Workers' Liberty. Many of his performances are benefit gigs for working-class and anti-capitalist campaigning organisations. To contact The Ruby Kid, email therubykid@hotmail.co.uk; for his tracks see www.myspace.com/therubykid

In about twenty seconds, the future of rap music beckons
And you'll be wondering whether the world's changed since you played this record.
Who can know for sure? But you might be at the start of this
The artist leading modern-day slave revolts like Spartacus.
A heartless world is hardest to exist in, I keep spitting
Like cowboys with tobacco when the bar-room door gets kicked in.
Keep listening, and you might just hear a rhythm
That tells your whole life-story like a posthumous inscription.
Big schisms between exploiters and exploited class
Cannot simply be dismissed, so don't put paper on the cracks.
The tirades of shit rappers do not bother me;
I stop them like a picket line stops scabs from gaining access to the colliery.
Honestly, I spit prophecies in rhymes and now you're bouncing
But to keep them honest, I'm carving out the future I'm announcing.
Pronouncing on conditions is a must,
But if you've got no better vision to propose then your analysis is dust.
Trust, we must steal fire from the gods like Prometheus
And turn it to our purpose — there's a part to play for each of us
Do battle with authority like Lucifer
And if we lose our paradise, we'll make a new one that's more suitable.
I'm an infidel, a sinner and a heretic
I'm sure a tidal wave is coming but I stay one step ahead of it
I never quit — I fight for my sister and my brother
So the poor can take courage and the rich can take cover.
I prefer the winter to the summer,
Because heat might make you melt but ice will only make you stronger.
Trees become clenched fists shaking themselves towards the heavens
And in the rock and stone is strength that we can find and use as weapons.
Wind mentions the remembrance of all those who went before us
But this war is ours to fight and no-one's gonna fight it for us.
Ignore us at your peril and meet tragedy
With alacrity I battle and reveal the masque of anarchy.

WORKERS' CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change as a class issue

BY ROBIN SIVAPALAN

The Workers' Climate Action gathering on 15-16 November was the first meeting of the campaign since the summer's Climate Camp and an opportunity to take stock of where we are almost a year since activists first started talking about the project. The network has continued to grow with more and more people across the radical environmental movement wanting to approach climate change as a class issue and with trade union activists getting to grips with what it might mean to work for a "just transition".

The Saturday of the event was for education and debate. Rose briefed activists on the reality of the market-based solutions for carbon-emissions reductions which are widely supported by the union movement, from the Kyoto framework to the ongoing Copenhagen talks. Even the seemingly benign version, Contraction and Convergence, which also accepts the commodification and privatisation of the right to pollute, is stacked in favour of the existing powers and relies on national governments and corporations to deliver justice.

Ewa spoke of her experiences and perspectives from working with the Iraqi oil unions fighting for control of the country's resources, and the enormous social strength that these unions have where oil is the main source of national wealth.

She argued that the time could come for that union to adopt a "leave it in the ground position", only on the basis of winning the battle for control over resources in the first instance. This example of workers with considerable class consciousness organising under occupation conditions was contrasted with her time as a Unite organiser at Manchester airport, under conditions of "social peace". Here, organisers came up against the Unite bureaucracy and partnership politics as well as a workforce fragmented by the vast number of companies operating at the airport and the extent of casualisation.

I focussed on the difficulties of facing both the trade union and climate movements, arguing that without a class perspective and strategy, the way forward would remain unclear, allowing us to be divided and reliant on cross-class coalitions.

I rejected the kinds of arguments common in the environmental movement which weigh the urgent needs of the global south in general with the relatively insignificant interests of frontline workers (in their view), as a way of justifying their actions which take little account of the class-interests they serve.

Over lunch, the inspiring film *Rocking the Foundations* was screened, which documents the unique struggle to democratise the Builders' Labourers Federation of New South Wales, Australia. Through doing this and by effectively organising around bread and butter issues — and winning — the newly confident union proceeded to champion broader class struggles and social movements, becoming famous for their Green Bans which halted \$6 billion of development projects which would destroy areas of environmental importance and working-class communities.

Dave Elliot, from the Open University, then gave a presentation on the Lucas Plan where workers democratically came up with a comprehensive business plan to transition to socially useful production, to stop redundancy and closures and put an end their labour being used for military ends. He talked of the various technologies developed through a wave of workers' plans that, if implemented, would have set the UK on a trajectory towards 100% renewables from the 70s.

Paul Hampton then critiqued the politics of the Green New Deal being adopted by the Green Party and "progressives" (see the www.workersliberty.org for article).

Sunday began with excellent facilitation training for consensus decision making. We reviewed and consolidated some of the perspectives we'd set down so far and developed other key aims for the months ahead. We discussed our work within the Climate Camp and assessed where we were at with our work at Heathrow and Kingsnorth. We agreed that some of our decisions on what kind of organisation we wanted to build would flow from our concrete aims, and we finished the day in regional groups, mapping out local work for the coming months. To read a report of our first year, for full minutes of this gathering, and to get involved, e-mail workersclimateaction@gmail.com.

WORKERS' LIBERTY FUND DRIVE

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty has launched a drive to raise £18,000. Coincidentally if you multiply that amount by the number of children, women and men that live in the UK, you will get the amount the Bank of England and government have advanced to bail out the banks.

The total bail-out figure is mind blowing, staggering, out of this world. The money we want to raise, when compared to the bail out figure, is completely the opposite. But it is a big ask for all our members, sympathisers and readers. We have neither bankers' wages nor bankers' assets (even dodgy assets).

Nonetheless if over the course of the next ten months, we can raise that amount we will have done a lot to expand our work at this critical time. Please help us in any way you can.

1. Support us by taking a few copies of our paper to circulate at work or college

(contact our office for details);

2. Give us money each month by standing order: contact our office or download a form from our website. Or donate via our members or online.

Send cheques made payable to "AWL" to our office: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA;

3. Contact us to discuss joining the AWL.

• In the last three weeks we have received £300 in increased monthly standing orders from sympathisers and members, £60 in standing orders from readers taking out standing orders, a £30 donation from Richard B, and a £300 donation from Bruce R. An accumulated total of £690, bringing our fund total to £2530.

**Fund total
£2530**

Students to march in 2009

From back page

On top of this, the government recently announced it would be slashing the number of students entitled to the (shockingly low and heavily means-tested) student grant. This will see some students whose applications for grants had already been approved lose out on money they thought they were going to receive.

The assaults from the government and university bosses are clear. Less apparent are the attacks under way from the leadership of the "official" student movement, the NUS. Decades of misleadership from various shades of New Labour supporter have seen NUS atrophy from what was once a mass organisation with genuine fighting potential (however imperfect and distorted) into a bureaucratic rump that most of its members see as a provider of discounts and services.

Time and time again, NUS has capitulated and sold-out over key struggles, consistently rejecting the strategies of labour movement-led direct action that movements in France, Greece and Italy have proved singularly capable of forcing concessions from government. Now, the current NUS leadership wants to irreversibly

concretise this state of affairs by renewing their efforts to introduce a new constitution that would formally make NUS what it has been in practise for years — an inaccessible, bureaucratic monolith controlled from the top-down by a layer of professional managers, rather than anything resembling a collective, representative, democratic and campaigning organisation (that is, a union).

The fight against the abolition of democracy in the official national student movement cannot simply be a campaign to defend the status quo. It must be an offensive campaign for a real, fighting national union and, if the new constitution is passed, it must be a campaign in the most active, radical Student Unions for a concerted break with NUS and the establishment of a new, rank-and-file led, activist federation of Student Unions.

The February 2009 demo will be a crucial stepping stone.

• To get involved with building the demonstration, or for a model motion to pass at your SU on support for the demo, email studentdemo2009@gmail.com or visit www.studentdemo2009.org.uk

EVENTS, DATES, PUBLIC MEETINGS

For more information, later dates links and downloadable leaflets see www.workersliberty.org/whatson

AWL London study group on Marx's Capital: 6pm, second and fourth Mondays of the month, Camera Cafe, Museum Street (Tottenham Court Road tube)

AWL London study group on the history of British Trotskyism: 7.30pm, first and third Thursdays of the month The Plough, Museum Street

Unison members' open forum: time to reclaim our union! 12-4pm, Saturday 22

November, Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret St, Birmingham

Reclaim the Night March: Assemble 6.30pm, Saturday 22 November, Whitehall place (march is women only) Meet at 5.45pm for the Feminist Fightback contingent. Followed by rally open to women and men at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road.

Cambridge AWL benefit gig with the Ruby Kid: 8pm, Wednesday 26 November 8pm, the bar, Cambridge Union Society, behind the Round Church.

"Climate change and class struggle" — AWL London Forum: 7.30pm, Thursday 27 November, School of Oriental and African Studies, Russell Square.

Workers' Climate Action banner-making for 6 December climate change demo: 11am, 30 November, central London. For more details email bobsutton1917@gmail.com.

"Capitalist crisis and workers' plan" — Sheffield AWL public meeting: 7.30pm, Thursday 4 December, Committee Room, Victoria Hall, Chapel Walk

"Feminism and the capitalist crisis" — London Socialist Feminist discussion group meeting: 7.30, Friday 5 December SOAS, Russell Square

National Climate Change march: Meet 12 noon, Saturday 6 December Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park. Look out for the Workers' Climate Action and No Sweat banners for the contingent led by Bangladeshi garment workers

No Sweat gathering: 10.30am-5.30pm, Sunday 7 December. People's Palace, Queen Mary University, 327 Mile End Rd, London E1.

WILLIAM MORRIS

State and revolution

THE THIRD PART OF A SERIES BY PAUL HAMPTON

One of the reasons for Morris' scepticism about the possibilities of trade unionism was his understanding of the state. On the ABCs of the state, he was sharp and clear. In 'An empty pocket is the worst of crimes' (*Commonweal*, 17 July 1886) he wrote of the ruling class: "This is mine, and whether I can use it or not, nobody else shall' is the watch-word of property; and Queen, Lords, and Commons, Army and Navy, Judge, Magistrate, Lawyer and Policeman are kept in their places and paid (handsomely too) by Society in order to carry out this watchword to its legitimate consequences, that is, the semi-starvation and complete degradation of the majority of the people." (Nicholas Salmon, *William Morris' Journalism*)

He used his Notes on News column in *Commonweal* to disparage the state. For example in 1889 he wrote: "For after all, what is their [the government's] business? The defence of property; the defence of the brigandage of the classes" and later that, "We are governed by a bureaucracy i.e. a government of professional officials governing in their own interests as representatives of the proprietary classes". (Salmon)

Morris was also remarkably sharp on the emerging imperialism of the European bourgeois states and the tendency of capitalism to generate wars. *The Manifesto of the Socialist League* in 1885 warned in the language of the day that "There is competition always, and sometimes open war, among the nations of the civilised world for their share of the world market. For now, indeed, all the rivalries of nations have been reduced to this one — a degraded struggle for their share of the spoils of barbarous countries to be used at home for the purpose of increasing the riches of the rich and the poverty of the poor." (Salmon 1996)

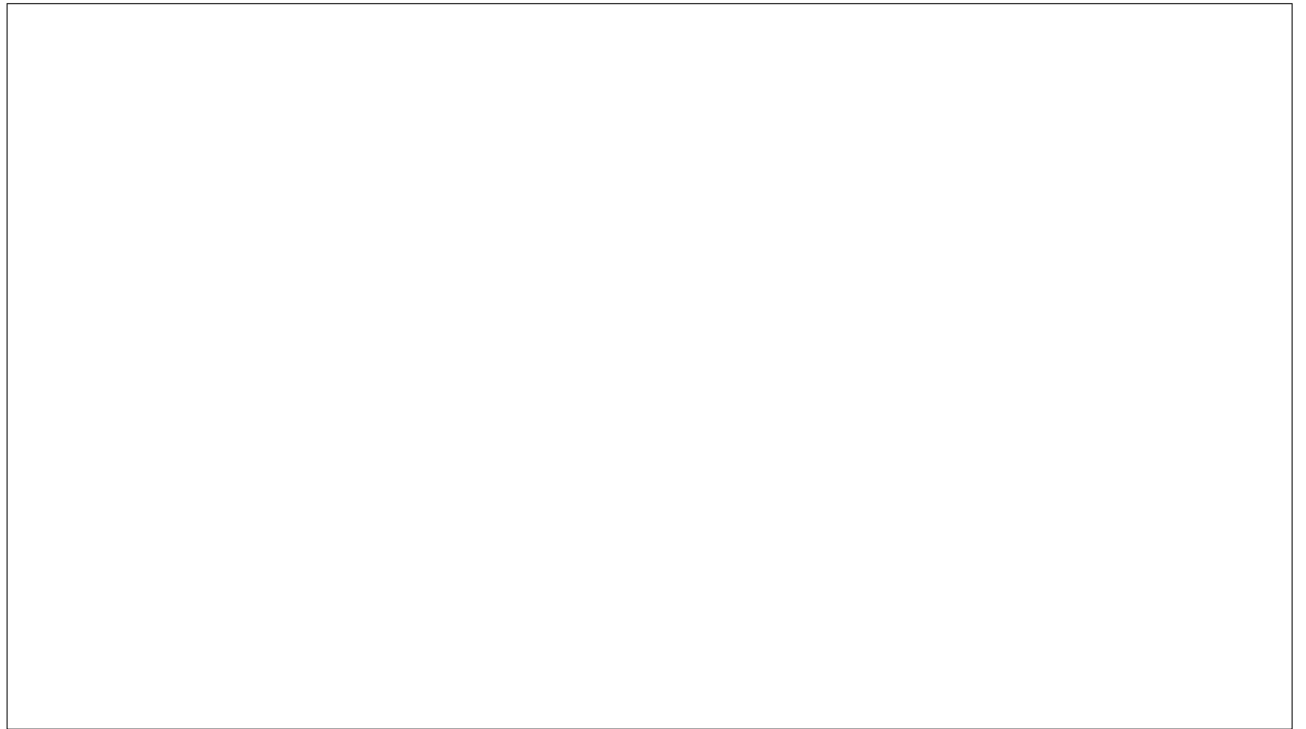
In 1888 he published a remarkable article by Belfort Bax in *Commonweal* discussing whether the imperialist expansion into Africa would give new longevity to capitalism. Morris wrote: "I must say that our comrade Bax's appeal to us to consider the Question of Africa is very timely... To put the matter in the fairest way possible — the present rulers of society are bound by their position to seek for new markets in order to work off the stock of wares which they go on producing by means of partly unpaid labour; they must do this whatever fresh suffering the process entails on the barbarous population they civilise, or the civilised population which they degrade far below barbarism." (Salmon)

Morris expressed his opposition to the British Empire and its expansion. He described the missionary Henry Stanley as "the enemy of workmen in Great Britain as well as of the natives in Africa" and said that if he reached England again that "the workmen of this country will make some demonstration against him, and so clear themselves of participation in his crimes". (*Commonweal*, 13 April 1889)

On Britain's invasion of Sudan, Morris wrote that "it would be almost too good to hope for defeat" by the Mahdi army. (*Commonweal*, 22 December 1888)

He also explained the attitude socialists should take in the event of a major European war between the great powers, in terms reminiscent of the internationalists in the First World War:

"Meantime, if war really becomes imminent our duties as Socialists are clear enough, and do not differ from those we have to act on ordinarily. To further the spread of international feeling between the workers by all means possible; to point out to our own workmen that foreign competition and rivalry, or commercial war, culminating at last in open war, are necessities of the plundering classes, and that the race and commercial quarrels of these classes only concern us so far as we can use them as opportunities for fostering discontent and revolution; that the interests of the workmen are the same in all countries and they can never be really enemies of each other; that the men of our labouring classes, therefore, should turn a deaf ear to the recruit-



Morris was hostile to "Parliamentarianism" by socialists, although his attitudes softened somewhat later in life.

ing sergeant, and refuse to allow themselves to be dressed up in red and taught to form a part of the modern killing machine for the honour and glory of a country in which they have only the dog's share of many kicks and halfpence — all this we have to preach always, though in the event of imminent war we may have to preach it more emphatically. (*Commonweal*, 1 January 1887)

Morris was unequivocal about the necessity for working class revolution to put an end to capitalism, since, as he put it, "a proprietary class neither will nor can yield its privileges voluntarily". (*Emigration and Colonisation*, 31 December 1887)

Ever blunt and straightforward, he wrote in *Unattractive Labour* (May 1885): "For my part, having regard to the general happiness of the race, I say without shrinking that the bloodiest of violent revolutions would be a light price to pay for the righting of this wrong." (Nicholas Salmon, *William Morris: Political Writings*)

He retained this view until the end. In his last lecture, *What we have to Look For* (30 March 1895), he said: "I cannot for the life of me see how the great change which we long for can come otherwise than by disturbance and suffering of some kind." (Edward Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*)

PARLIAMENT

However this did not prevent him from denouncing the r-r-revolutionary phrasemongers, who "preach revolution without class struggle, which is an absurdity and an impossibility." (*Commonweal*, 28 September 1889)

Soon after the split with SDF, the Socialist League debated its attitude towards standing candidates for parliament and for other bodies, such as local councils. On one side were Eleanor Marx, Aveling, and Bax, who like Engels favoured using elections as a means of making socialist propaganda; on the other stood Morris and some comrades influenced by anarchism, who opposed such an intervention.

In his contribution in *Commonweal* (July 1885), Morris argued: "I think that Socialists ought not to hesitate to choose between Parliamentarianism and revolutionary agitation, and that it is a mistake to try and sit on the two stools at once; and, for my part, I hope that they will declare against Parliamentarianism as I feel assured that otherwise they will have to retrace their steps at the cost of much waste of time and discouragement... On the other hand the object of Parliamentary institutions is the preservation of society in its present form — to get rid of defects in the machine in order to keep

the machine going... if we mix ourselves up with Parliament we shall confuse and dull this fact in people's minds instead of making it clear and intensifying it." (Salmon, *Political Writings*)

He maintained this hostility throughout his involvement with *Commonweal*, asking readers in 1890: "What is the aim of Parliament? The upholding of privilege; the society of rich and poor; the society of inequality, and the consequent misery of the workers and the degradation of all classes." (Salmon, *PW*)

He described the House of Commons as a "Den of Thieves" and famously in his utopian novel *News from Nowhere* (1890) made the historic parliament building a store for manure under Communism.

Of course workers had only recently obtained the vote and there were not, as in Germany, Marxist MPs in Parliament, although a few Radicals did seek workers' support. Morris was therefore highly critical of the Liberal Party, which he described as "a nondescript and flaccid creation of bourgeois supremacy, a party without principles or definition, but a thoroughly adequate expression of English middle-class hypocrisy, cowardice, and short-sightedness, engrossed the whole of the political progressive movement in England, and dragged the working-classes along with it, blind as they were to their own interests and the solidarity of labour." (*Socialism from the Root Up*)

At best, Morris believed that revolutionaries "Socialists may be obliged to use the form of parliament in order to cripple the resistance of the reactionists by making it formally illegal and so destroying the power of the armed men on whom the power of the parliament and the law-courts really rests. But this can only come in the last act; when the Socialists are strong enough to capture the parliament in order to put an end to it, and the privilege whose protection is its object, the revolution will have come, or all but come." (*Anti-Parliamentary*, *Commonweal*, 7 June 1890)

Later in life Morris' hostility toward standing for parliament softened, in part because of the experience of getting John Burns and Keir Hardie elected in 1892. In a lecture, *The Present Outlook in Politics*, in 1887 he looked forward to the "gradual building up of a great labour party" and as late as May 1895 he spoke in favour of George Lansbury, who stood for parliament as an SDF candidate.

On his earlier attitude toward standing candidates and parliament, I think Morris was simply wrong. His justifiable hostility to the bourgeois state and its parties was mechanically transformed into inflexible tactics to close off avenues for socialist propaganda, and thus conceded important arenas of national and local politics to the bourgeoisie.

21ST CENTURY SOCIALISM

Two other “workers’ plans”

By SACHA ISMAIL

In the first two articles of this series, we looked at how, after the Russian revolution, the Communist International developed the concept of “transitional demands”. Many socialists in the international movement before the First World War had instead operated with a combination of “minimum programme” (minimal demands, enough for now and for the foreseeable future) and “maximum programme” (the goal of socialism, put off indefinitely). Transitional demands meant, as the Third Congress of the Communist International put it in 1921:

“...the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat, for demands which in their application undermine the power of the bourgeoisie, which organise the proletariat, and which form the transition to the proletarian dictatorship, even if certain groups of the masses have not yet grasped the meaning of such proletarian dictatorship.”

How does the British left relate to this question today?

The AWL has produced a “Workers’ Plan for the Crisis”, which we think is in the spirit of the “transitional” programmes produced by the Communist movement before the political degeneration brought about by Joseph Stalin and his followers, and by the opposition to that led by Leon Trotsky. Below we look at the “workers’ plans” produced by two other British socialist groups: the Socialist Workers’ Party and Socialist Appeal.

First, however, a few more words on the meaning of transitional demands — which the analysis of the SWP and SA’s programs will hopefully serve to illustrate.

There is no such thing as “the transitional program”, which exists independently of concrete struggles and can be dusted off and used (perhaps with a bit of updating) across the decades. The socialist programmes written in the early 1920s, for instance, were an attempt to respond to the situation which existed in a number of European countries, where Communism had a mass following but the post-war revolutionary wave had passed and reformist parties represented the majority of the politically organised working-class.

The Trotskyist programmes of the 1930s were attempts to grapple with a huge economic crisis, but in a situation where the workers had previously been defeated and the mass revolutionary workers’ parties of the 20s no longer existed.

Our situation, though it has more in common with the 1930s, is different again. We have to mobilise a working-class response to the crisis in a situation where, despite the crisis, working-class struggle is at a relatively low ebb and a majority of the class is to at least some degree turned off by mainstream politics and has little experience of left wing politics.

What we need is not a “faithful” updating of what Trotsky wrote in the 30s, but use of the same kind of *political method*, the same kind of approach, to help organise the working class in the situation that exists

today.

It follows from this that there is also no such thing as “a transitional demand”, in the sense of a demand with an inner essence that is in some mysterious sense inherently “transitional”. The whole thing depends on which issues are immediately facing the working class (in Britain today, for instance job losses, real wage cuts and house repossessions; in Bolivia in 2005 the ownership of natural gas resources was centre-stage), on the strength and organisation of the labour movement and on the extent to which the bosses politically and dominate or the workers’ movement (the trade unions and workers’ political parties) dominate.

The point is to create and test out a programme, an interlinked set of ideas and demands, which can help working class activists rebuild their movement and get more combative towards the bosses and their system of exploitation.

THE SWP’S “PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT CHARTER”

The SWP tends to scorn the concept of “transitional demands”. Sometimes they argue that the period we are in is insufficiently revolutionary for the use of such a programme, which as explained above is a misunderstanding of the whole idea. Whatever the theory behind it, the “People Before Profit Charter” launched by them is most definitely not an application of the “transitional method”.

The document contains barely any mention of the working class, capitalism or class struggle; the best we get is a vague reference to “working people” and mention of the possibility of public sector strikes.

Meanwhile, the actual demands are minimal and/or vague in the extreme: “introduce a windfall tax on corporate superprofits”; “stop privatisation... free and equal health and education services available to all”; “no to racism; no to the BNP”. They do not assert, or only very minimally assert the principle of what Marx called “the political economy of the working class”, i.e. human need, solidarity and democracy should be the principles by which the economy and society are run, against the “political economy” of capital.

The SWP are tinkering, not in the sense that they are not immediately or directly revolutionary (neither are most transitional demands in a non-revolutionary situation), but in that they do not cut sharply against the logic of the profit system. And there is nothing in the document about social ownership, not even of the banks, nor about defending and extending democracy.

There is no concept here of inter-linked chain of struggle around which the workers’ movement can rally, go onto the offensive and prepare itself to take power. Nor is there any concept of a “workers’ government” (see page three of this paper), a vision of how the labour movement can impose its demands, at a governmental level, when it reaches a great enough level of strength

and mobilisation. We are left with the sense of lobbying the bosses’ government for a few more crumbs from the tables of the rich.

The “charter” ends by citing a number of campaigns which “sound good”. It is worth noting that the two most directly run by the SWP (Stop the War and Unite Against Fascism) make no attempt to even present themselves as working-class campaigns but are “single issue” liberal campaigns.

• peoplebeforeprofit.wordpress.com

SOCIALIST APPEAL: “MAKE THE BOSSES PAY”

Unlike the People Before Profit Charter, Socialist Appeal’s programme is an attempt to produce a “transitional programme” for the current crisis. It is far more comprehensive and radical than the SWP text. However, it is all over the place.

The title tries to tap into the widespread, but very vague, left sentiment about “making the bosses pay for their crisis”. The problem with this idea is the issue is one of control, of who rules in society, and the need to replace the rule of profit with democratic working-class rule. Saying “we will not pay for your crisis” is one thing; posing the solution in terms of “making the bosses pay” — redistribution within the given system — is another.

Socialist Appeal have thrown everything but the kitchen sink into their programme in an attempt to produce an update of the transitional programmes of the 1920s and 30s. This is not a honed down action plan for socialists to fight for in the labour movement, but a worthy presentation of selected clippings from the Trotskyist archive. Even the language is archaic — “work or full maintenance for all”; “society will inscribe on its banner: the universal right to work”; “for proletarian internationalism”.

Alongside this is a fair amount of blue-print-mongering. For instance in the idea, spelt out in detail, that the boards of banks should be made up as follows: one third of bank workers’ representatives, one third from the unions, and one third from the government. This scheme, cut-and-pasted from “war communism” in Russia 1918-21, is an more of an architectural sketch as if the workers’ movement was bricks and mortar not a living movement, involved in struggles which emerge and take shape and have to be fleshed out and concretised as the labour movement reorganises itself.

If the SWP’s charter is an open departure from the method of transitional demands, Socialist Appeal’s manifesto is a good example of how to garble it and make it irrelevant by filling your head with “orthodox Trotskyism”, demands which have been ossified and applied without thought to their actual relevance today.

• Previous articles in this series at www.workersliberty.org/tp

A workers’ plan for the crisis

1. Nationalise the entire system of banks and financial institutions, without compensation for the bosses and under democratic control.
2. Reverse cuts and privatisation; tax the rich to rebuild the NHS, education etc. as public services under workers’ and service-users’ control.
3. Resist the job cuts. Jobs for all: a shorter working week, maximum 35 hours, without loss of pay; expand public services; nationalise firms declaring mass redundancies.
4. The labour movement should calculate its own, realistic, inflation figure and demand, as a minimum, that wages, pensions and benefits are inflation-proofed; benefits that are enough to live on; a minimum wage of £8.80 an hour without exemptions. Phase out VAT etc; cut taxes for the least well off; tax the rich.
5. No evictions. A big programme of council house building and confiscation of empty/unused properties to provide cheap, quality housing for all.
6. Open the books of the corporations! Fight for work-

- ers’ control at every level of the economy. Nationalise the giant industrial and service companies
7. Nationalise energy and transport; use their profits to bring down energy bills; make local transport free and reduce other fares; invest in public transport and renewables and convert polluting industries as part of a worker-led transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy.
8. Scrap the anti-union laws; a positive charter of workers’ rights. Support workers defying the law. Fight for civil liberties and democracy: abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords, all representatives should be recallable and paid a worker’s wage.
9. Organise workers regardless of immigration status, as part of the fight for open borders. Mass mobilisation against the far right and the social decay on which it feeds.
10. Fight for women’s liberation: demand equal pay without compromise; expanded abortion rights; free, universal childcare, well-funded services and other

- demands to make equality real.
11. Unite with workers across Europe and the world to fight for a levelling up of wages, conditions and rights; for a Workers’ United Europe.
12. Organise the unorganised, including young, contracted out and precarious workers. Organise the unemployed. Union officials should be elected annually and paid a worker’s wage; decisions on industrial action made by elected strike committees. Rebuild Trades Councils.
- The unions must fight to impose their demands on the Labour government — not advise or lobby Brown, but confront him politically! Rally the activists to build a movement for independent working-class representation, as the basis for a new workers’ party. Its aim should be a workers’ government — a government based on mass working-class mobilisation and accountable to the labour movement, which serves our class as the Tories and New Labour have served the rich, and reshapes society in the interests of people, not profit.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

Two states — or no hope for either people?

By SEAN MATGAMNA

In two previous articles, I have responded to Moshe Machover's polemic against my discussion piece from July, "What If Israel Bombs Iran?" (www.workersliberty.org/israel-iran)

There remains to consider Moshe Machover's proposed solution to the Arab-Jewish conflict, his programme.

I have in the articles noted such strange things in Moshe Machover's polemic as his description of the USA as "humanity's worst enemy" and his nod — to put it its weakest — towards the notion of a manipulative Zionist conspiracy operating in the background of 20th century history and controlling events. No less strange is his programme for solving the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

What Moshe Machover counterposes to the two-states programme is the destruction, in different ways, of both the Israeli Jewish and the Palestinian nations!

He expounds it in a text he recommended to his readers in his first polemic, the Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust Lecture which he gave in 2006. (www.iran-bulletin.org/palestineisrael.htm).

"What I propose to discuss here", he explains, "is resolution rather than palliatives... various steps that can be taken to ameliorate the present dire situation, in which great suffering is caused to millions of human beings — mostly to Palestinians, but also to many Israelis... pressure must be applied on Israel to end its military occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan Heights. But... so long as its causes are not eliminated, the conflict will persist; any amelioration is likely to be no more than a lull, followed by another violent eruption".

So he is not against "palliatives". But he holds that they will produce no more than "a lull". His main argument is that there is no hope for a real political settlement in the world as it exists now or is likely to exist in the "medium term". He is utterly defeatist for the Palestinians.

He tells us his preconditions for a settlement:

"First and foremost, equal rights. By this I mean not only equal individual rights for all... but also... equal collective rights, national rights, for the two national groups actually involved: the Palestinian Arabs and the Israeli Hebrews. [Otherwise] one of these groups will be underprivileged, subjugated and oppressed."

How will those equal rights be arranged? Two states?

"TWO STATES"

No! Against that, Moshe Machover insists on "the right of return: recognition of the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, to be rehabilitated and properly compensated for loss of property and livelihood. The only argument voiced against it is that it would jeopardize the 'Jewish character' of Israel, or, in plain language, its ethnocratic constitution as a settler state. But to accept this argument would amount to capitulation to Zionist ideology."

Here Machover uses definitions that are either spurious, or about things common to most states, to brand Israel an illegitimate nation and deny it the right to exist. He calls what is in other people national identity "ethnocratic constitution as a settler state". He elevates refusal to "capitulate to Zionist ideology" to a governing and shaping principle in the search for a solution!

The "right of return" — of organised collective resettlement and repossession — by up to five million people, almost as many as the existing population of Israel, has long been understood on both sides as another way of expressing opposition to Israel Jewish self-determination and to Israel's right to exist.

Moshe Machover makes the end of the self-determination of the Israeli Jewish nation a precondition for any "settlement" between Israel and the Palestinians. After that, he will suggest, may come some approved form of Hebrew self-determination; but only after.

Further: "The third and most fundamental element in a genuine resolution is removal of the fundamental

Ethiopian Jews: dupes of the Zionist project?

cause of the conflict: the Zionist colonisation project must be superseded. This means not only de-Zionisation of Israel, but also repudiation of the Zionist claim that the Jews at large, constituting a 'diasporic nation', have a special right in — let alone over — the 'Land of Israel'."

This is on a par for irrelevance with Moshe Machover's seriously archaic commitment to Arab unity, which I will discuss below! He makes the end of Jewish immigration a precondition for a settlement between the existing Jewish nation and the Palestinians.

Certainly some immigrants from the old Stalinist world have been used as settler-fodder by the colonising movement in the West Bank. That settler movement will be ended in an agreement to set up a fully independent Palestinian state. After that, the immigration policy of Israel is surely the business of its citizens.

Here too, Moshe Machover makes negating "Zionist ideology" his overriding consideration, rather than the possibilities for reconciliation and working-class unity.

"No genuine resolution is possible in the short or medium term", he continues. Why? "Because of the enormous disparity in the balance of power. Any settlement will inevitably impose harsh oppressive conditions on the weaker side. To expect anything else would be wildly unrealistic".

This doctrine would make the resolution of any situation of colonial oppression "impossible". Ireland was always weaker than Britain, for example.

So we should reject a weak Palestinian state? In the name of what? In the name of a solution in a different world, where all the conditions he lists are radically altered. That is the ideal answer. Now and "in the medium term" we are left with rejection in the name of... the terrible status quo!

In the categorisation of the Marxist movement, this is a species of "imperialist economism" — the rejection of the struggle for national rights on the grounds that such things are bound to be imperfect, and count for nothing, in a world dominated by imperialist giants.

"In these circumstances [today's and the medium-term future's] any 'two-state settlement' is bound to be a travesty: not two real sovereign states (let alone two equal ones) but one powerful Israeli state dominating a disjointed set of Palestinian enclaves similar to Indian Reservations, policed by corrupt elites acting as Israel's proxies".

Why is it not possible to argue for a Palestinian state in contiguous territory? Like everything else, it is hopeless. "The virulent malignant metastasis of Israeli

colonisation, and the weakening of the Palestinian Authority under Israeli pounding and international strangulation" is irresistible.

This is simply defeatism — accepting the probable destruction of the Palestinian nation. Moshe Machover, from his watch-tower in Britain, throws in the towel on behalf of the Palestinians!

IN ANOTHER WORLD

But Moshe Machover does have a programme — **None not for this, but for a very different world. "Given the actual imbalance of power, a single state embracing the whole of Palestine will be no better than an extension of direct Israeli military occupation and subjugation. A flaw common to both 'two-state' and 'one-state' formulas is that they are confined to the 'box' of Palestine — the territory of the British Mandate from 1923 to 1948... This box was purpose-made for Zionist colonization, the root cause of the conflict".**

Moshe Machover makes pan-Arab unity and a change in the world balance of forces the precondition for anything seriously better than now for the Palestinians.

"Two interconnected and mutually reinforcing processes will be vital for changing the present balance of power. First, decline in American global dominance, and in particular in the ability of the US to go on backing Israeli regional hegemony without incurring unacceptable economic and political costs. Second, a radical-progressive social, economic and political transformation of the Arab East, leading to a degree of unification of the Arab nation — most likely in the form of regional federation".

Then everything will be different. "The task will then be to accommodate these two groups [the Palestinian Arabs and the Hebrews] in the regional union or federation. Borders will become internal demarcations within the federation, and will be drawn accordingly. We cannot foresee what they will be, but they need by no means conform to those that have existed so far".

This is a programme for an epoch, or possibly two epochs! And how does Moshe Machover know that the new world balance of power after the hegemony of the US declines will be well-disposed to Jews, or Palestinians? The history is one of Arab states — Syria, Jordan, Lebanon — butchering Palestinians and denying them rights.

Meanwhile? No hope at all for the Palestinians — neither a two-states nor a one-state solution. The practical Palestinian conclusion might well be to migrate far away — if they can! Which is what the worst Israeli chauvinists advocate!

The rapid historical philosophising here, and the ultra-left rejection of anything that is — perhaps — possible, come down to despair and an implied advice to Palestinians who want to resist despair that they should give up and migrate.

It is a fact of history that most of the 1940s Israeli Trotskyists who denied the right of the Jewish state to exist and had no hope of anything better simply packed their bags and left. That was not an option for most of the Jewish people then.

It is not an option for the Palestinians now.

There is no hope in Moshe's recommended future history for the Israeli Jewish nation either. It is, he seems to say, a case of the "mutual ruin" of the contending peoples. The Palestinian Arab state cannot come into existence, and the Hebrew state does not deserve to continue existing (as Moshe put it in his first polemic) "in anything like its present form".

I have not come across anything like this policy apart from a 1947 piece by Ernest Mandel predicting, and passively accepting as inevitable, the imminent destruction of Jews throughout the world [1].

WORKERS' UNITY

Now, of course, the programme for the Middle East, and specifically for the Jewish-Arab conflict, which you support and advocate will naturally shape and inform your attitude to events. Socialists

Want a socialist Middle East. Marxist socialists believe that a socialist Middle East can be created only by the working class there, by the Arab workers and the workers of the minority peoples there, Jews, Kurds, Persians, etc.

The question of questions is, how do we get from where we are now, from where the workers of the region and of its different states are now, politically, to the point where the working class is actively fighting to create a socialist Middle East and thus to solve such seemingly intractable conflicts as that between the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab peoples.

In terms of its size and weight in the economy and society, the working class of the region could easily create a socialist Middle East. If right now we could magic a revolution in the political consciousness of the working class, overnight so to speak, then the whole situation in the region would be transformed, if not overnight, then very quickly, by a socialist revolution.

In fact, of course, the possibilities are limited by the political consciousness of the workers in the region. Overwhelmingly the working class is in politics subordinate to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois and regressive theocratic political forces.

In the past there were strong Communist Parties in a number of countries — in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Syria, in Iran. At a number of points there were powerful working-class movements and mobilisations. In the late 1970s and into the early 1980s there were huge movements of the working class in Iran. There is a working-class movement there now.

We do not have magic, but we do have proposals, a programme, for transforming the consciousness of the working class. We advocate socialism, but not only socialism. We propose immediate and practical measures which fall short of socialism but which, focusing and developing the political consciousness of the workers, would bring socialism into the realm of possibilities. We propose democratic measures that can transform the consciousness of the working class.

That is what “two states” means for us. It is not primarily advice to governments — though in realistic calculations progress now depends heavily on governments, in the first place action by the US government to compel Israel to accept a Palestinian state — but a programme which socialist workers on both the Israeli and the Palestinian side could agree as a basis for their peaceful and friendly co-existence. It means Jewish workers championing the right of the Palestinians to a fully independent state of their own, and Palestinian and other Arab and Muslim workers agreeing to the existence of the Israeli Jewish state.

“Two states” is a necessary part of any socialist programme for the region, for a democratic socialist federation or whatever. Any Palestinian or Arab working-class movement that does not recognise the right of Israel to exist is a chauvinist movement. The Jewish working-class movement that does not champion the rights of the Arab minority in Israel, and fight for the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to get their own fully independent state, is a chauvinist movement.

ISRAEL

Yet to draw a neat parallel sign between chauvinist Jews and chauvinist Arabs (or Iranians) is misleading here. The right to go on existing of the established Arab states, and Iran, is not in question and not threatened. That of the Jewish state is.

Israeli military might means that it is not in military fact threatened now; but without Israeli will and ability to resist, the right of Israel and the Hebrew nation to go on existing would be under military threat.

Even now, after sixty years, only three Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania) recognise Israel. The mass movements of political Islam, including Hamas among the Palestinians, have it as their programme to put Israel out of existence.

In an earlier article I cited Frederick Engels’s comment at the end of the 19th century that Poles and Irish had a duty to be nationalists before they were internationalists. It is a precondition of the existence of their nation that the Israeli Jewish working class are “nationalists” and support the defence of their own state.

Jewish working-class chauvinism begins much further out in the continuum from nationalism to chauvinism. It begins at the point where the nationalism of the Jewish workers leads them to indifference, opposition, or hostility to the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

In the last decade we have seen, again and again, how the Israeli and Palestinian chauvinists goad and promote each other. Nonetheless socialists — those “on the ground” — must advocate co-existence in two states.

A programme for a Middle East socialist federation must include this “two states” programme, build on it.

A programme which accepts as one of its prerequisites the conquest and dismantling of Israel and the dispossession of the Hebrew nation is not a socialist programme at all, but an Arab-chauvinist or Islamic-chauvinist programme.

The idea that retributive and “redistributive” justice demands the dismantling of the Jewish state is a poisonous piece of Arab or Islamic chauvinism. It is built on the idea that the Hebrew nation is a “bad” nation, an illegitimate people, undeserving of rights.

The “two states” programme is based on the opposite propositions: that there is no such thing as an illegitimate nation or a bad people; that the Israeli Jewish nation as well the Palestinian has rights.

The idea that Israel was “seized” from the Arabs is one of the central pillars of the anti-Israeli ideologising that poisons the left. National rights are about human communities, not tracts of land. What exists in Israel is overwhelmingly the creation of the Israeli-Jewish people. Some of it is on land bought from Palestinian landlords. Much of it is on reclaimed formerly waste land.

Of course, some of it is on land conquered from the Palestinians in 1948. But there is no end, and no justice, to programmes based on rival groups claiming the land of their forefathers. Today there is no way to do as much justice as possible to both living populations, Jewish and Palestinian, other than “two states”.

ZIONISM

Moshe Machover’s lecture also contains his account of the history of the Arab-Jewish conflict.

A lot of what he says would be acceptable to most Marxists. For instance, he uses the model of a nation employed by the Bolsheviks (that it is an entity with a common language, territory, culture, economy, etc.) illuminatingly to draw the distinction between what he calls the Hebrew nation and the Jewish diaspora. Yet even there, it seems to me, he goes wrong by using the bedrock Marxist categories in such a way as to lop off aspects of modern Jewry and modern Jewish history that do not fit.

He skews his view of Israel. He emphasises what, as a Zionist colonising enterprise, it has in common with other European colonising enterprises.

He states: “Saying that Zionism was and is a colonising project and Israel is a settler state, a colonist state, is not a matter of value judgement but a plain statement of fact”. But “statements of fact”, in the way they are presented, imply pre-existing value judgements.

Moshe Machover emphasises particular features of Israel which accentuate the bad connotations of the “settler colonial state” description, and downplays the unique character of Israel as a refuge for people fleeing persecution, many of them fleeing for their lives. There is a “value judgement” attached to the statement of that unique character which cuts across the “value judgement” attached to the “settler colonial state”.

In a limited space, I will focus on a few examples of what is wrong with Moshe Machover’s account of the history.

One of the roots of the historical demonisation of Zionism and Israel on which the poisonous kitsch left account is mounted is the identification of Zionism with imperialism. Moshe Machover describes the Zionist settlement in Palestine as Europe’s “rampart against Asia”, or Britain’s “little loyal Jewish Ulster”.

To put it at its weakest, this grossly oversimplifies a series of complex questions. Yes, the Zionist project has depended on the relations of the Zionist movement, and then of the growing Jewish population in Palestine, with a series of imperialist powers in possession of or with interests in the region — first the Turkish Empire, then Britain, and now the USA. It is fact that in the 1930s the attitude of the Trotskyists to the Zionist enterprise was determined by their condemnation of the alliance of the Jewish colonists with British imperialism which the Zionist project entailed.

And yet the relations of the Zionists with Britain were anything but a straightforward alliance, with the Jews “subordinate” to and mere “agents” of British imperialism. Eleven years after Britain took control in Palestine, it imposed restrictions on the acquisition of land by Jews there and seriously (through its Labour government) discussed abandoning commitment to a “Jewish national home” there.

In the late 1930s, as war with Germany loomed, Britain found the Jewish colonists a major problem, pushing Arab nationalists towards alignment with Hitler’s Germany. Britain imposed very severe limits to Jewish immigration, projecting an end to it after five years.

Thereafter, as the great slaughter was going on in Europe, they interned Jewish “illegal” immigrants.

The Jewish population rose in revolt against Britain in the mid 1940s and forced British withdrawal and a UN decision to create two states, one Jewish and one Arab, in pre-1948 Palestine. (The territory of the UN’s proposed Arab Palestinian state was taken in 1948-9 by Jordan, Egypt, and, some of it, by Israel; in the 1967 war Israel took the West Bank from Jordan and Gaza from Egypt).

In the 1950s and 60s the existence of Israel pushed Arab states like Egypt into alliance with the Stalinist bloc in the international polarisation of that time. The 1973 war, in which Israel was invaded, precipitated the Arab rationing of oil that plunged the advanced capitalist world into economic slump.

And yet the kitsch left — and Moshe Machover — go on as if Israel is primarily a tool of “imperialism”. The incidents from history of Zionism collaborating with imperialism are passed on from each anti-Zionist propagandist to his comrades, and so on for generation after generation. Theodor Herzl talked to the anti-semitic Tsarist minister von Plehve, Ben Gurion to Turkish officials, and so on.

It is largely cod history. Take an example from Moshe Machover’s exposition: “A little loyal Jewish Ulster”. This is one of the quotes that has passed from hand to hand for many decades.

“JEWISH ULSTER”

Think about it, relate it to the real little loyal Protestant Ulster, and you see how stupid it is. Yes, Ronald Storrs, the British military governor of Jerusalem, did say in 1917 that the Jewish colony could form a “little loyal Jewish Ulster”. That is how the Irish situation appeared to him then.

But what in real history did Ulster’s “loyalty” mean to the British empire? Nothing but injury! In the 1880s, “little loyal Ulster” the British Liberal settlement with the Irish nationalists, for Home Rule powers to a Dublin government not much greater than those which would be given to the London County Council in the 1890s.

The Ulster revolt was backed by the Tories, and some Liberals, for a variety of reasons. Some didn’t think the Irish would stop at Home Rule. They would want independence and use Home Rule as a stepping stone to it.

“Little loyal Ulster” revolted against the British Liberal government proposal for Irish Home Rule in the period immediately before World War One. Britain seemed on the brink of civil war; that affected German calculations about British capacity and helped bring on the World War. The success of Little Loyal Ulster in breaking Home Rule brought on the nationalist Irish rebellion of 1916, now not for Home Rule but for an independent republic. It brought on the powerful movement for a republic that developed thereafter.

It led to the secession of nationalist Ireland from the UK in 1919, and war in Ireland between republicans and British forces. It led to 26 counties of Ireland winning Dominion status — something vastly greater than Home Rule.

The embitterment in nationalist Ireland caused by the partitioning off of “little loyal Ulster” meant for Britain — leave aside what it meant for Ireland — that its access to the Irish naval bases which it desperately needed in World War Two were frustrated by Irish neutrality.

Major Storrs’ “little loyal Ulster” would have served Britain better if it had been less “loyal” in the Home Rule conflict of the 1880s and before World War One.

PAN-ARABISM

Moshe Machover sees the question of Israel in a peculiarly anachronistic framework — that of a revolutionary pan-Arabist nationalism that will unite the “Arab nation”, i.e. all the states of the Arabs.

Is there an “Arab nation”? There was at the height of Arab nationalism, in the 1960s, a mass cross-state Arab national sentiment. There may be some of that sentiment left.

Commitment to that pan-Arab nationalism was part of the ideology of several states, and led to abortive attempts to unite Egypt and Syria (1958-61). Nothing lasting came of it.

The Trotskyist movement of that time committed itself to the unity of the Arab nation as part of “the Arab revolution”. Michel Pablo, Secretary of the Fourth International, wrote a pamphlet 50 years ago on the question entitled *The Arab Revolution*. The international network led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel had a programmatic formula based on that idea: a socialist federation of the Middle East, with “autonomy”, “even self-determination”, or “self-government” for national minorities such as the Jews and the Kurds. [2]

You will find echoes of those pan-Arabist concerns in AWL’s coverage of the Kuwait war of 1991.

CONGESTION CHARGE

Campaign for free, publicly owned transport

BY BRUCE ROBINSON

On the 11 December Greater Manchester will vote on a package of government funding for transport that is dependent on the introduction of congestion charging over a wide area of 80 square miles around the centre of Manchester. To win, there needs to be a majority for the proposals in seven of the 10 GM boroughs. This may be helped by the fact that the referendum question does not mention the charge.

The £3.7 billion funding consists of a £1.5 billion grant and a £1.2 billion loan, which is intended to be repaid by means of the congestion charge. The rush hour charge could cost a motorist up to £5 a day to go to work in the city. In exchange, the local authorities promise three new tram lines, more frequent buses, various improvements to stations and roads, school buses and more peak hour seats on trains.

Not all this is really new money though. The government promised to build the new tram lines over 10 years ago and then cut the funding. Still the government hopes that by blackmailing Greater Manchester into accepting congestion charging it can create a precedent for the rolling out of road tolls or congestion charges elsewhere.

The referendum has split both business and the left. In the "Yes" camp are Labour controlled councils, Greens and Friends of the Earth, that section of business that has profited from the 'regeneration' of Manchester and believes that "Greater Manchester needs a total transport revolution if we are to remain competitive in the global marketplace", and last but not least the current private near-monopoly operators of buses and trams. They are spending £2 million on a propaganda campaign, which makes much of the beneficial environmental effects of the switch to public transport they hope will occur.

However, there have recently been concessions to the road lobby so that there will be a "one-year, 100% discount for all delivery vehicles over 3.5 tonnes while we test the impact of congestion charging on business transport costs (in partnership with the Road Haulage Association)". Further concessions are likely to those business lobbies that make enough fuss about the impact on their profits.

On the "No" side are the Tories, various anti-tax and motoring lobbies, petrol station owners, people living in areas like Wigan that will get little benefit from the new investment, some of the left particularly Respect (Renewal), smaller businesses and those like the Trafford Centre who are located inside the charging zone and dependent on cars for customers. The anti-charge Momentum campaign advocates that the investment should be paid for by the privatisation of Manchester airport.

What attitude should socialists take? Firstly, we should oppose the congestion charge as a regressive

The experience of over half a century seems to me to have relegated the "unity of the Arab nation" to the realm of historical might-have-beens. The reality is that the Arab states, with their artificial boundaries drawn by Britain and France after World War One, have proved to be remarkably durable. Even Iraq, which may still break apart, in which often antagonistic elements (Kurds, Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs) have been bound together, has shown remarkable durability, and in its Arab part at least has a strong specifically Iraqi nationalism.

The various projects by Arab nationalists to unite existing states have all come to nothing. Different sections of the pan-Arabist Ba'ath party were in power in Syria and Iraq for four decades, but the Ba'athists split, Iraqi versus Syrian, rather than those Arab states which they ruled becoming united.

The point seems to be that, despite culture and previous history, no Arab nation knit together by a common economy exists. The different Arab states have evolved distinct histories over at least half a century, and some, like Egypt, have a vastly older distinct identity. They have distinct state bureaucracies and ruling classes.

It would have been nonsense to speak of a distinct Palestinian nationalism in the 1930s and 40s, as distinct from an Arab nationalism among Palestinians; but a Palestinian nation exists now, formed by a common history.

In a curious anomaly, Moshe Machover's assessment of *Israel* uses the old Marxist criteria of a nation sharply, narrowly, and rather too prescriptively. But he seems to have forgotten some of those same criteria when assessing the Arab "nation". He ignores the fundamental things lacking to bind that "nation", such as a common economy. He elevates culture and pan-Arabist sentiment above all else, in a way that has less in common in Lenin than with the concept of a nation of his opponents in the Marxist debate before 1914, the Austro-Marxists.

The aspiration to Arab unity was always in some serious degree only a secularised version of what is now expressed by some clerical fascists — the Muslim Brotherhood, for example — as the aspiration to restore the "caliphate", a new version of the centuries of Islamic empires in the region. In any case, much of "pan-Arabism" is now subsumed into pan-Islamism.

The 1960s Trotskyists with whom Moshe Machover is aligned by his programme saw the "Arab revolution" in their own semi-mystical framework of ever-advancing "world revolution".

The "Arab revolution" would end in the working class across the Arab world taking power. It could not win its objectives otherwise. This was "permanent revolution" — but the "permanent revolution" not of Trotsky but of Trotsky's epigones. The working class was invoked in the scheme, but it was not at all clear how the working class would come to the leadership of this movement.

That idea of the "Arab revolution" — the "colonial revolution" in the Arab world — shaped the attitude of Trotskyists in the 1950s and 60s to Israel. Although Israel figures only in a footnote in Pablo's 1958 *Arab Revolution* pamphlet (and the Palestinians not at all, except as "the refugees"), pan-Arabism had as one of its components a deep animosity to Israel. The Trotskyists felt that they had to get in line with the "Arab revolution".

It would be unfair to say of them that their talk of "self-government" for the Israeli Jewish nation was only lip-service; but in the circumstances it could not be a lot more. It did not prove durable, being swept away, for many of them, by events after 1967.

DESPAIR

In Moshe Machover's programme there is a strange and irresponsible mix of ultra-leftism and despair. He refuses to consider ways forward in this world, and instead "orients" to a solution in a remote future world!

In his own roundabout way, he shows that the only way forward is "two states"; striving, in that framework, to accumulate improvements in the Palestinians' situation; and on that basis to build Arab-Jewish working class unity.

1. Mandel-Glotzer debate:
www.workersliberty.org/mandel-glotzer

2. That was broadly the position "inherited" by Workers' Fight, the AWL's predecessor in the 1960s. Those interested in that will find our views then on the "Arab revolution" set out in an article by the present writer published in the Irish Workers' Group magazine *Workers' Republic* not long before the Six Day War of 1967. It was reprinted in *Socialist Worker* (then called *Labour Worker*) in June 1967, under the name Anthony Mahony.

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It all depends on the cost and quality of public transport

tax that hits the less well off and is unlikely to move those who are well off out of their cars. (In a splurge of generosity, the proposals include a 20% deduction on the charge for those on the minimum wage — this is purely cosmetic.) This is also a move to shift transport infrastructure out of the sphere of public services paid for by general taxation to make it something that has to be financed specifically by extra taxation and borrowing.

Secondly, the impact of the charge depends on the cost and quality of alternative public transport. Current fare levels are very high and there is no clear indication of how they would be controlled after the charge is introduced. More fundamentally, as long as buses and trains are privately owned, there is no public control over fares or service levels and public subsidies go to boost private profits.

The government's current plans to re-regulate buses outside London have loopholes for controlling fares and services where "it would not be commercially viable for that operator...to provide services to the standard specified." In other words, profitability is a valid reason for high fares and bad services. Taking transport back into public ownership is then a pre-condition for an adequate and affordable transport system.

Despite my objections to the charge, I do not believe that socialists can simply line up with the "No" campaign in the referendum and vote against. While there are left elements arguing for a "No" vote, the overwhelming dynamic of the campaign is reactionary opposition to tax rises regardless of who pays. They are not proposing an alternative positive policy for the environment and transport that we should support.

Rather, faced with the choice in the referendum we have no alternative but to abstain and start building a campaign for such a policy. That is why we are participating in the Campaign for Free Transport, set up to fight for "an expanded public transport system that is fully integrated, publicly owned and free at the point of use." This is the only policy that can guarantee environmental improvements through a decent public transport system and is in the interests of workers in Greater Manchester.

Within a few weeks, the Campaign has collected nearly 1,000 signatures on a petition and is planning a rally on 2 December at 5pm in Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester.



Let Naomi and Jemima stay!

BY RUBEN LOMAS

The barbaric inhumanity of capitalism is exposed starkly through its immigration laws, which base themselves on the fundamental principle that while capital and commodities should be able to travel freely across the globe, human beings wishing to move between states or enter another country must be selected and judged based on criteria established by the capitalists themselves — usually on the usefulness of the humans to the profit system.

It is this grossly and obscenely anti-human logic that leads to people like sisters Naomi and Jemima Izevbekhai (aged seven and six respectively) facing the threat of deportation from Ireland back to their native Nigeria, where they fear female genital mutilation (sometimes dismissively referred to as “female circumcision”).

Their mother, Pamela, left Nigeria for Ireland in 2005 because of her husband’s family’s strongly-held belief in FGM (against which Nigeria has no federal law). Her first daughter, Elizabeth, died aged 17 months from loss of blood, which the attending doctor believed could have been caused by FGM.

Anyone with the most basic instincts of human solidarity and compassion can see the brutality of forcefully deporting young girls who may face this kind of danger. Arguments about how real that danger is (typically, there are whispers from some quarters that the family are really just “economic tourists”) are utterly irrelevant; the right to move between countries and to live where we like should be a fundamental human right, not one that is subject to arbitration and discrimination in capital-



The Izevbekhai family

ist courts. Pamela's appeal against the deportation was turned down by the High Court in Ireland on Tuesday 18 November but the family will remain in Ireland until the case is heard by the European Court of Human Rights.

The case should be a wake-up call for those on the left who are afraid to criticise practices such as FGM (claiming that such criticism amounts to “cultural imperialism”), and those leftists who believe that fighting against immigration controls is somehow too radical; only a consistent struggle against the racist and misogynistic logic of capitalist immigration controls can guarantee the safety of the Izevbekhai sisters and others like them.

- To visit the campaign website, go to www.letthemstay.org.
- For the London-based Campaign Against Immigration Controls, visit www.caic.org.uk.

Students to march in Feb 2009

BY DANIEL RANDALL, EDUCATION NOT FOR SALE STEERING COMMITTEE (PC)

Several student unions, together with the National Union of Students Women’s and LGBT campaigns, have called for a national demonstration for free education for 25 February 2009.

Already, Bradford, Sussex, UEA and, on indicative votes, UCL, Edinburgh and Aston have backed the mobilisation. More SUs look set to come on board in the coming weeks and, with the two of the main left factions in the student movement (ENS and the SWP-initiated “Another Education Is Possible”) also supporting the initiative, the mobilisation for the action is gaining real momentum. Discussions around it are also taking place inside trade unions such as the RMT, and activists have plans to raise it inside other key unions such as UCU and NUT.

A successful demonstration will send a clear message to the government and university bosses that united, student-worker direct action campaigning around education issues is not something confined to continental Europe. Moreover, it will galvanise activists within the student movement and allow us to prove to ourselves that we can work together to organise campaigning on a grassroots, activist basis independently of NUS. Given that NUS is, sadly, likely to have abolished its own democracy by the planned date for the demo (see below) the demonstration could be the catalyst for cohering a network of activist student unions to found a new national union.

Revolutionaries within the student movement should therefore be clear about the significance of the mobilisation; it is potentially the decisive battle in the struggle over the future of NUS as well as the future of education funding.

The New Labour government’s project for the education sector is amongst the most nakedly neo-liberal of its many schemes; it has been aggressive in its ambition to subordinate every aspect of education — from primary schools upwards — to the exigencies of the market. In 2009, it will review the £3,000 cap on university top-up fees.

Bosses at prestigious universities such as Cambridge have already been clamouring for the cap to be lifted or scrapped altogether, creating an open, unrestricted marketplace in Higher Education that could see top institutions charging up to £10,000 for the privilege of studying there.

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