

# workers POWER

*Nato's Balkan victory means*

# Peace without justice

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## UNISON CONFERENCE

# Stop the witch-hunt and start the fightback

DELEGATES ASSEMBLE in Brighton in mid-June for the annual conference of Britain's biggest trade union, Unison. This year's gathering comes in the wake of Tony Blair's address to a TUC-organised conference on "partnership at work". At the conference, Blair declared "you are rising to the challenge of demonstrating a real role for trade unions" before admonishing his union backers not to use partnership "as a disguise either to get your foot in

the door and start rowing about recruitment or to go back to your old behaviour in the bad old days of the 1960s and 1970s."

Blair demands the continuation of a one-sided truce in the class struggle at work in exchange for a few more individual rights, the prospect of wider union recognition and an abysmally low minimum wage.

Certainly, Blair has not told his New Labour acolytes in local councils or NHS

Trust managements to stop attacking Unison members. Labour-controlled Manchester City Council has torn up a long-standing agreement for a 35-hour week, while Labour-led Sefton has locked out 40 workers for taking wholly official action short of a strike.

At a national level, New Labour continues to pursue the Tory-inspired Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in the NHS and a Best Value agenda in local government. Both policies mean serious

attacks on the jobs, pay and conditions of Unison members.

How to mobilise the most effective resistance to these and other attacks should be at the very top of Unison's agenda. Instead, the union's national leadership has intensified its witch-hunt of the left in key branches across the country. Two of the biggest local government branches, Birmingham and Sheffield, are now suspended, while two democratically elected branch officers

at University College London Hospital face disciplinary action by their own union for leading the fight against PFI at the hospital.

Militants in Unison must seize the opportunity to turn the Brighton conference into a launch pad for a real fightback against both the Blairite attacks and a union leadership that works overtime to stifle any effective opposition to them.

● Turn to page five for more on Unison

## THE WAR - FACTS AND FIGURES

### REFUGEES

Total Refugees: 850,000  
Albania: 443,100  
Macedonia: 248,000  
Montenegro: 68,900  
Bosnia: 21,700  
Turkey: 16,758  
Croatia: 6,000  
Bulgaria: 2,500  
Others: 75,200  
Homeless in Kosova: 600,000

### CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

At hands of Serbs: At least 5,000 Kosovars through ethnic cleansing  
At hands of Nato: 1,200 through bombing, Serbs and refugees

### MILITARY CASUALTIES

Serbs: Nato estimates at least 5,000 dead and 6,000 wounded  
Nato: Two Apache helicopter pilots

### ESTIMATED COSTS

Cost of rebuilding Balkans: £20 billion plus  
Nato: British armed forces - £100 million  
US military - £3.74 billion

### NATO MISSIONS FLOWN

Total flown 33,000  
Attack missions: 9,800

### NATO MUNITIONS USED

Cruise missiles: 2,000  
Explosives dropped: 6,000 tons

### NATO AIRCRAFT USED

700 (including 530 combat planes)

### NATO TROOPS IN AREA

Macedonia: 14,000  
Albania: 7,500

### TEN WEEKS OF CONFLICT

MARCH 24: Nato launches air campaign against Serbia; Russia suspends cooperation with Nato  
APRIL 6: West dismisses Yugoslav unilateral ceasefire  
APRIL 28: Vuk Draskovic, Yugoslav deputy prime minister, sacked for urging compromise with Nato. Stray Nato missile lands near Bulgarian capital Sofia  
MAY 6: West and Russia move closer to agreement on settlement; in Bonn G8 foreign ministers agree seven-point plan but Russia holds out against major Nato countries forming core of peace force  
MAY 25: Nato's ruling body agrees to almost double international peace implementation force  
MAY 29: Belgrade says it is prepared to accept "general principles" of G8 plan  
JUNE 3: Serb parliament accepts peace deal

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# War ends but Bal

As we go to press Serbia has apparently accepted the G8 peace plan. Analysis of the plan shows that it has nothing to do with justice but everything to do with the imperialist powers imposing reactionary regimes on the Balkan people. Here we outline the plan, its problems and the socialist alternative.

**T**HE ACCEPTANCE by the Serbian parliament of the G8 ultimatum, if carried through over the next weeks, marks a near total surrender by Slobodan Milosevic to the diktats of Nato imperialism. A peacekeeping force of 48,000 Nato troops dominated by the United States, Britain and France plus 10,000 Russians and other "neutrals", such as Sweden, Finland, and the Ukraine, will replace the Serb forces.

Everyone should welcome the withdrawal of the genocidal forces that have driven nearly a million Kosovars from their homeland and made another half million refugees in the woods and mountains. But they cannot welcome the conversion of Kosova into a nominally United Nations (but in reality a Nato) protectorate. The Kosovars themselves should be masters in their own country.

They have no need of a British Nato general or UN "high representative" as proconsul for the imperialist powers. These occupation forces - despite the initial welcome they will undoubtedly receive from the population - will rapidly prove themselves enemies of the national and social aspirations of the workers and peasants of Kosova.

A similarly critical response must guide our attitude to the Serbian regime's capitulation to imperialism. Serbia lost because of the reactionary character of its attempt to hold on to Kosova and empty it of its majority population. This meant that the Serbian population could not be consistently rallied to defence of their country when this goal was enmeshed with prosecuting genocide in Kosova. Indeed this latter fact made it difficult - if not impossible - to win the support of progressive, anti-imperialist forces around the world.

A number of factors combined to finally crack the Milosevic regime's resistance. Militarily, the tide seems to have turned against Serbia with the greatly intensified bombing of the infrastructure which eventually eroded civilian and military morale. After six weeks of ineffective attacks on the 40,000 Serbian occupation forces in Kosova the recent offensive of the Yugoslav army against the KLA along the Albanian border made them much more vulnerable to Nato air attack. Nato claims that 5,000 soldiers have been killed and 6,000 wounded.

The impact of these casualties fuelled the recent war weariness felt by the Serb population in the cities. In southern Serbia the mothers of conscript soldiers demonstrated in the streets as reports of high casualties in Kosova came through. The brutal repression of these demonstrations in turned sparked mutinies among Yugoslav army conscripts in Kosova.

This growing revulsion against the war was fuelled by the knowledge that something terrible was going on in Kosova and the realisation that in exchange for a nationalistic pipedream they were being asked to sacrifice their jobs, their houses, their transport system and thousands upon thousands of their sons' lives in the event of a land war.

Many workers and peasants were disgusted by the fact that it was primarily their sons who were sent to the most dangerous places in Kosova while the sons of the bureaucracy and middle class were spared this fate. Demonstrators protested against the privileges of the rich, revealing the germ of a progressive, if embryonic, anti-war opposition.

Diplomatically, after Milosevic's initial success in bringing Moscow in on his side and Nato's own goal of bombing the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, it looked as though he might be able to drive a wedge between Nato hawks - the US, Britain and France - and its doves - Italy and Germany. But in the end he did not succeed in splitting the alliance. The US, with over 80 per cent of the military clout, arbitrated between these wings and the unity of Nato held in the long run.

What finally forced Milosevic to cave in was Russia's acceptance of Nato's terms for ending the conflict - a move prepared by Yeltsin's re-emergence in mid-May to sack the nationalistic Primakov government, replacing it with a more pro-Western one. The Anglo-Saxon predominance throughout the war, plus the support for this by the French, makes it clear that an independent European Union diplomatic and military policy is still a fairly distant project.

### A reactionary settlement

This reactionary settlement - if it succeeds - forms a complement to the reactionary Dayton Accords that ended the Bosnian War in 1995. Both deals will have severe consequences for progressive forces throughout the Balkans, across Europe and indeed worldwide, since it establishes a powerful precedent for Nato - and in particular the USA and Britain - to act unilaterally as enforcer of a "world order" fit for the unhindered rule of the major banks and the multinationals which exploit the whole planet. This, not the nauseating democratic and moral rhetoric with which Clinton and Blair have fooled the mass of the population, is the real motivating factor behind the war.

Naturally, Nato has been mightily helped in gaining acceptance for their war aims by the horrors of Milosevic's attempted genocide; this more than anything accounts for the near total absence of a mass anti-war movement in the imperialist countries and indeed in the semi-colonies too. Those on the left who all but ignored the sufferings of the Kosovars or played down Milosevic's crimes (the British SWP and its Social

democratic and Stalinist allies) ensured their isolation from the spontaneous sympathy of the working class for the victims of pogroms and mass expulsion. In fact, they handed the great mass of workers and youth over to the "humanitarian", "liberal" and "socialist" warmongers.

Of course, the working class must welcome the ending of the attempted genocide against the Kosovar people and, if it fully materialises, the return of all the refugees to their homes. But this progressive consequence is accompanied, and in the end outweighed, by long-term reactionary ones. The G8 proposals neither make the Kosovars sovereign in their own country nor do they recognise their right to self-determination.

Kosova will become an international, that is, an imperialist protectorate. Combined with the imperialist troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia the peace deal amounts to an occupation of the Balkans. Of course, for the refugees in the camps in Albania and Macedonia, a Nato protectorate must seem a great step forward from the appalling conditions experienced in Kosova. Likewise, for the civilian

population and conscript soldiers in Serbia, the end of the war must be an enormous relief. But in a few months or years, the reality of the Nato protectorate in Kosova will be revealed to both Serbs and Albanians. The Nato troops will put a straitjacket on both the Kosovars' self-defence and on their political struggle for independence. They will cripple the struggle of the workers and small farmers of Kosova to resist

their country's exploitation by huge multinationals and the Kosovar big landowners. Having destroyed the industrial and communications infrastructure of Serbia the terms dictated for international aid in reconstructing the country will be twofold: political subordination to the EU and USA; and the speeding up and completion of the restoration of capitalism.

### What the G8 Agreement means

The G8 ultimatum demands the complete withdrawal of military, police and paramilitary forces from the province. Serbia has 48 hours to remove all its air defences from Kosova and seven days to get all its forces out. NATO will continue its bombing until it is satisfied that a full-scale troop withdrawal has actually begun. Serbian troops will have to withdraw beyond a speci-

fied line in southern Serbia, creating a demilitarised buffer zone between them and Kosova.

A 50,000 strong military force (KFOR) will enter Kosova under the command of a British general. The UN auspices is a fig leaf. Although the agreement only refers to "essential Nato participation" in it, this is a euphemism. The force will be Nato-led, and operate under a "unified control and command" structure.

The UN Security Council is charged with setting up an interim administration for Kosova, granting the province "substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." There is no mention, as in the Rambouillet Accords, of this being a temporary measure nor any granting of a plebiscite on independence in three years time. Yet the "demilitarisation of the Kosova Liberation Army" is maintained in the G8 proposals.

The only point on which Serbia can claim a nominal victory is that its territorial integrity is reaffirmed. But this was inevitable if independence was to be ruled out. Anyway the deal is an open invitation by Nato for the Serbian opposition to Milosevic to unseat him and open up the prospect of future Serbian government influence - via the Yugoslav federation - in the affairs of Kosova once again.

Likewise, the agreement promises a "stability pact for south-eastern Europe" based on promoting "democracy, economic prosperity, stability and regional co-operation". Given the indictment of Milosevic and four of his inner circle for war crimes, Serbia is effectively barred from receiving international reconstruction aid as long as they remain in power. This too is designed to strengthen the bourgeois, pro-western opposition to Milosevic.

### Problems with the G8 agreement

However, there are important internal weaknesses in the G8 plan. Vital questions have been left to further negotiations. Where will the Russian troops be stationed and will they act under UN, Nato command or neither? While the Russians insist on not acting under Nato command, Nato still wants to have the unified command in Kosova.

The relative size of the Russian contingent could mark an important difference to the Dayton Agreement but is by no means less reactionary. If Russians act under Nato command this would have severe repercussions in Russia's political scene. A footnote to the G8 agreement states that "the Russian contingent will not be under Nato command and its relationship to the international presence will be governed by relevant additional agreements". This holds the possibility of separate areas of occupation by Russian and Ukrainian troops. What could be negotiated is some sort of partition - though Nato says it will not allow this. If a de facto Russian zone were established in the northern zone or "areas of historic importance to Serbs" then the Kosovar population would not return and the agreement - like Dayton in Bosnia - would in effect recognise and reward ethnic cleansing and would poison relationships between

*But in a few months or years, the reality of the Nato protectorate in Kosova will be revealed to both Serbs and Albanians.*

# Kosovan agony continues



Left: dead Kosovar, victim of Nato's "friendly fire". Above: Serb surveys the damage done by Nato's bombs.

Serbs and ethnic Albanians far into the next century.

Another problem is the future of the refugees as they will probably be forced, at least for a period, to continue to live in refugee camps. Faced with a situation where imperialism reluctantly gives them economic and social support but denies them the right to self-determination, desperation could lead to the radicalisation of the ethnic Albanian masses.

Finally, while Nato managed to hold together there is no doubt that the war created inter-alliance contradictions not seen before. While Britain publicly agitated for a ground war Italy insisted that there should be no land invasion under any circumstances. The US wavered between the two.

## Prospects

The way that the war has ended certainly represents an important victory for imperialism in general and for Clinton and Blair's "Third Way" version of the new world order. But, as Rosa Luxemburg once said, there can be military victories that are political defeats and vice-versa. Albania has come through as a unified alliance under US hegemony but the war has increased the contradictions between its members. The diverging interests, such as relations to Russia, relative reliance on diplomatic rather than of military pressure, of the US and Britain on one hand and Germany and Italy on the other hand, have been clear for all to see. These differences may spur the thwarted European powers, together with France, to move in the direction of building their own military force. But even now the Europeans show their weakness by proposing Nato general secretary Javier Solana as the official leader of that structure.

Relations between the US and the two biggest non imperialist military powers – Russia and China – are much worse than before. Nato's nakedly aggressive war-drive alarmed not only Russia and China's ruling circles but also broad sectors of the population in

these countries. Arch Russian pro-imperialists such as Anatoly Chubais, bemoan the evaporation of pro-western sentiments among the post cold war youth and claim that anti-western nationalism is at its most intense since the early 1960s. This again is the reason why several continental European countries openly criticised the USA.

These frictions between states and inside the ruling class, and the example of unilateral military adventures laid down before powerful semi-colonial regimes like India, Pakistan and Turkey, denote a deepening of the new period of capitalist crisis and instability we are living in. It is not a resolution of it in favour of a stable humanitarian world order.

## The future of the KLA?

Estimates place the KLA's strength today at anything between 10-15,000 members, a tripling of its numbers since the crisis began in March and despite the efforts by Serbian forces to destroy it. This proves that it is a mass resistance force of the Kosovar people and not the band of criminals and terrorists that Milosevic and his western apologists made out.

Nevertheless, socialists have no reason to prettify it either. It is a nationalist organisation, which has become increasingly committed to a "Greater Albania". During and immediately after the Rambouillet conference, the KLA underwent a rapid change of leadership from that dominated by Adem Demaci to one led by Hasim Thaci. The new leadership openly accepted Nato hegemony and subordinated its goals for immediate independence to the project of a Nato protectorate. It is currently regrouping with a new commander-in-chief, Agip Ceku, a commander in the Croatian Army that drove the Serbs out of Krajina in a massive and brutal act of ethnic cleansing.

But for all this leadership's pro-imperialism, and whatever its subjective intentions, it will be far from easy for it to agree to disarm the KLA fighters let alone successfully carry it through. Journalists in Albania report com-

manders and rank and file KLA soldiers are resistant to this.

The KLA commanders will try to convert their force into the autonomous Kosova's new police force. It is far from certain that the Nato allies, let alone the Russians and the UN neutrals, will allow this and in any case any police force will be under Nato and Russian control.

"Meaningful self-rule" suggests, but does not actually spell out, free elections and the international authorities will undoubtedly delay these under the pretext of the lack of proper state authorities, electoral registers and all the flummery of bourgeois democracy. Meanwhile, the economic and juridical basis for imperialist rule, aided by the local bourgeoisie and landowners, will be put into place.

A revolutionary programme for Kosova must centre on the creation of an armed militia by the returning external and internal refugees, the election of councils of workers and peasants' deputies in every village and every urban district. The Kosovars do not need a state separate and above the sovereign armed people. They do not need to wait for Nato or the UN to create such a bureaucratic military machine to oppress them and defend the landlords, the businessmen and the criminal Mafia.

The workers expelled from the mines, factories, schools and so on during the past ten years must be reinstated and a massive programme of public works instituted under the control of the workers. The poor peasants must receive the lands of the larger landowners and genuine co-operatives founded or re-established to provide food for the year ahead.

If the UN and Nato authorities are established then workers must demand immediate elections to a Constituent Assembly which must be sovereign and accept no restrictions on its authority or size, such as those imposed in the G8 agreement.

## What will happen in Serbia?

Milosevic rose to power in 1987 on a reactionary pledge to abolish Kosova's limited autonomy, a pledge he made good in 1989. He provoked a war in March 1999 to continue the ethnic cleansing of the province and to prevent

the entry of Nato troops into Kosova. Now Kosova will effectively cease to be ruled from Belgrade. For this thousands of Serbian civilians and military personnel have been killed and injured. The country's power, transport and communications infrastructure has been destroyed. The country's economy has been set back years – the Economist Intelligence Unit predicts a 50 per cent fall in real social product this year as compared with an increase of 2.7 per cent last year.

Millions of Serbs are asking why the war was fought. Social discontent, especially on a local level, is substantial. Reports suggest that as a result of the war, power has become decentralised. Citizens, local initiatives and regional media are outside the control of Belgrade.

The danger is that this discontent will be manipulated by the bourgeois pro-western opposition led by Democratic Party chairman Zoran Djindjic and Serbian Renewal Movement leader Vuk Draskovic, as well as by the fascist Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj. Unless the Serbian workers and youth make their voices heard, unless they form local councils of delegates from the factories, offices colleges and schools – then even if one set of political parasites under Milosevic goes, another swarm will smother the masses. There is a real possibility for a mass popular, workers' revolution in Serbia, one that could put the destiny of the country into the workers' own hands.

A vital component of such a revolution is to trample under foot every vestige of Greater Serbian chauvinism, whether it comes from Seselj, Milosevic or Draskovic. This filthy ideology has imposed enormous suffering on the Serbs themselves, as well, of course, on their Bosnian and Albanian neighbours. Serbian workers must pledge themselves to respect the rights of the Kosovars to independence. Only on this basis will it be possible to draw the peoples of former Yugoslavia and the other Balkan states into a free and voluntary socialist federation. This federation would protect the rights of minorities – and all the Balkan peoples have minorities of their co-nationals in areas dominated by other national groups.

The policy of mono-ethnic states

leads to the horror of ethnic cleansing as Bosnia, the Krajina and Kosova have shown. The phrases "we cannot live with the Albanians, with the Serbs, with the Croats, with the Bosnians" – understandable in the mouths of those recently pogromed – are, however, wrong. The Balkan peoples, particularly the workers and peasants, the women and the youth, cannot live in peace without one another.

But to be more than a pious phrase this has to be turned into concrete political and economic facts:

- Control over the farms and factories, the offices and mines by those who work in them

- All political power in the hands of councils of delegates and a militia, which in multi-ethnic areas will represent all ethnic groups

- A Balkan Federation must be a Socialist Federation. Only such a federation will put an end to the divide and rule policies of the capitalists, the landlords, the bureaucrats and the criminal Mafia.

If the phase of bloody wars and genocide which have wrecked the countries of former Yugoslavia during the entire closing decade of the twentieth century is to be ended then those responsible for them have to be fought and driven from power. Who are they? Certainly the Milosevics, the Seseljs and their equivalents amongst the Croats and the Bosnians. Tomorrow the leaders of the KLA could be added to this list, for to be an oppressed nation does not preclude becoming an oppressor. Only revolutionary internationalists oppose all national oppression but by fighting alongside the oppressed not by counselling them to be reconciled to their oppressors.

Behind and above all these Balkan puppets stand their imperialist masters, the Clintons, Blairs, Jospins and Schroeders. For all their nauseating democratic and humanitarian verbiage they are interested only in exploiting these countries, keeping them weak and divided and imposing this model – well named Balkanisation – onto other areas of globe whose raw materials they wish to plunder or whose peoples they wish to exploit.

It is the urgent task of revolutionaries in the imperialist countries to mobilise the labour movement to oppose every reactionary aspect of this peace – more successfully than they did to oppose the war. Returning Kosovars certainly need help to rebuild the roads, bridges and communications system destroyed by Nato bombing as much as they need material to rebuild their homes wrecked and burned by Milosevic's thugs. They should demand massive compensation to the people of Serbia and Kosova with no IMF or EU strings. But they alone should decide how it is spent not the bankers and economists of London, New York, Paris and Frankfurt. The sole interest of these imperialist financiers will be to win fat contracts to rebuild what their bombs destroyed at the expense of their victims.

The war in Kosova and the imperialist peace that ends it have shown the workers of all the countries involved the desperate need for an International that can prevent the masses being used as the tools of their worst enemies.

It has shown the burning need to give organised expression to the slogan of the revolutionary Communist International of the early 1920s – "Workers and oppressed peoples of the world, unite!"

**NEW DEAL**

# Labour's raw deal for youth

THERE ARE 356,000 young people rotting on Britain's dole queues. More than 600,000 others have "disappeared" from the register – jobless, yet excluded from the benefits system.

In addition 130,000 16 and 17 year olds barely survive, outside of the education system, unemployed and denied any benefits since Margaret Thatcher withdrew their entitlement in 1988.

Over a million young lives wasted by capitalism. The forgotten generation.

For those "lucky" enough to be in work, not only does the minimum wage discriminate against them – set at a mere £3 an hour for the under 22s and at nil for the under 18s – but employers are in many cases refusing to abide by it or, like Pizza Hut, taking away taxi fares for late night workers to compensate. With only 63 inspectors to police the law and a measly £5,000 fine if they get caught, bosses know they can ignore the new legislation.

According to New Labour, however, young people today have never had it so good. Employment Minister Andrew Smith claimed last month that:

"The total number of 18-24 [year old] unemployed claimants is at the lowest level since July 1974."

Nearly 70,000 under-25s have been placed in jobs in the first year of the New Deal programme, according to the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), while a further 64,000 have attended training courses or taken part in work experience programmes like the Environmental Task Force.

How can the two sets of statistics be reconciled?

For Employment Secretary David Blunkett and the Labour government, the New Deal is as much about bullying young people off benefits as it is about matching their skills and aptitudes to real jobs.

This is why there are stringent penalties for young claimants who refuse to take up training or a job on the New Deal: two weeks stopped benefits for the first refusal, four weeks for subsequent failures to gratefully receive offers. The DfEE proudly boasts that, "10,800 young people have had sanctions applied under the New Deal".

Now Blunkett is preparing to turn the screw. Claiming that there was a

"hardcore" of 2,000 "work-shy" youth, the Employment Secretary revealed last month that those who turn down three training or job offers will be denied benefits for six months. A DfEE spokesperson added that the new sanctions regime "will be applied forcefully".

Blunkett's clamp-down coincided with the publication of two surveys from, of all people, the Blairite think-tank Demos. Both reports – *Real Deal* and *Destination Unknown* – reveal the true picture of youth unemployment in Britain today.

The Real Deal project involved 150 young people on the New Deal. One of the participants explained how his placement worked out:

"I was working at a dry cleaners, supposedly to train as a counter assistant, but they kept me in the stores at the back, and doing deliveries. I was working eight hours a day, six days a week but I wasn't learning anything about retail, so after a month I left."

This is why many young workers refuse to take up placements. New Deal is tailor-made for bosses who want to super-exploit youth, without offering

any training or a real job at the end. In fact, 13,000 of the 70,000 job placements made under the New Deal (that is 20 per cent) are subsidised by the taxpayer – a sure sign that the bosses are after cheap labour! Young workers need to fight to exercise control over the wages, the conditions and the quality of the training on the New Deal, if they are not to be ripped off and chucked back onto the dole queue after their six-month placement is up.

The *Destination Unknown* report is even more damning. The name of the report comes from a box on the DfEE form for signing off New Dealers who neither find a job nor go back onto Job-seekers' Allowance: they are the "disappeared".

*Destination Unknown* claims that for every young person signing on there is another who has disappeared from all records. It estimates that over 600,000 youth are missing in this way, a third of them have no qualifications, half live in households where no one has a job and 40 per cent have never worked. Almost 400,000 of these marginalised and impoverished youth receive no state benefits whatsoever – on top of the

130,000 under-18s who are denied benefit by law.

Youth are being made to pay for the capitalist crisis. As well as suffering the lowest pay and the worst conditions, they also bear the brunt of unemployment. Officially, unemployment for 18 to 24 year olds stands at 11.6 per cent (compared with 6.2 per cent for the workforce as a whole). But when those forced off the dole by cheapskate employers and a callous government are taken into account, this figure can, according to Demos, be doubled if not trebled.

The TUC and the unions must take up the issue of youth unemployment, recruit and organise young workers, New Dealers and the unemployed and give them the resources to fight for their rights.

- Equalise the minimum wage, with no exemptions, at £7 an hour
- Abolish all penalties – full benefit rights for all over the age of 16
- Unionise all trainees on New Deal and pay them at union rates
- For workers' control over training and working conditions on all New Deal courses and job placements

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

# Right to jury trial scrapped

LAST MONTH New Labour scrapped a basic legal right and went back on one of its key election manifesto pledges.

Home Secretary Jack Straw announced the axing of the right to a jury trial for scores of offences, a step that Tory Michael Howard threatened to bring in under the last government and which Straw attacked at the time as a violation of human rights. Now Straw is proving himself, yet again, to be one of the most authoritarian Home Secretaries ever.

The jury system is one of the oldest democratic liberties in Britain. Straw says it is too expensive to maintain, and argues that a single magistrate can deal with trials much more efficiently. Cost effectiveness, rather than justice, is Straw's watchword.

Defence lawyers reacted with fury. Mark Haslam, of the Criminal Solicitors Association, said that under Straw justice is "at the mercy of the Treasury" and that the protection of the citizen does not even enter into New Labour's calculations.

Rushing to Straw's defence, the tabloid *Daily Star* reported on a judge

who called off a jury trial of a man who was accused of stealing a 19p can of lemonade. This, the paper said, was an example of why Straw was right to scrap the jury system for these cases of this type.

A moment's thought shows that this case proves the opposite. If the police and magistrates are left to deal with "crimes" like this, they will always be influenced by their class position and class prejudices. The overwhelming majority of judges and magistrates are drawn from the richest, most privileged sections of society.

Their sheer estrangement from the lives and conditions of the overwhelming majority of working class people make them congenitally incapable of administering "objective" justice for everyone. They are the judicial guardians of capitalism, criminalising the poverty-stricken, driven by desperation to crime, the youth who seek an escape from the drudgery of life in sink estates through drug use and, above all, organised workers who fight back against the bosses.

The man accused of stealing a can of pop would fare better from a jury of 12

of his peers, would know that they could understand the absurdity of the charge, be more likely to know first hand the reality of daily life in the workplace and the conditions in which he operated. A jury might put the formal "rights and wrongs" of the law aside and come to a common-sense, humane decision. They might let him off even if he broke the letter of the law, because they might understand how he felt and identify more closely with a thirsty worker than a penny-pinching boss.

That is why the jury system should be defended, why any step that weakens democratic involvement in the judicial process must be resisted.

Instead of maintaining a discreet silence as our hard-won rights are eroded, the labour movement must mount a vigorous campaign to defend trial by jury, to avoid major miscarriages of justice from recurring in the future and to keep in place one of our best defences against the daily injustices of British class law.

- Restore jury trials
- Elect all judges
- Full legal aid.



The jury is out!

**INFORMATION BILL**

# Straw defends the secret state

THE FREEDOM of Information Bill, one of New Labour's most keenly awaited manifesto pledges, has been so watered down by Jack Straw that even the establishment are attacking it as a sell-out.

Newspaper chiefs and even financiers denounced it as a useless measure that will not enable anyone to get hold of any additional information.

Gareth Pierce, the lawyer who represented the Guildford Four, said the Bill allows the government to block any information that could "prejudice" government or even commercial interests. She said it would do nothing to counter the "growing appetite for secrecy" from the police and intelligence services.

The new law would not allow the parents of Stephen Lawrence to find out any more about the police investigation into their son's murder.

But there is another, even more sinister, side to the Bill. Not only can the government block access to information with impunity – it could actually be more difficult to get hold of "secret" data. Under the old code, if the government blocked you, you could at least appeal through the courts (although chances of succeeding were slim). Now, there will be no appeal against the decisions of the new commissioner, who will

assess all disputes.

The fact that a Labour government is blocking the people's access to state information and slashing away at basic rights like jury trials speaks volumes. They were elected by millions of workers because they promised to rule "for the many, not the few". But it is only "the few" who are benefiting from their regime, which is becoming more authoritarian by the day.

We say:

- For a new comprehensive Freedom of Information Act that opens all state records and government papers to public inspection
- Abolish the Official Secrets Act
- Abolish the secret services: MI5, MI6, Special Branch etc
- Abolish the right of judges to grant and the police to use telephone tapping.

# Council workers betrayed

UNISON BRANCH officials have betrayed Manchester City Council workers in a cynical sell-out of their dispute in defence of the 35-hour week.

In April, Manchester City Council imposed a 37-hour contract for new recruits to former APT&C (white collar) posts. Under a 1974 local agreement these posts had been covered by 35-hour contracts.

Management had argued that the 1997 "single status" deal, negotiated nationally, had rendered the earlier agreement redundant. But this type of agreement was specifically excluded from revision through single status harmonisation.

Members understood that if management were able to force through the principle of the extended 37-hour week for new contracts then all of us who remained on 35-hour contracts were under threat as well.

Following a 1,000-strong mass meeting, the branch balloted for strike action for the first time in its history. Members backed action by a three-to-two majority and the branch agreed a series of three one-day strikes.

But late on Friday 14 May, five days before the first strike was due to go ahead, branch officials did a deal with the council and called off the

action without consulting either the rest of the branch executive or, more importantly, the membership. The deal accepted 37-hour contracts, albeit with the proviso that these employees would, in practice, remain on 35 hours for the next two years.

"Negotiations" would then establish a new standard working week, on the basis of Best Value, job evaluation and the council's budgetary position. In return for the right to negotiate, Unison would effectively accept a no-strike pledge for the duration of the negotiations. The negotiators had caved in on virtually all seven of the Council's original demands.

The Council had won the introduction of 37-hour contracts. The union had "won" the temporary retention of the 35-hour week for the minority of new white collar staff who had been forced on to 37-hour contracts. So much for the promised "35 hours for all". It was the worst sort of defeat: abject surrender without a fight.

The two-year interval will allow management to recruit hundreds of new workers on the basis of 37-hour contracts.

Come the June 2001 deadline they will be told: "you will now work your contracted hours, if you refuse you are not only in breach of your contract and

therefore liable to the sack, but you are also in breach of our interim agreement with Unison."

The agreement actually paves the way towards 37-hour contracts across the board, as Unison has accepted council management's right to alter existing contracts as well. If management had ever had any intention of seriously negotiating a 35-hour week for all, they would not be now recruiting to 37-hour contracts. If management claim that "they can't afford" the 35-hour week now, is their answer going to be any different in two years' time?

In short, this is a serious defeat that could have an adverse impact on the branch for years to come. All the signs were that the majority of the membership had enthusiastically embraced the strike call. It was not surprising that the hourly-paid workers, currently on a 37-hour week, were the least willing to fight, because in spite of the slogan of "35 hours for all" the branch officials never made this an explicit goal of the strike. Only Workers Power supporters around the bulletin *Well Red* demanded that we bring forward our demand for a uniform 35-hour week to consolidate the support of blue-collar workers for the action.

As in many Unison branches the

SWP were the largest organised opposition to Manchester's local leadership. Their response to the sell-out, however, exposed them as a paper tiger. While SWP members rightly voted against the deal when details of the sell-out emerged at the Branch Executive meeting, they had changed their tune by the time of the branch's Annual General Meeting, the following day. They refused to send a clear message to the membership to reject the deal.

In the meantime, SWP supporters had discovered that the climbdown by branch officers on our terms and conditions somehow represented a "retreat by the City Council".

They did not "accept that members who work 35 hours should have 37-hour contracts" yet they steadfastly refused to vote against the deal. Instead, they let our treacherous officials off the hook.

Rather than arguing clearly for a "no" vote at the mass meeting, they promoted the idea that management could be persuaded to change their minds within the following eight days. Their eight-day deadline was supposed to fit in with the anti-union laws. But as the branch secretary, a notorious right-winger put it, "I am not going to hide behind the legal deadline for action. I believe this is the best possi-

ble deal and recommend it to you as such."

*Well Red* supporters were still able to win a quarter of the AGM to vote against the settlement. This was an excellent response, given the disorientation and demoralisation, which had arisen through the cancellation of the action and the sell-out. But we could not win over the SWP. They abstained on our proposal to reject the deal, and after the defeat of their own ill-conceived and woolly amendment, abstained on the sell-out as a whole. After the meeting there was a rich irony as SWP supporters shouted the familiar slogan of "start the fight-back" just after abstaining from that "fight-back" five minutes before!

Militants in the branch face an ever stiffer challenge in the wake of recent events. Official strike action is off the agenda for two years, and the supposed opposition around the SWP has failed the critical test. There is an urgent need for activists to regroup. We call on all those who wouldn't swallow the officials' lies and who saw through the SWP's sorry performance to join with Workers Power supporters around *Well Red* to build an alternative fighting leadership to the scabby branch officials and to their counterparts who lead the union nationally.

## POST OFFICE

# Fascist leaflets boycotted

IN THE run-up to the European parliamentary elections postal workers in West Yorkshire and the Lothians region of Scotland have taken a marvellous stand against the fascists of the British National Party (BNP).

Members of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) in Huddersfield and around Edinburgh refused to deliver the BNP's vile racist propaganda. There was also resistance in smaller offices in Sheffield, the south west of England and East Anglia.

In Huddersfield, with a large Asian community, dozens of postal workers refused to deliver the BNP's filth in defiance of the local management's threats to take disciplinary action.

Local managers soon backed off and agreed that workers would not have to distribute the leaflets that eventually

accumulated into an enormous pile in a manager's office. The Lothians CWU branch threatened strike action if local

bosses instructed members to deliver the BNP literature.

Nationally, the CWU has a policy of

refusing to handle fascist election literature, but the national leadership did nothing to translate fine words into action.

Instead, this was left to activists in a handful of branches and local depots. John Keggie, the CWU's deputy general secretary, expressed the pious hope that the action would "spread to other areas to take the pressure off our members".

That, of course, would have been far more easily done if Keggie and other union full-timers stopped hiding behind the excuse of the anti-union laws and fought openly for a complete boycott of the fascists' material.

**IN LATE April Royal Mail bosses unveiled plans for a major attack on CWU members in London. Management's restructuring proposals could mean the loss of 2,000 jobs and the virtual closure of the Mount Pleasant and Northern District Office (NDO).**

**Both sorting offices have been bastions of militant CWU organisation for many years and have repeatedly been to the fore in unofficial action against a range of management attacks. The bosses' aim is to transfer most of Mount Pleasant's current workload to a greenfield site in Berkshire in the hope of slashing costs and**

**undermining union organisation.**

**Branch officers at Mount Pleasant have launched a publicity campaign against the closure threat, while there has been a one-day strike at the NDO. The fight must shift to building resistance across the whole of the CWU's London membership through a campaign of mass meetings addressed by activists from Mount Pleasant and the NDO. Industrial solidarity will be crucial to halting the bosses' plans in their tracks. This means strike action across all of Royal Mail's operation in the capital.**

## SEFTON COUNCIL

# Lock-out ups the stakes

FINANCE DEPARTMENT bosses at Sefton Council on Merseyside have dramatically upped the stakes in a pay and regrading dispute with housing benefit and council tax workers.

On 12 May 40 Unison members in the housing benefits section turned up for work only to find lock codes changed and security guards on the doors. The local authority had made good its threat to suspend workers who had been taking part in official industrial action, short of a strike, by refusing to answer phone calls and handle work from the Council's recently opened "One Stop Shop".

The lock-out has the full support of Labour as well as Tory

and Liberal Democrat councillors. They are partly motivated by spite in the wake of their failure to force through an increase in the length of the working week under the guise of the single status deal.

But this dispute also has national significance since it marks an escalation of the general offensive by local authority bosses against Unison.

To date Unison members across Sefton have held two well-attended branch meetings, with both voting for Council-wide strike action to fight the lock-out. The union's national industrial action committee has authorised ballots that are now under way.

Across Merseyside trade union-

ists at other workplaces, including Liverpool and Knowsley Unison members and AEEU members at the AC Delco factory in Kirby, have all donated to the hardship fund

for the suspended workers.

What is needed now is an overwhelming "yes" vote for indefinite strike action across the whole of Sefton Council until management backs down and unconditionally reinstates all 40 workers. The Sefton workers should demand and receive the full public backing of Unison's national leadership

at the same time as they independently build support from fellow Unison members and other trade unionists.

● Messages of support and donations to: Sefton Unison, 209 Linacre Lane, Bootle L20 6AD, Tel: 0151 934 4760. Cheques payable to: Sefton Unison Hard-

## EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

WORKERS POWER believes that protests against Blair's war in the Balkans – and the reactionary peace he is now imposing – can and should be made in the June Euro election.

We call on readers to vote against Labour, and for the Scottish Socialist Party list in Scotland headed by expelled Labour MEP Hugh Kerr, the Alternative Labour list in the East Midlands headed by expelled Labour

MEP Ken Coates and the Socialist Alliance list in the West Midlands headed by ex Labour MP and now Socialist Party councillor, Dave Nellist.

We regard these three lists as credible anti-war candidates within the workers' movement. In all other Euro constituencies we call on readers to spoil their ballot papers by writing "Nato out of the Balkans – Independence for Kosova" on them.

We do not recommend a vote for the Weekly Worker list since this represents nothing at all in the labour movement other than an irrelevant sect, the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Nor do we recommend readers vote for the Stalinist Socialist Labour Party, which has revealed itself to be a pro-Milosevic, and therefore pro-ethnic cleansing party.

# Greenwich: year zero

*Keith Harvey* takes a look at the origins of the calendar we use today and finds more behind the Millennium celebrations than just a desire for a once in a lifetime massive party.

ON 1 JANUARY 2000 the twentieth century will be 99 years old and moving into the final year of the millennium; that, at least, was what the vast majority of the world's population assumed on 1 January 1900. A survey of all the leading world's press for that day will not turn up any mention of the start of the twentieth century.

You have to wait for the *New York Times* edition on 1 January 1901 to find the front page banner headline "Twentieth Century's Triumphant Entry", followed by the description of the New York celebrations the night before:

"The lights flashed, the crowds sang, the sirens of craft in the harbour screeched and roared, bells pealed, bombs thundered, rockets blasted skyward..."

So how has it come to pass that the British press today is fretting over whether or not the Jubilee Line extension to the Millennium Dome at Greenwich will be completed in time for the end of 1999? Surely they have got another year to work with?

The story of the dating of the beginning and end of centuries (and millennia) is not quite as old as time but certainly has raged for three hundred years. But in his social history of the controversy over the millennium (*Questioning the Millennium*), Stephen Jay Gould makes clear that the origin of the problem lies much further back in the sixth century with a monk called Dennis the Short (Dionysius Exiguus).

He was instructed by Pope St John I to prepare a new chronology. Diplomacy demanded that he satisfy both secular and religious interests.



**The Millennium dome - a year early or just in time?**

So he started time with the foundation of the city of Rome, as was common, and then started it again first by calculating the birth of Jesus, arbitrarily and in contradiction to the gospels, to be 25 December 754 A.U.C. (after the foundation of Rome). Secondly, he began the new year on the feast of the circumcision of Jesus on his eighth day, on 1 January which also happened to be New Year's Day in Roman and Latin Christian calendars.

So he started time on 1 January 754 A.U.C and called this 1 January of year one AD (Anno Domini or "in the year of the Lord"). This was his big mistake. He should have started time with the year zero, just like babies, but the new era was one year old at birth. As Gould

points out, however, Dennis could have done little else at the time since "western mathematics had not developed a concept of zero to serve as a proper place marker across Dennis's great divide." This only happened when it borrowed it from Hindu or Arabic sources in the ninth century.

As Gould explains: "If we insist that all decades must have ten years, and all centuries one hundred years, then year ten belongs to the first decade - and, sad to say, year 100 must remain in the first century. Thenceforward, the issue never goes away... and 2000 must be the completing year of the twentieth century, not the inception of the next millennium."

The logically consistent position has been the preferred stance of the ruling class up the end of this century, uniting its scientists, media barons and business interests in a pervasive view; even popular sci-fi writer Arthur C Clarke concurred in the 1960s when he wrote *2001*, a title to which the film remained faithful. While publicly recorded debates have raged since 1699-1701 it has only been recently that the overwhelming consensus has shifted to the "common sense" position. Why?

In part for the reason it has always been contested; human beings "want to match transitions with the extent or intensity of apparent sensual change, and 1999 to 2000 just looks more definitive than 2000 to 2001", as Gould notes.

But the victory now being recorded for the common sense view is more a result of the fact that in the twentieth century capitalist big business knows that there is big money to be made by allying itself with popular and even spontaneous

conceptions of the millennium and very little to be made by standing up against them and insisting on following the logic of the system bequeathed to us by Dennis the Short. So the die is cast.

An "intellectual" solution can be found if one is desired. Many have

proposed that we just declare that the first decade had only ten years and the first century 99. Those who lived at the time are hardly likely to object. But the real point is that like much else the issue of the dating of the millennium is a social question, resolved not simply on the intellectual plane but as a result of the clash of competing interests.

In 1996 in an attempt to get its retaliation in first, the Royal Greenwich Observatory at Cambridge defended orthodoxy:

"The start of the new millennium is January 1, 2001, not the year 2000".

In the USA the purveyors of marketable and profitable mass culture were contemptuous. "In addition to no longer being in Greenwich, the obser-

vatory is no longer the world's time-keeper", sneered the *New York Times*. The turnover time of capital demands that the millennium starts as soon as possible. So Greenwich has surrendered and a dome is being built there in homage to the

*While publicly recorded debates have raged since 1699-1701 it has only been recently that the overwhelming consensus has shifted to the "common sense" position. Why?*

new reality.

On the hill across the river from the dome the old keepers of time may withhold their recognition of the new epoch next New Year's day but the rest of Britain will be suffering from the mother of all hangovers.

## OBITUARY

■ Bruce Groves 1949 - 1999

# A fighter against oppression and exploitation

Workers Power is sorry to report the death of Bruce Groves, a founder member of our organisation. Bruce was an active revolutionary in Birmingham and the Black Country from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s. In the last few years ill health compelled him to reduce his political workload. This frustrated Bruce but he remained a loyal supporter of Workers Power and the League for Revolutionary Communist Party, contributing to our work in every way he could.

Bruce was a revolutionary from his school days, attracted first to anarchism but later to the International Socialists (IS - the forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party). His working class background, the experience of family and friends around him in the Black Country, led him to an immediate and natural identification with workers' struggles. But Bruce took this further. He identified with the struggles of oppressed people wherever they were and generalised from this, seeking a deeper understanding of the roots of oppression and exploitation.

Bruce joined the Left Faction in IS. He agreed with the Faction's critique of the IS leadership's abandonment of critical support for the IRA after the Aldershot bombings in 1972. He argued fiercely that revolutionaries in Britain had a duty to support the IRA's fight against the British army. At the same time he had no sympathy for the petit bourgeois nationalist politics of the republicans and still less for the romantic illusions

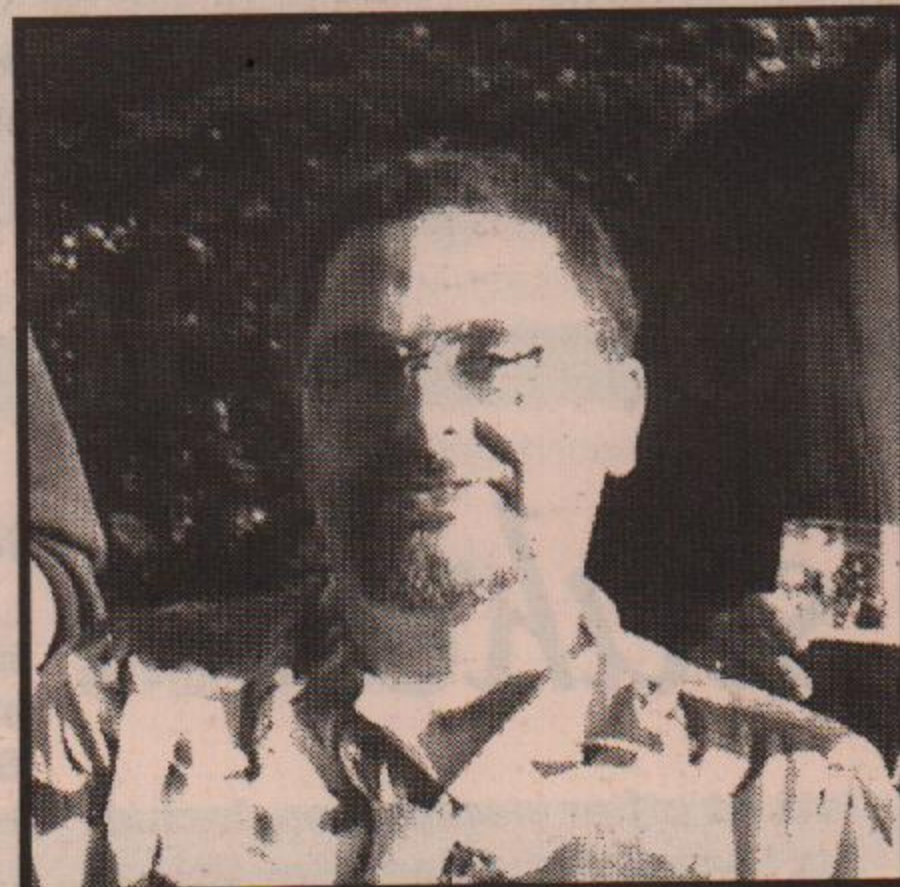
peddled by their sympathisers in Britain.

Bruce participated in the debates and discussions on programme, on Economism and on the Portuguese Revolution that led the Left Faction to widen its critique of IS, which led to our expulsion and then to the formation of Workers Power in 1976.

At the age of 17 Bruce suffered a serious accident that left him wheelchair bound. Only the devoted care of his family, particularly his aunt and uncle, together with his own fierce determination, enabled him to be so active for so long.

He attended meetings, went on demonstrations, helped organise all kinds of activities, putting up with discomfort and the inevitable indignities to do so. The trouble was worth it for Bruce because he wanted to fight back against the system.

He played an important role in the growth of Workers Power and contributed to its programmatic and theoretical work. Keen to understand the scientific basis for the Marxist pro-



**Bruce Groves**

gramme, Bruce not only pursued his own education but played an important role in educating others. He developed a sound grasp of the basics of Marxist political economy.

When Workers Power expanded in the 1980s, Bruce, although unable to play a full part in solidarity work with the miners or print workers, contributed by running education courses for young people who were attracted to our organisation.

He applied his knowledge, maintaining his interest in Irish politics, and developing our understanding of the unfolding crisis in southern Africa. He participated fully in our debates about the nature of the Stalinist states.

Bruce had a fierce hatred of racial oppression and injustice. He developed an increasing interest in the theoretical debates around feminism and the wider questions of social oppression. This, together with the day to day experience of discrimination and confinement that capitalist society imposes on most disabled people, led him to develop a theory of disabled

oppression at odds with that of the majority of the group. He conducted the argument as always in a determined and loyal fashion.

In developing this interest in the politics of disability, Bruce had no time for sentiment nor for the "right to lifers". He argued that it was possible to fight for the right to full participation in society, but to still to support the scientific advances that could prevent some forms of disability.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Bruce's personality was the contrast between his physical confinement and the wide breadth of his interests. He had a powerful intellect and developed a wide knowledge but he also possessed that ability to make a leap of imagination, the ability to put himself in someone else's shoes on the other side of the world. His interests were wide and varied - in contemporary scientific debates, in art history, not to speak of opera, the theatre, rock music and cricket.

This sharp contrast meant that Bruce could never be resigned or contented. At times he fell prey to depression, born out of personal isolation. But his last few years were marked by an important change when he met and married Tina, and became a step father to Hayley. And last year we were able to celebrate the birth of Bruce and Tina's daughter Imogen.

To them and to all Bruce's family and friends we extend our sympathy and condolences. We shall miss him very much.

# marxism THE BASICS

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM

## Lenin's fight against economism

JENNY SCOTT outlines the struggle against economism and the beginnings of Leninism

TOWARDS THE end of the nineteenth century the European Marxist movement was gripped by a major debate between "revisionism" and "orthodoxy". The revisionists were led by the German social democrat Bernstein. Bernstein rejected revolution as a goal and argued in its place for a strategy of reforms, which were designed to make life under capitalism more acceptable for workers. Modern reformism was born.

In Russia, the revisionist trend in the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP) organised itself into a faction which became known as the "Economists".

The RSDLP had made an important turn to factory work in the 1890s, during an upsurge of strikes. Vladimir Lenin, a Russian revolutionary who went on to found the Bolshevik Party and lead the victorious workers' revolution of October 1917, had wholeheartedly supported this turn as a serious attempt by Russian Marxists to break out of small intellectual circles and address the Russian workers.

For Lenin this turn involved a systematic attempt to raise the social democratic (socialist) programme among workers by starting with their immediate concerns and connecting those concerns with the general goals of the party, in particular the political struggle to overthrow the absolute monarch, the Tsar. His leaflets and pamphlets were fine examples of socialist agitation.

However, the Economists drew very different conclusions from the turn to agitation. They concluded that the "least line of resistance" needed to be followed. That is, the socialists should go no further in their agitation than the demands, primarily those of an economic character, spontaneously raised by the workers. Political struggle should be reserved for the intelligentsia, the liberal bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie. These classes would overthrow Tsarism while the workers got on with their day-to-day economic struggle.

They believed that the economic struggle would, in a piecemeal and spontaneous fashion, turn workers into socialists. But the socialism the Economists had in mind was increasingly the reformist socialism of Bernstein – it was legislative change for the benefit of the working class, not the emancipation of the working class by the working class through social and political revolution. For the Economists, revolution was "primitive Marxism" as opposed to their own "democratic Marxism".

Their ideas were spelt out by one of their leaders, Kusova, in a text that became known as the *Credo*. This argued that the party's goal of seizing power would, through participation in the everyday struggle of the workers, "be transformed into a desire for change, for the reform of contemporary society along democratic lines that are adapted to the present state of affairs, with the object of protecting, in the most complete and effective way, all the rights of the labouring classes."

The practical consequence of this, for Kusova and the Economists, was clear: "participation in, that is assistance to, the economic struggle of the proletariat and participation in liberal opposition activity."

Politics for the bosses and the intellectuals, bread and butter economics for the workers. This was the nub of Economism.

Lenin is frequently called an elitist because of the ideas he put forward against the Economists, principally his claim that the workers themselves, in their everyday struggle, would not get beyond trade union, reformist bourgeois consciousness.

But the real elitists were the Economists. For them the workers had no business participating in politics. They should stick to their factory demands. And socialism would be a legislative gift from above.

Lenin countered these arguments in a series of polemics in the paper *Iskra* as well as the book, *What is to be done?* (1902). His struggle culminated at the second congress of the RSDLP in 1903, when the party divided into two factions, the Bolsheviks (meaning majority

### IN BRIEF

■ **Leninism was born in the struggle against Economism in the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party in the late 1890s and early 1900s**

■ **Economism believes that the spontaneous economic struggles of the working class will automatically lead to the spread of socialist consciousness among workers. For Economism the job of socialists is to always follow the line of least resistance – never challenging the existing demands, slogans, forms of struggle or consciousness of workers.**

■ **Against Economism, Lenin insisted that the task of revolutionaries was to bring revolutionary socialist consciousness to the workers. He recognised that the economic struggle in and of itself, the pure trade union struggle, did not spontaneously lead to socialist consciousness, but to reformist – i.e. bourgeois – consciousness.**

■ **The task of revolutionaries was to intervene in the class struggle through an organised and centralised party, in order to challenge pure trade union consciousness and transcend it. Only by doing this in every sphere of struggle – not just the economic sphere – would workers be won to the revolutionary party and its programme.**

at the congress) and the Mensheviks (meaning minority).

The charge of elitism against Lenin rests on quotes such as this one, from *What is to be done?*:

"We have said that there could not have been social democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation etc."

There is nothing elitist about this. It is simply true. That is why to this very day workers all over the world remain enchained by capitalism. They have not, despite decades of heroic trade union struggle, attained socialist consciousness and without an international party bringing that consciousness to them – through participation in their struggles but not through liquidation into their existing politics – they never will.

The reason for this lies in the nature of the trade union struggle itself and the nature of capitalism itself. The workers have to organise together to resist the constant attempts of the bosses to raise the pace of work or cut real wages. This is the beginning of class consciousness and class organisation.

But the trade union struggle does not look beyond this to the wider question of the overthrow of the whole system of exploitation. The true nature of that exploitation – and the possibility of overthrowing it – remains disguised in the day-to-day battle over wages and conditions. Socialist consciousness has to be brought to the working class from outside the confines of that day-to-day struggle.

The Economists attacked Lenin for these arguments, claiming that he was ignoring the significance of the spontaneous struggle of workers and that he was promoting the importance of the professional revolutionary at the expense of the ordinary worker. To this day the Economists on the British left, the Socialist Workers Party (the SWP), echo these criticisms of Lenin. SWP leader Tony Cliff wrote of Lenin's insistence that "class political consciousness can be brought to workers only from without":

"There is no doubt that this formulation overemphasised the difference between spontaneity and consciousness. For in fact, the complete separation of spontaneity from consciousness is mechanical and non-dialectical."

There is nothing mechanical in Lenin's position. Lenin simply recognises – and insists upon – the simple truth that spontaneity does not create revolutionary class conscious workers. If it did there would be no need for a party, for theory, for a programme, for a conscious struggle against reformism. Spontaneity would do all of this for us. Which is exactly what the Economists believed.

For its part the SWP essentially agree with the Economists but add that the party is the "organisation that groups together the workers who want to fight so that they can have the maximum chance of winning the majority of their fellow workers to taking action", as another SWP leader, John Rees, puts it.

The importance of Lenin's understanding was that it posed the party as the leadership, as the means of advancing socialist consciousness, as the only way in which the working class could be won to the fight against all aspects of oppression and exploitation and not simply fight around their own immediate day to day concerns.

Far from denigrating the struggles of workers, or ignoring the significance of spontaneity, Lenin had a clear idea of their relevance to the spread of socialism. Spontaneity, he argued, represented "consciousness in embryo". But for an embryo to develop into a human being, it needs to be nurtured. Without such nurtur-

ing it will not develop at all. For Lenin, the party's job was not to worship the embryo, the spontaneous struggle, but to develop it into something qualitatively more advanced.

Lenin wanted to take the workers' struggle beyond the elemental sectional strike towards the conscious struggle to overthrow absolutism and capitalism. He could never have achieved this – and let us remember that this is exactly what the "mechanical" Lenin did achieve – if he had mistaken the elemental strike for the generalised political class struggle, or simply waited until it transformed itself into such a struggle.

None of this meant, for Lenin, that the workers were incapable of being the bearers of consciousness. Quite the reverse. Unlike the Economists, Lenin strove hard to train and develop Russian workers into becoming worker intellectuals, capable – in a manner far superior to bourgeois or petit bourgeois intellectuals – of convincing ever wider layers of the working class to struggle against capitalism. Such workers would be "tribunes of the people". They would not be limited to agitating against the appalling conditions in their own factory.

Agitation was recognised by both Lenin and the Economists as spreading "few ideas to many people". But for the Economists, this meant steering clear of political agitation. Political questions, they argued, should be dealt with in propaganda – "many ideas to the few". Their reasoning was that action – the goal of agitation – would be economic action. Political action was impossible.

Lenin argued that the tribunes of the people should seize the opportunities presented by the spontaneous economic struggle to agitate around a range of immediately relevant political issues. He argued:

"In conducting agitation among the workers on their immediate economic demands, the social democrats inseparably link this with agitation on the immediate political needs, the distress and the demands of the working class, agitation against police tyranny manifested in every strike, in every conflict between workers and capitalists, agitation against the restriction of the rights of the workers as Russian citizens in general and as the class suffering the worst oppression and having the least rights in particular, agitation against every prominent representative and flunkey of absolutism who comes into direct contact with the workers and who clearly reveals to the working class its condition of political slavery."

Always and in every struggle it is Lenin who is trying to raise workers consciousness. This is the antithesis of the sort of elitism he is so often accused of, and the antidote to the sort of anti-working class elitism that prevails in reformist or bureaucratic socialist organisations.

As for the charge that Lenin's fight against Economism led him to be undialectical about the relationship of the spontaneous class struggle and the revolutionary party, Lenin's own estimation of the relationship between the two in 1900 is answer enough:

"Social democracy is the fusion of the workers' movement with socialism. Its task is not to serve the workers' movement passively at each of its separate stages but to represent the interests of the movement as a whole, to direct this movement towards its ultimate goal, its political tasks and to safeguard its political and ideological independence. Divorced from social democracy, the workers' movement degenerates and inevitably becomes bourgeois: in carrying on the purely economic struggle the working class loses its political independence, becomes an appendage of the other parties and betrays the great principle that 'the emancipation of the working class should be a matter for the workers themselves'. In every country there has been a period when the workers' movement and socialism existed separately, each going its own way – and in every country this separation has weakened both socialism and the workers' movement; in every country only the fusion of socialism with the workers' movement has created a lasting basis for the one and for the other."

# After the peace deal: where now for KLA?

Michael Glatter analyses the origins and development of the Kosovan Liberation Army and asks will it be able to secure independence for Kosova or will it become a tool of the Nato protectorate?

THE KOSOVARs are an oppressed nationality. They were compelled by an international treaty, in which they had no say, to be a part of Serbia from 1912. They have never been offered self-determination, despite constituting the overwhelming majority in Kosova.

Their oppression became more intense 10 years ago when their limited autonomy was removed by Milosevic and tens of thousands of miners, teachers and government employees were sacked.

Ten years of passive resistance ensued, including elections, an underground education system and a shadow government. After Milosevic began his wholesale repression of the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosova in 1998, the small and recently formed Kosovan Liberation Army's (KLA) ranks swelled rapidly. The genocidal attacks on ethnic Albanians marginalised president Ibrahim Rugova's strategy of non-violent resistance. Many of his former supporters joined the KLA.

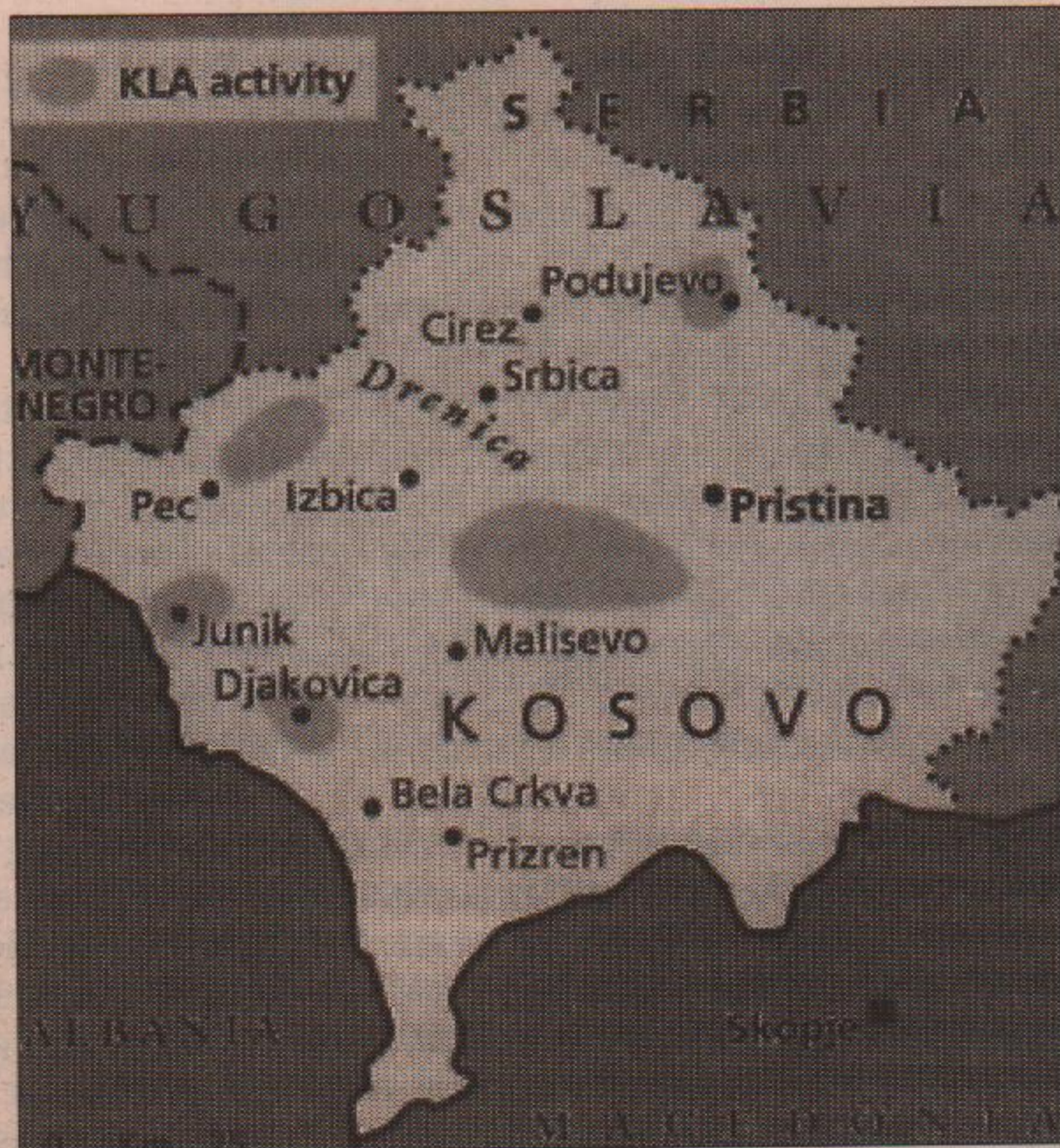
The KLA had been founded on a strategy of a sustained guerrilla campaign against the primary instrument of Milosevic's oppression, the Serbian paramilitary police force. Despite the ideological roots of some of its leaders in Hoxhaite Maoism (followers of Enver Hodja, long-time Stalinist leader of Albania and friend of Chairman Mao), the younger KLA leadership were pure nationalists. They called for an independent Kosova and openly expressed the long-term perspective of a pan-Albanian union that would unite the ethnic Albanian populations of Kosova, Montenegro, and Macedonia with Albania.

The first KLA guerrilla attack on the Serbian police occurred in Glogovac, a city in the Drenica region, in May 1993. Numerous hit-and-run attacks on police stations in the succeeding years drew attention to the existence of the KLA. Uniformed KLA fighters first appeared in public on November 28 1997, at a funeral service for a schoolteacher murdered by Serb police.

These attacks prompted increasingly bloody reprisals. After the massacre in Prekaz of the Jashari clan in March 1998, the KLA broadened its military activities, hoping to sever communication links between Yugoslav forces and to liberate territory within the north-western side of the province. But the KLA seriously overestimated its ability to take on the Yugoslav army, as opposed to the police. The Serb Army's summer 1998 counter-offensive recaptured nearly all the areas won by the KLA in the spring.

Yet the KLA has proved remarkably resilient in the face of massively superior Serb forces – 40,000 regular troops plus thousands of paramilitaries and irregulars. Despite suffering a terrific pounding by these for more than a year, the KLA's command-and-control network remains largely intact. The KLA have also captured and handed to Nato several Yugoslav military personnel since Nato's bombing began in March.

Many on the left, especially the *Morning Star* and *Socialist Worker*, have made



Left: areas of KLA activity. Right: Hasim Thaci, who wants the KLA to be allied with Rugova and Nato



a lot of the statement on 23 February 1998, by US Special Envoy to the Balkans Robert Gelbard, that the KLA is a "terrorist group." Leaving aside the astonishing fact of accepting the US government's definition of terrorism – Marxists simply do not characterise national liberation guerrilla forces in this way – there is little or no evidence that the KLA makes indiscriminate terror against Serb civilians either a central or even a significant part of its strategy. A recent US-based study of the KLA reports that "apart from isolated instances, the KLA has targeted Yugoslav police and security forces but not Serbian civilians in Kosova." (*The Kosovo Liberation Army and the Future of Kosovo* James H. Anderson and James Phillips)

The KLA has indeed kidnapped and shot Serbs (see *Amnesty International Special Report 1998*) this has to be understood (as Amnesty does) in the context of mass terror against the Albanian population and pogroms carried out by Serb paramilitaries.

Another quote from a German government source, again repeated by the *Morning Star* and *Socialist Worker*, concerns the KLA's connections with Albanian criminal clans involved in smuggling immigrants and drugs. The KLA has indeed relied in part on criminal networks to raise money, buy arms, and smuggle supplies into Kosova. But in the first place, this is not in itself illegitimate for an illegal resistance force and, second, it further proves the absence of the supposed imperialist material support for the KLA, which its "left" critics inconsistently raise against it.

And despite the reality that some of its money comes from smuggling drugs, most authorities say that the KLA's main source of revenue has always been the ethnic Albanian communities outside Kosova, particularly those in the United States, Europe, Canada, and Australia. Donations from the Albanian diaspora have been funnelled through a Swiss-based fund.

Should revolutionaries throw up their hands in horror at the thought of freedom fighters "mixing with drug pushers and criminals"? Anyone who

does this knows nothing of the history of some other rather famous guerrilla movements; some approved of by the *Morning Star* (the Vietnamese), some supported at the time by the SWP (the Afghan Mujahideen).

The KLA is far from being a bandit army of drug smugglers. Its capacity to resist repeated Serbian army attacks, its sophisticated organisation in seven operational zones (testified to in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 1999), its well organised base camps in northern Albania, its political directorates, social services, and administrative departments all indicate that it is a serious national liberation movement like many others. Indeed, many Serb nationalists who have criticised the LRCI on demonstrations and at meetings have made the point that "the KLA is just like the IRA" – only to be thrown into confusion when we point out that, as revolutionaries in the oppressor country, we supported the IRA's armed struggle against Britain!

The war has had an enormous impact on the KLA, increasing its contradictory character. It has greatly expanded, making it a real representative mass force in a population less than two million. In its ranks are thousands of men and women who have lost everything in the past two months and are determined to have their own independent state at last.

Estimates of the KLA's strength range as high as 12,000 regular troops but with 25,000 irregulars. Another 15,000 exiled Albanians have signed up. The KLA fighters have shown enormous courage in the war by defending their people against the Serbian occupation forces and by opening a corridor from the border to the remaining enclaves.

At the same time, the KLA's leadership has moved dramatically towards becoming a tool for imperialism. While Nato tactically used them to engage Serbian forces and to get information on the ground about targets, they neither gave them weapons nor any kind of serious tactical air support (for example during the fighting for the corridor). The reason for this is that imperialism is actually against the Kosovars' goal of

independence because it could lead to a significant change in the borders of the region, threatening the spread of instability. The sanctity of borders far outweighs the right of nations to self-determination for the "democratic" imperialists.

In February and March 1999 during the peace talks held at Rambouillet, the KLA came firmly under the leadership of Hasim Thaci, head of the Kosovar negotiating delegation and the KLA's political director. Thaci, a 31-year-old Swiss-educated leader, has his headquarters near Kukes in Albania and has imposed a strategy of reliance on Nato to liberate Kosova. This is a fatally wrong strategy that threatens to turn the KLA into no more than a tool of imperialism.

Even this is not unique among national liberation movements. For Marxists to turn their back on the KLA because the KLA supports the Nato bombing of Serbia is scandalous. Did anyone on the left suggest condemning the Kurds when their leaders supported the Allies in the Gulf War and stabbed "anti-imperialist" Saddam Hussein in the back by an all-out offensive? Of course not.

The problem with the KLA is not that it is a terrorist organisation but that it is an increasingly pro-imperialist guerrilla army. Nato's project of the pacification of Kosova requires reliable agents on the ground. The main figure was Ibrahim Rugova, a member of the clan which is the biggest land-owner in Kosova. He combined a non-confrontational attitude towards Milosevic. In this he was repeatedly encouraged by the US administration which had hoped from 1993-1998 to use Milosevic as their main regional gendarme. But Thaci's ascendancy inside the KLA offers the prospect of an alliance between him and Rugova.

However, it is clear that the US offer to integrate the Thaci leadership into the administration of a de facto Nato protectorate has its price. They must accept Kosova as a part of Yugoslavia and lay down their arms. There can be little doubt that Nato has offered the

leadership the prospect of well-paid jobs in a Kosova administration and the integration of some of the KLA fighters into a lightly armed police force. This demilitarisation must be completed within three months according to the G8 plan. The embryonic military bureaucracy of the KLA is quite willing to sell out the struggle for independence so long as they become ministers and administrators.

The entire development of the KLA confirms the LRCI's characterisation of it as a petit bourgeois nationalist force. It represents a genuine mass struggle. It does not represent any real sections of the bourgeoisie and landowners. It is led by a petit bourgeois, bureaucratic layer which is not under the control of the workers and peasants it represents. The past months have accelerated a process in which the leaders of the movement are trying to increase their bureaucratic control of the mass of fighters pouring into the KLA's ranks.

The existing leadership is trying to transform itself into a fully bourgeois state machinery, part and parcel of the imperialist colonial administration for Kosova. If it succeeds in this the KLA will be transformed from a petit bourgeois movement into a bourgeois force. It will have followed the path already taken by the PLO in the West Bank and the ANC in South Africa.

But it is likely that this process will be accompanied by splits. In the past there have been open disputes. Adem Demaci – who was the political speaker of the KLA from autumn last year until March – denounced the signing of Rambouillet by Thaci and, half-heartedly it is true, opposed the Nato bombing. He is a nationalist petit bourgeois democrat who supported the Serbian democratic movement at the beginning of 1997 and opposed the ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Krajina in 1995. But Demaci was forced to resign over Rambouillet after losing the battle to oppose it inside the leadership.

But there are also other forces inside the KLA who oppose the sell-out. They represent a layer of fighters and commanders who insist on independence for Kosova and who have no prospect of the few well-paid jobs in a Nato protectorate. Of course, revolutionaries should side with these forces if they really struggle against the sell-out to imperialism of Thaci. But at the same time it is necessary to draw the essential conclusions of the defeats of the past period.

The Kosovars need a revolutionary workers' party not a petit bourgeois guerrilla force if they are to both achieve independence and freedom from exploitation at the hands of the ex-bureaucrats, who aim to become capitalists, the imperialists and the big landowners. They need to fight now for the organisation of workers' and poor peasants' councils, a workers' and poor peasants' militia as the alternative to a new state machine defended by Nato.

Above all they need such a party to fight for an internationalist solution – a socialist federation of the Balkans – that can finally put an end to the nightmare of war and ethnic cleansing that reactionary nationalism created.



# Euromarch – success in the sun

Despite the heat, 30,000 marched to show the EU summit that there is an alternative to unemployment

THE EUROMARCH against unemployment, racism and social exclusion took place in Cologne, Germany, on 29 May. It was an excellent opportunity for socialists and trade unionists to unite across the borders and show the Eurobosses that there is an alternative to mass unemployment, racist immigration controls and poverty. It was a powerful symbol of international solidarity to workers across the continent.

The march was held to coincide with the European Union (EU) Heads of Government meeting. It was also at the height of the Kosova war, and was an important chance to raise the banner of internationalist opposition to the social democratic warmongers, Blair, Jospin and Schroeder. Nowhere was this more firmly grasped than on the League for a Revolutionary Communist International's (LRCI) contingent, with our chant: "Freiheit für Kosova – Freedom for Kosova – Solidarité internationale!"

Up to 30,000 took part in the demonstration, with particularly strong representation from France, Italy, Spain and from the Kurds. The German labour movement itself was less well represented than at Amsterdam two years ago. This was partly because the DGB (the German TUC) and the IG Metall (engineers' union) leaderships had openly opposed the Amsterdam demo – which actually encouraged the left in the unions to mobilise for it!

This time, the bureaucrats tolerated and in some cases, like IG Metall, formally supported the demo but did nothing to mobilise for it. As a result many branches paid for coaches but made no effort to fill them.

In addition, much of the German trade union left, particularly the PDS (the former Stalinist party in East Germany), put all their efforts into electioneering rather than into the demonstration. The idea that socialists should



Italian trade unionists from COBAS

use election campaigns to mobilise the working class to fight is anathema to these dyed-in-the-wool reformists.

The British trade unions were also notable by their absence, despite Unison's paper position of support for the demo. A flick through most union annual reports will reveal that our well-paid bureaucrats are not averse to travelling abroad to "build international links" – but only for themselves.

Heaven forbid that the rank and file from different countries should forge bonds and plan co-ordinated strike action against the multinational corporations' continental-wide assaults. Such things might get in the way of the leaders' wine and beer guzzling junkets with their fellow bureaucrats.

It fell to the left in Britain to build for the Euromarch in the colleges and unions. Workers Power, at the Newcastle low pay demonstration, on the anti-war demos and in union branches and workplaces raised the march, argued for union delegations to it and distributed thousands of leaflets publicising it.

In stark contrast, the largest group

on the British left, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), boycotted the Euromarch, reflecting the union bureaucracy's own disdain for practical internationalism. Although the SWP has an international organisation, it refuses to give it any prominence.

This national-centredness runs completely counter to the tradition of all the great Marxists, from Marx and Engels through to Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky. As a result, it spurned an ideal opportunity to raise opposition to the war in the Balkans and make their proclaimed internationalism reality.

Workers Power and the socialist youth organisation, Revolution, on the other hand brought 50 people to the demo, where we joined with over a hundred others from the LRCI sections in Sweden, Germany, France and Austria and sister Revolution groups from around Europe, including the Czech Republic.

As marchers from across Europe began to assemble, we greeted them with leaflets and bulletins, written in several different languages. Literature from all our European sections was on sale

and our bookstall became a meeting point and centre of discussion for people from all over the continent.

With each new arrival more colour was added to the march, or sound in the case of the Spanish trade unionists and their firecrackers. There was loud applause for the big Kurdish contingent with its demands for the release of PKK leader, Ocalan.

When the march moved off the significance of an international workers' demonstration became clear to all. Sandwiched between the Portuguese socialists ahead of us and the Italian Rifondazione Comunista and the militant trade unionists of COBAS to the rear, the vibrant and vocal LRCI and Revolution contingent made a big impact. With everyone joining in with our multilingual banners and flags, slogans and songs, our lively contingent made its mark.

A massive police presence kept the demonstrators away from the venue for the Heads of Government meeting. The police also succeeded in disrupting the march by separating out and surrounding one section. The leadership of the demonstration were obviously unprepared for this and the demonstrators as a whole had no clear idea of what was happening or what should be done against the police provocation. Nevertheless, the police could not wreck the day as a whole.

After the end of the march the LRCI held a rally, at which speakers from several countries outlined the common problems facing the working class interna-

tionally and the revolutionary answers needed to overcome them. The whole experience was a great boost. In Britain, where the workers' movement has suffered some heavy blows and where the labour movement tends to be narrow and parochial in its outlook, a reminder of the militancy the international working class is capable of was timely and welcome.

We came away with a renewed determination to carry on the work, building a new international and an international communist youth organisation. The march gave us a glimpse of what can be done. It pointed the way to the only progressive alternative to the Euroland of the bosses: revolutionary internationalism and the Socialist United States of Europe.



LRCI contingent makes its mark

## ISRAELI ELECTIONS

# Barak woos the right after election victory

Mark Robbins explains why One Nation's election victory will continue the oppression of the Palestinians

ISRAEL'S ELECTIONS, last month, proved to be a disaster for Benjamin Netanyahu. He had led a coalition government dominated by his right-wing Likud party.

Netanyahu's defeat, however glad people are to see the back of the bigot, should not lead anyone to believe that the election of former general, Ehud Barak, as prime minister brings peace and justice for the Palestinians any closer.

Barak's One Nation party – the old Labour party rebranded – gained 26 of the 120 Knesset seats, putting it well ahead of Likud's 19. But now Barak is wooing the Likud and other parties of the right.

Barak had promised a number of policy changes during his campaign. In particular, he pledged:

- to pull Israeli troops out of Lebanon within 12 months;
- to resume peace talks with Syria over the Golan Heights that had been pursued under Israel's last Labour administration;
- to accept the dismantling of some West Bank settlements; and
- to "implement existing agreements", in particular the Wye accords – the agreement signed with PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

In return for this last pledge, Arafat

had postponed the Palestinian "declaration of independence" which had originally been planned for May until after the election.

In effect, Barak has revived the Rabin-Peres strategy, which inspired the 1993 Oslo accords. The underlying objective is to replace Israeli military hegemony over a hostile region with economic hegemony over a huge, undeveloped market for labour and goods.

However, both during and since the elections, Barak has been busy making compromises with right-wing interests, including both Likud and the National Religious Party, which represents settler interests, in order to form a coalition. These give him the pretext for maintaining a much harder line on negotiations with the Palestinians and in particular the crucial issue of the West Bank settlements.

While there are signs of a deal with Syria and Israel's surrogates in the South Lebanese Army have started a withdrawal from the Israeli "security zone", Barak appears to be making concessions to the right-wing West Bank settlers. He is also putting distance between himself and One Nation's main allies, Meretz and the Centre party, whose own leading candidate withdrew to give Barak a clear run.

Barak has said he will observe four "security red lines" in the Palestinian peace process: Jerusalem remaining under eternal Israeli sovereignty; no return to the 1967 borders under any circumstances; most West Bank settlers staying in settlement blocs under Israeli sovereignty; and no "foreign armies" west of the River Jordan.

Since the original Oslo accords in 1993, Israel has confiscated 54,000 acres of Palestinian land. There have been 12 new settlements since the Wye River accords last year. Since the election the situation in the West Bank has actually worsened. On 28 May, the outgoing defence minister Moshe Arens approved the extension of the West Bank settlement, Maale Adumim, to the borders of Jerusalem, cutting the West Bank in half and stripping land from five Arab villages.

In response to this and to Barak's prevarication, the PLO declared a campaign involving three days of mass action, or "Days of Rage". The PLO leadership insisted these should be peaceful demonstrations, anxious to give Barak more time. But further settler activity and repression by Israeli forces, mean Arafat will not be able to keep a lid on Palestinian anger indefinitely.

Aimed Chore, speaker of the Pales-

tinian legislative council, has already declared that further talks should be made conditional on the cessation of settlement activity. Barak, however, has refused to speak out and condemn the continuing settlements.

Underlying Barak's paralysis over the West Bank are the growing divisions and contradictions within Israeli society itself. These were graphically illustrated during the election campaign, much of which was dominated by scrapping between parties representing rival ethnic and sectarian constituencies.

Two large minorities have their own political parties with influential Knesset representation: the secular but very right-wing recent Jewish immigrants from the ex-Soviet states represented by Yisrael B'Aliyah; and the religious Sephardic Jews, originating from the Middle East and North Africa, and represented by Shas, an ultra-orthodox party. The latter have historically faced discrimination within Israeli society by the European Ashkenazi elite who still dominate Labour.

Both Yisrael B'Aliyah and Shas were originally part of the Likud-led coalition and its re-election campaign. However, the unobservant "Russians" are regarded as not being proper Jews by the religious parties, who controlled the

Interior ministry and have imposed increasingly strict definitions of "Jewishness" for the purposes of citizenship and marriage.

Now Barak has promised the interior ministry to the "Russians" – but may yet have to make concessions to Shas, to build support for his coalition. While Shas declares its willingness to consider giving up some of the West Bank settlements, in return it would undoubtedly demand further concessions to the ultra-orthodox in social and political life.

Thus, Barak might feel safer with the right-wing devils he knows, Likud and the National Religious Party.

The Palestinian people can put no trust in either Barak or any of the parties tied to the Israeli state. Indeed, these events show once again that the Oslo peace deal and subsequent Wye River Accords seek to achieve an impossible goal: the maintenance of the Zionist state alongside a weak and subordinated Palestine. The goal of Palestinians as well as progressive anti-Zionist Jewish workers and Israeli Arabs needs to be different: a secular, multi-ethnic workers' state, which alone can overcome the national oppression of the Palestinians and the racial discrimination that is inherent in the Zionist state.

## EAST TIMOR

# Freedom for East Timor!

As Indonesia goes to the polls few of its leading politicians want to give up control of East Timor – seized by the army in 1975. *Sean Kelly* in Melbourne explains why socialists should back independence

INDONESIA'S GENERAL election this month is being hailed as the long awaited return of the country to the democratic fold. The claim is exaggerated. Whoever wins – the poll is underway as we go to press – the Indonesian masses are being systematically denied any meaningful rewards for their heroic struggles one year ago when they overthrew the dictatorship of Suharto.

Suharto's party, Golkar, is now led by the country's president Habibie. It claims to be just another of the 48 parties fighting the election. But its control of the state machine has been used to intimidate or bamboozle voters, particularly in the countryside.

Its troops and police still attack the demonstrations and rallies of its opponents with impunity. And, despite the relaxation of state control of the media, the fact that the television stations and radio networks are almost wholly owned by Golkar supporters has ensured that the election will be far from free.

The person most likely to defeat Habibie is the enormously popular Megawati Sukarnoputri. Her party, the Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle, is riding high. Megawati herself, despite having few clear policies, is widely held to be a symbol of opposition to Suharto, a friend of the dispossessed and a true democrat.

In reality, she is an Indonesian Cory Aquino. Aquino rode to power in the Philippines on the basis of the mass "people power" movement against the Marcos dictatorship. Once in power this democrat proceeded to keep order on behalf of imperialism, particularly US imperialism. The workers and poor peasants who overthrew Marcos remain impoverished, super-exploited and oppressed. Megawati, already being praised by the US, will see to it that the Indonesian masses suffer the same fate.

One true test of democratic credentials in post-Suharto Indonesia is a clear commitment to grant East Timor independence. Megawati has signally failed this test. In January Habibie, as part of his democratic counter-revolutionary manoeuvres designed to save Indonesia for capitalism, offered the people of East Timor a referendum on partial autonomy. However, he took a further gamble by stating that if this offer was rejected then the Jakarta regime would recognise East Timor's independence.

As a result of this there is to be a UN-supervised referendum on independence versus autonomy on 8 August. In the election campaign Megawati has made clear her opposition to independence. Worse, she has challenged Habibie's right to offer it in the first place. This can have only one meaning – if she wins she will not grant independence. She said as much at an election rally in early June in East Timor:

"I have come here to invite you to join together and develop with Indonesia."

She knows that this invitation can only be passed on to the East Timorese people on the end of the bloodied bayonets of the Indonesian army who occupy the country. Megawati also made clear that before considering independence the East Timorese would be obliged to undergo a period of autonomy under the auspices of her administration. That, she claimed, would convince them to abandon independence.



Members of the reactionary militia outside the Governor's office in Dili

Her reasoning on this issue has nothing to do with democracy and everything to do with preserving the prison house state of Indonesia. If she granted independence to East Timor then the pressure for her to meet the demands of other national minorities, in Irian Jaya and Aceh, for example, would grow and threaten to blow the Indonesian state apart.

Megawati's stance will reassure many of the most reactionary elements in Indonesia. Within the existing government there was disquiet at Habibie's independence offer.

The foreign minister, Ali Alitas, could hardly conceal his embarrassment as the referendum announcement was made. He was the key minister responsible for overseeing the subjugation of East Timor for 10 years, yet wasn't consulted over the offer of independence.

These sections of the bourgeoisie, together with Megawati, favour limited autonomy for East Timor. Their hope is that such autonomy will cut the ground from beneath the feet of the independence movement, liberate Indonesia from its status as evil oppressor, while at the same time enabling the Indonesian bourgeoisie to carry on exploiting East Timor.

They are aware that without such a move East Timor will prove to be a burden. Figures in early April showed an 89 per cent fall in the value of foreign investment approvals in the first three months of 1999. This lack of fresh capital was bringing business to a halt in East Timor. Autonomy, and with it stability, can reverse this decline.

The importance of this to the ruling elite is clear. The Suharto clan and their many rich friends have massive business interests in East Timor as do numerous multinationals. Autonomy could safeguard these interests, independence will threaten them.

Thus, amendments have been passed to the proposed autonomy package that will mean the maintenance of Jakarta's control over East Timor's natural resources. The Indonesian security forces (ABRI) will continue to police

the island.

The East Timorese, in any free and fair vote, would reject these autonomy proposals outright and choose independence. This is clear both from the mass support for the protracted struggle for independence on the island since the 1975 Indonesian invasion and from the flourishing of independence movements since the overthrow of Suharto.

The student movement immediately took the initiative organising massive rallies in the countryside and the cities last year. The scale of the pro-independence movement had the ABRI running scared. The pre-1975 Timorese parties were refounded and opened offices in Dili, the capital, including the umbrella for the pro-independence parties, the Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT). The most dynamic organisation to emerge is the student federation, which has become the organising centre for mass protests against the Indonesian occupation.

Ranged against the burgeoning independence movement are the flunkies of the old Suharto regime, along with leading personnel of the "new" Indonesia, Megawati and her allies in the Muslim opposition parties led by Amien Rais and Abdurrahman Wahid. But these political opponents of independence effectively provide cover for far more sinister forces on the ground in East Timor.

In the first place, the Indonesian army and ABRI are continuing their regime of brutal repression. Despite an announcement by Habibie of troop withdrawal last January, Jakarta has maintained a garrison of 21,000 soldiers on the island, and has just shipped out police reinforcements for the run up to the August referendum.

Under the protection of these official "peacekeepers" the opponents of independence on East Timor itself are organised into reactionary militia, death squads to give them their correct name. In April, 1,000 of these armed irregulars – under the direction of Indonesian army officers – paraded on

the streets of Dili and then unleashed attacks on the houses of prominent independence activists and districts where the independence movement is strong.

While they burned the house of Manuel Carrascalao, an independence leader, they butchered his 17-year old son and the refugees he was protecting. Carrascalao said the next day that:

"The former head of intelligence in East Timor, General Zaki, is the force behind the militia slaughter."

Zaki was in Dili for the launch of the militia's "Operation Clean-up" – a militia campaign, overseen by the police and army, to wipe out 370 leading activists. The militia groups are quite clear about their aims. At one of their ceremonies last month, at which the fighters got drunk on a mixture of whiskey and blood, the pro-Indonesian rule speaker of the East Timorese assembly declared:

"If independence comes, civil war will come too. You must vote right on 8 August."

The militias – with names like Mahidi, "Life or death for integration", Gdapski, "Guards to uphold integration" – are being organised, armed and bankrolled by the supporters of the old regime. Gdapski was set up by Suharto's son in law, Lt. General Prabowo. It currently enjoys the support of the island's Governor, Abilo Soares. The big landowners on the island do the recruiting to the militias.

After the April killing spree Jakarta decided that the risk of a premature civil war was too great and sent in General Wiranto to broker a peace pause.

The peace plan, signed with pomp and ceremony, may as well have been written on fresh air. It was followed by the massacre of 100 people in Suai who had been ordered into West Timor in May so that they couldn't register for the referendum.

Clearly the presence of the militia means that the vote in August, whichever way it goes will not be the end of the story. Given the levels of intimidation during voter registration,

let alone the violence that will accompany voting, there is no guarantee the result will reflect the true will of the majority. A "majority" for autonomy could well provoke the real majority into an open struggle for independence.

The new regime, even if led by Megawati, will try to impose autonomy and will be obliged to rely on the despised military to do so. The militia will try to enforce a partition that will maintain Indonesian control of the coffee-growing and oil-producing regions. Civil war will break out.

Fearful of this, imperialism, via the UN, will try to broker a reactionary outcome. Terrified of allowing the masses to decide their own fate, the imperialist powers – from former colonial master Portugal to regional imperialist power Australia – favour some sort of UN-sponsored autonomy rather than independence. Even East Timorese activists and leaders, tied to petit bourgeois nationalism and incapable of seeing the solution to independence as a workers' revolution, will accept such a deal in order to win the protection of the "international community".

One leader, Jose Ramo Horta, favours "an international transfer administration" and an "international police" into which the independence fighters, Fretilin, could be "integrated". These petit bourgeois and emerging bourgeois leaders in East Timor are, in their own way, just as concerned to maintain order after the referendum as Habibie, Wiranto and Megawati.

There can be no justice or peace in East Timor until all Indonesian troops and police are withdrawn. The 25-year regime of murder, torture, incarceration, rape and forced sterilisation programmes of these front-line troops of Indonesian rule must be smashed by the East Timorese masses. They must wipe out and smash the reactionary militias before they are able to claim more innocent lives.

At the same time the Indonesian ruling class must be forced, by mass action, to pay huge reparations to East Timor. It must not only be held to account for its injustices; it must be made to pay for them. Its property, along with that of the local landowners and the multinational corporations, must be confiscated and placed under the control of the workers and poor peasants.

To do this the masses must go beyond the politics of petit bourgeois nationalism and its military strategy, guerrilla struggle separated from mass struggle. The workers and poor peasants must organise and arm themselves – into workers' and poor peasants' councils and militias.

Such organisations can unite the masses in a drive to secure not only independence, but also a workers' republic that can stand as an example to the entire Indonesian archipelago, rousing it to take up and complete the struggle begun so heroically last summer.

● Indonesian troops and police out of East Timor now

● Organise armed defence against the integrationist militias

● National self-determination for East Timor now.

At the same time, workers in Britain can help by demanding that the Labour government immediately stop all British arms sales and shipments to the Indonesian regime. ■

# Stop this reactionary war

**I**N LATE February, India's then prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, passed through a border post in the Punjab to inaugurate a regular bus service between Delhi and the Pakistan city of Lahore.

While there, Vajpayee met with his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif. The two politicians pledged that any future disputes between once-warring neighbours, including the vexed question of Kashmir, would be resolved peacefully. Less than four months later India and Pakistan are teetering on the brink of war over Kashmir.

A war, largely ignored by the western powers, has been waged in and around Kashmir since 1988. Hidden from view, it has, however, been a remarkably costly war, claiming anywhere between 25,000 and 60,000 lives. In the last week, of May this decade-old, "low-intensity" clash between

the Indian military and separatist guerrilla – most probably bankrolled by the Pakistani security services – escalated dramatically.

Delhi authorised repeated bombing missions as MiG 27 and Mirage 2000 fighter planes attacked guerrilla positions north of the so-called "Line of Control". This semi-official, 800-kilometre border separates Pakistani-administered Kashmir and the Indian-controlled statelet of Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistani gunners immediately shot down two MiGs. The following day Kashmiri guerrillas blasted an Indian helicopter out of the skies. June opened with Indian mortars raining down on two schoolyards to the north of the Line of Control where Muslim children played, killing 13.

Talks between the India and Pakistan scheduled to start on 8 June seem

likely to go nowhere; the rhetoric of war is escalating. The Indian government looks unlikely to compromise on the issue of sovereignty, especially when Hindu chauvinism has emerged as a common currency in India's electoral politics.

Nawaz Sharif, under intense pressure from senior figures in the Pakistani military and ever mindful of the growth of fundamentalist Islam as a political force, is likewise loathe to concede any ground.

The trajectory towards a full-scale conflict threatens to spiral out of control in a situation in which both countries have enhanced their nuclear weapons capability since a series of underground tests last year. In addition, the Cold War is over; the Soviet Union no longer exists to constrain the independence of action of its former client state of India. Meanwhile, although the Clinton administration reacted to last year's nuclear tests with a programme of sanctions against both countries, it is highly unlikely that Washington would intervene directly. Its main, albeit substantial, leverage with the Sharif government in Islamabad is economic since the US ultimately controls the flow of money to an effectively bankrupt state.

In the event of a war between India and Pakistan, two semi-colonial states, enslaved by debt to western imperialist interests, the response from socialists should be support for neither side and instead for the masses to wage civil war on their own ruling classes. A defeat inflicted upon both governments by their own populations as the price for dangerous nationalist adventurism would be the only progressive outcome.

Neither Indian nor Pakistani forces would be waging a war for any just cause. Both states have been adamantly opposed, in practice, to the Kashmiri people exercising genuine self-determination over their affairs. The ruling classes of both are more than willing to sacrifice the lives of countless workers and peasants, while they try to ride the waves of communalist and sectarian hatred they have done so



Indian artillery in action

much to foment to deflect opposition from their own appalling records of repression and economic inequality.

The workers and poor peasants of India and Pakistan make up the only social force on the subcontinent with the capacity and overriding material interest to halt the drive towards another India-Pakistan war. What the masses of both countries desperately need are parties committed to socialist revolution, based on programmes that not only reject communalist bigotry but seek to

build class unity across the border drawn by British imperialism in 1947. Such a fighting unity between the exploited classes of both states can and must be forged around such demands as:

- cancellation of all debt to the imperialist bankers
- the expropriation without compensation of the multinational and major national corporations and banks
- the immediate termination of nuclear weapons programmes in both India and Pakistan.

## KASHMIR

**Kashmir's often rugged terrain covers some 145,000 square kilometres. So-called Azad ("free") Kashmir and the Northern Areas, currently under Pakistani control, house nearly eight million, while a population approaching 10 million is in Jammu and Kashmir. In the Kashmir Valley the population is overwhelmingly Muslim, while in Jammu, Hindus make up a clear majority. Kadakh, the eastern territory of Jammu and Kashmir, has a narrow Buddhist majority and a Muslim minority exceeding 46 per cent. There is an adjoining smaller area, Askai Chin, currently held by China, but still claimed by India.**

**Despite the large Islamic presence, a majority of Kashmiri Muslims do not spontaneously identify themselves with Pakistan. In fact, most local Muslims subscribe to the Sufi wing of Islam and have historically faced discrimination at the hands of Sunni Islam that is dominant in Pakistan. One 1995 poll of the Kashmir Valley's inhabitants revealed that 72 per cent actually want independence – an option specifically precluded by the terms of the referendum that the United Nations has advocated since the late 1940s.**

**The Indian security forces have seized on the pretext offered by the separatist guerrillas' insurgency, backed by Islamabad, to operate a shoot to kill policy, summarily execute suspected foreign militants and destroy the personal property of the local peasantry. On both sides of the Line of Control, Kashmiris have been at the sharp end of state repression, and religious discrimination. The current brutal division has only ensured continuing absolute poverty for much of the population and the strengthening of reactionary forces within Kashmir itself.**

## SPAIN

# Strikes rock right-wing government

**D**URING MAY and early June the Spanish labour movement delivered a powerful warning to the right-wing Popular Party (PP) government.

On 21 May in the Basque country (Euskal Herria) a general strike closed down large parts of industry and commerce for the day. The main demand raised by the four trade union federations organising the strike was the immediate introduction of the 35-hour week. This would help absorb the estimated 180,000 unemployed who are victims of the speed-ups and sackings of the last years, the benefits of which have gone to the employers in the form of higher profits.

Only one in five youth has a permanent job in the Basque country. The vast majority are either forced to live without an income, conscripted onto cheap-labour schemes or appalling short-term contracts. Some 70 per cent of women

are without paid work and those in jobs earn, on average, 30 per cent less than men.

The strike was a day of protest to highlight all these injustices. The days and weeks running up to the strike saw a highly visible campaign of posters, and teams of agitators in cavalcades touring the main cities and towns. Posters were everywhere. This became a day for the working class as a whole to voice its discontent. The unions, for example, actively sought out the solidarity of the non-unionised workers in the retail sector.

At dawn on 21 May pickets were out in force outside workplaces and on the main roads; many directed traffic with mobile phones. In general the police stood aside but in some locations the police provoked fights and 20 pickets were hospitalised. At noon 50,000 joined the demonstrations throughout the region.

A key factor behind the effectiveness of the day's action was undoubtedly the unusual degree of co-ordination between the two nationalist-led trade union federations (LAB, ELA) and the CC.OO and UGT, which organise throughout the Spanish state, to maximise the turnout. But lamentably the new-found spirit of co-operation between the trade union officials did not extend to the organisation of the main demonstrations; in Bilbao the ELA/LAB and UGT/CC.OO organised two demonstrations, starting at the same time and place, but then moved them off along different routes!

In early June coal miners throughout Spain held a solid two-day strike aimed at forcing the PP government to honour the terms of the *Plan for Coal 1998-2005*, agreed in 1997. This action was the first since the bitter December 1997-January 1998 conflict during the negotiations for the *Plan for Coal*.

Nearly 20,000 miners (13,000 of them in Asturias) walked off the job in protest at the delays in implementing early retirement schemes and relocation deals, among other issues. Participation averaged between 80 and 90 per cent in most private and state-run mines in Asturias and was completely solid in León and Palencia.

In León miners blockaded the Madrid-Coruña motorway, cutting off traffic for four hours. Elsewhere in Asturias strikers mounted smaller-scale roadblocks. On 2 June, the strike's second day, 2,000 delegates from around the country laid siege to the Industry Ministry in Madrid to present their claims.

The government was knocked onto the defensive by the miners' strike, conceding that its impact was significant but denouncing the action as "unnecessary".

Coinciding with the miners' strike

was a further work-to-rule by the pilots of Iberia airlines which forced the cancellation of flights in Madrid and Barcelona, and caused extensive delays to many more. They are engaged in a bitter and protracted fight against management plans to cut their salaries and non-wage benefits.

With the municipal elections taking place throughout Spain later this month, the actions in Euskal Herria, those of the miners and pilots are all proof positive of continuing widespread resistance to the Aznar government's two-year old programme of privatisation, deregulation and cuts in social services.

What is now needed is for all the unions across the Spanish state to co-ordinate a General Strike throughout the whole of Spain, run and controlled by rank and file strike committees, to force the PP government to abandon the whole of its reactionary programme.

# Third world debt: m

Three years ago the G8 countries and the International Monetary Fund were finally forced to acknowledge that the continuing rise in Third World debt had to be halted. They launched the Heavily Indebted Poorer Countries Initiative. Its stated aim was to achieve a substantial cancellation of the debt for about 40 of the poorest nations, leading to an "exit" from the debt trap. But as *Lesley Day* explains, a leaked IMF report this April admitted that the Initiative has had a negligible effect and "may not be significantly reducing debt service from current levels paid".

**T**his month's meeting of G8 leaders drew many campaigners against poverty in the Third World to Cologne to press their case for the cancellation of the debt owed by poorer countries to the rich.

Jubilee 2000, a coalition of churches, charities and political organisations is leading this movement. All socialists and trade unionists should support this demand. The poorest countries often repaid the original loan several times over in interest repayments; in 1997 developing countries paid out \$270 billion in payments - \$60 for every man, woman and child.

In addition, the debts themselves were often incurred as a result of the foisting of loans upon them by the big western banks and the money lent was rarely, if ever, used to benefit the majority of the population.

Any campaign to end the plight of poor nations enslaved by debt deserves success but even if it were achieved it could not eliminate the roots of indebtedness, of poverty and oppression.

These lie in the nature of capitalism itself. Massive indebtedness, debt crises of different kinds and chronic instability for the poorest countries are endemic features of the capitalist system as it enters the new millennium.

**T**HE ORIGINS of the debt crisis facing the world's most Heavily Indebted Poorer Countries (HIPC) lies for the most part in the events of the early 1970s that marked the end of the post-war boom. As growth slowed in the major imperialist countries, investors and bankers went in search of more profitable areas for investment.

In 1973, US Federal Reserve Governor Andrew Brimmer noted that the main reason for the sharp rise in loans to developing countries was the "failure of demand for loans from borrowers in developed countries to keep pace with the expansion of credit availability".

The oil shock compounded this situation. The rise in oil prices meant a bonanza for the wealthiest of the oil producing countries such as those in the Gulf. Much of this went into western banks and financial institutions which became awash with "petrodollars". The growth rates in countries like Mexico and Brazil looked attractive. Interest rates in the west could not compete. Loan terms were softened, making them more attractive to developing countries. As a result, Third World debt increased from \$100 billion in 1970 to \$600 billion in 1980.

The official line was that these countries in Latin America and Africa would use the loans to build new industries and boost education to help the climb out of underdevelopment. They naively expected the growth rates of the 1960s and 1970s to continue. But this confidence was misplaced; a series of problems hit the debtor countries.

In Africa decades of colonial rule left the continent riddled with inequality and stifled by poverty. On gaining independence, power was handed to corrupt and dictatorial regimes. Often these regimes were backed by the west which wanted allies against the USSR in the Cold War.

Similarly in Latin America, military regimes predominated from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. Uruguay, for instance, first got enmeshed by the western banks in 1973. Its economy was already facing problems and many of the local rulers owed big sums to international banks. The generals who came to power in 1973 decreed that the national interest would be best served by bailing out those responsible and borrowed the money to do so. Thus the debts of the rich were effectively "nationalised". Uruguayan workers and peasants were never asked whether they wanted the loans - nor did they see any benefit.

In the following period in Uruguay and elsewhere much of the money lent went into grand projects or ended up being salted away by the leaders. Twenty years ago the IMF's man in Kinshasa warned that there was "no prospect for Zaire's creditors to get their money back in the foreseeable future". Yet over the following six years the IMF lent Zaire, headed by that friend of the west Mobutu Sese Seko, \$600 million,

while its partner, the World Bank, lent \$650 million and the old G7 governments lent nearly £3 billion. Mobutu stashed away millions in Swiss bank accounts or squandered it on show palaces and projects. His legacy to Zaire was debts of over \$13 billion. Every individual in Zaire now "owes" \$260 to the creditors.

In many cases, such as Argentina and Brazil, loans were siphoned off by the military dictators to pay for arms and the military - and of course many of the contracts went to big arms producers like Britain. In other cases such as the Philippines, contracts went to western companies. The largest single debt left by dictator Ferdinand Marcos was the \$2.8 billion Bataan Nuclear Power Station - a white elephant built by the US company Westinghouse over an earthquake zone.

**I**N THE early 1980s the debtor countries were hit by changes in the international economy. So far many had been able to pay interest on loans and to pay the increased oil prices through the sale of their own commodities. But competition and recession sent commodity prices plummeting.

At the same time the US raised interest rates. The debt crisis was ushered in by the 1982 peso crisis in Mexico. Foreign banks had lent money to Mexico in the 1970s, but much of this had fallen into the hands of the privileged cliques who controlled much of the economy and the ruling party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).

Between 1976 and 1982, President Portillo and his cronies, fearful of peso devaluation, sent millions out of the country into US real estate and other assets. They borrowed foreign exchange to service the debt at increasingly short term rates. Default became inevitable. The debtor countries ran out of foreign exchange and tax revenues to pay back the loans. Many countries were unable to pay back even the interest. All of a sudden the western banks were faced with a real possibility of international generalised default.

To prevent this the US government stepped in to protect the interests of American private banks. A series of "Brady" plans (named after the US Treasury Secretary) meant that state sponsored bodies took over the debts. The International Monetary Fund, together with the World Bank, took on a new role as coordinator of the "rescue" packages, turning private into public liability.

The 1980s saw a reversal of the flow of funds. Whereas in the 1970s there was a net transfer of \$28 billion from developed to developing countries, by 1987, the poor south had transferred \$12.4 bn to the rich north.

The IMF organised the rescheduling of debts in a whole series of countries. On each occasion it imposed a series of measures known as "Structural Adjustment Plans" (SAPs). These were ostensibly designed to encourage growth and development. In the neo-liberal rhetoric of the

day they were supposed to sweep away state bureaucracy and protection, allowing the liberating winds of the international market to attract more productive investment and foster growth.

In fact what they did was to further open up these countries to the profiteers of international capitalism, confirming their semi-colonial subordination to the imperialist powers and international banks.

The usual features of a SAP combined devaluation of the currency, opening up the economy to world markets, reducing government intervention and public spending and selling off state-owned assets. These measures meant that foreign as well as local investors could get their hands on public utilities and major industries. The debtor country had to continue to pay the interest in dollars, so had to continue to finance repayments through the export of commodities, continuing the over reliance on key exports such as copper or coffee, with often disastrous consequences for local agriculture and industry.

And often this drive to export brought little return. As one trader on the London Metal Exchange succinctly put it: "Zambia doesn't have any alternative. If they want to survive they have to export copper. They need the revenue. The tragedy is, the more they produce, the lower prices fall".

The reductions in public spending meant swingeing cutbacks in health and education. The combination of a harsh external environment and these measures meant that the economies failed to grow. For Latin America and Africa the 1980s were the "lost decade" when real wages fell and unemployment ballooned. By the end of the decade, Ethiopia, for instance, was spending four times as much on debt repayments as on health care. The total third world debt had doubled, rising to \$1,600 billion by 1990.

While some Latin American countries have seen economic growth in the 1990s alongside a massive extension of inequality and poverty, much of Africa has yet to recover from the burden of debt and the political legacy of colonialism and cold war.

Such aid as has been forthcoming often flows down old colonial paths (this is particularly the case for France and Britain) and is often linked to specific projects. British embassies across the globe act as conduits for the merchants of death. Frequently, aid has had to be used to pay off debts, and even then, countries have fallen further under the burden of debt.

By 1997, the debt snowball had reached \$2,200bn.

**B**Y 1996, the major lending countries and the IMF decided something had to be done to prevent the debt problem becoming unmanageable and causing another crisis for the western banks. They launched the Heavily Indebted Poorer Countries (HIPC) Initiative.

But three years on, after sustained criticism

## CASE STUDY: MOZAMBIQUE

The poorest country in the world is still suffering from the effect of the Apartheid sponsored war that ravaged its agriculture, industry and services. An estimated one million people were killed, two thirds of primary schools were destroyed and five million made homeless. In the late 1980s, as part of the settlement in southern Africa, Mozambique's debts were rescheduled. By 1997 this debt exceeded \$7bn, one third each owed to Russia, to the major industrialised countries and to various international agencies and smaller countries. The IMF's terms took little account of the war damage, demanding budget restraint and "liberalisation" of the economy.

It was of course impossible for Mozambique to keep up the repayments. By the early 1990s, it was paying more in debt service than on health and education and even then was only paying 30 per cent of the debt service due.

Under the terms of the HIPC Initiative, Mozambique will have £1 billion written off its debt on 1 July 1999 but this will cut annual repayments by less than 10 per cent. In fact this is an accounting trick - it cancels part of the debt that Mozambique was not paying anyway. The country is still left with debt service costs equal to the health and education budgets combined. The introduction of universal primary education has been postponed to 2010.

UN estimates suggest that for every 1 per cent increase in the share of GDP spent on health and education, infant mortality can be cut by nearly a quarter. If Mozambique were able to halve its debt service payments and divert those resources into the health and education budgets, it could halve infant mortality - saving over 115,000 children a year.

# isery for millions

from international charities and campaigners, the IMF has been forced to admit that only three countries, Uganda, Bolivia and Mozambique, so far qualify to enter the debt reduction programme, and in these cases the "relief" has turned out to be a mirage. This is because of the terms of the HIPC Initiative itself. Hidden behind various Byzantine regulations are further stringent controls that will keep countries in debt bondage.

The IMF and World Bank first do a calculation to establish what they call the "net present value" (NPV) of all loans. They then compare this with annual exports and annual revenue to decide the amount of "sustainable debt". According to the IMF the debt service ratio (i.e. the proportion of debt repayments to annual export earnings) should be between 20 and 25 per cent.

It is worth making some historical comparisons to understand what this means. In 1944, Britain and the US agreed a debt service ratio of 4 per cent for Britain to pay back war loans. The schedule agreed for Germany by the victorious Allies was less than half the HIPC ratio. Of course these were to aid the reconstruction of capitalist Europe. When the bloody dictator Suharto took over Indonesia in the late 1960s, having murdered 700,000 alleged communists, he was rewarded with a cut in the "unsustainable" debt service ratio of 20 per cent to a manageable 6 per cent!

Even if the debt service ratio was reduced, as many critics are demanding, this still leaves the question of the proportion of debt being repaid compared to the national budget. Aid is having to be transferred to repay debt.

Far from dismantling Structural Adjustment the HIPC Initiative actually strengthened it because countries must comply with its requirements for six unbroken years before any relief can be considered. Under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) governments can be advanced concessional loans to keep up with debt repayments – as long as they stick to the IMF's prescriptions which remain the usual mixture of cutting public spending, opening markets etc.

In effect, the HIPC Initiative is a way of maximising sustainable debt repayments rather than reducing them. It is a way of managing debt rather than providing relief. This was confirmed when after close questioning the IMF confirmed that Mozambique would see a reduction of just \$11 million on its annual debt service bill of \$108 million.

Meanwhile Uganda has been pushed back into an "unsustainable debt" position just a year after becoming the first HIPC graduate.

Furthermore, the IMF's plan in allowing the debtor countries to repay creditors other than the IMF itself benefits creditor nations.

By the end of 2000, total debt service payments worldwide will be reduced by only \$200 million a year. This is exactly 1 per cent of the debt service paid each year by the 93 poorest and most indebted countries.

A number of indebted countries do not even

*While some Latin American countries have seen economic growth in the 1990s alongside a massive extension of inequality and poverty, much of Africa has yet to recover from the burden of debt and the political legacy of colonialism and cold war*

come within the HIPC net. For instance Jamaica is considered a "middle income" country with its GNP per person of \$1,714. But its debt per person is \$1,616. It spends £165 per head each year on debt servicing, compared to just £30 on health care.

WITH THE debt mountain inevitably rising, the big imperialist powers and the IMF are being forced to reconsider the terms of HIPC assistance. Once again, they fear the spectre of collective default and political and social instability.

Various preparatory discussions suggest that at the G8 meeting in Cologne this month there will be various new initiatives. These may include a reduction of the "qualifying period" for HIPC relief, further sales of gold reserves to increase available funds, and the prospect of larger cancellations. A number of the social democratic governments, including the British Labour government, have been pushing for changes which seem on the surface to be more progressive. Gordon Brown is arguing for various codes which would govern what the countries spent their money on. This could include a greater degree of flexibility to allow spending on health and education. But it is hardly likely that the heads of these government which are busily carrying out the capitalist mandate at home, slashing welfare budgets and privatising utilities, are going to allow third world countries to embark on major redistributionist programmes of intervention.

In fact in all the various IMF and G8 proposals the underlying principles of ESAF seem inviolate. The economies would have to remain open to western penetration. Their spending would be overseen by IMF inspectors. They would remain enslaved.

THE Jubilee 2000 coalition has put together a powerful critique of the IMF and its strategies. But the alternative proposals made by its supporters are marked by fundamentally the same weaknesses as those put forward by Brown. Oxfam, for instance, wants to put incentives in place to reward governments willing to enter into genuine poverty reduction partnerships. This has the attraction of ensuring that money couldn't be diverted by corrupt rulers or spent on arms. But such measures still leave power in the hands of the "donors". Other proposals made to try to overcome these problems include the establishment of some sort of independent agency to oversee debt relief programmes involving institutions from "civil society" (NGOs, trade unions, churches etc.). But this presupposes that international capital will readily accept such bodies as "referees" of its own behaviour.

Some of the most radical plans for cancellation have come from the churches. For instance the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) suggests that before determining the amount a country could be expected to repay, a sum should be deducted to meet basic needs. This is part of a goal of halving world poverty by 2015. Aside from the glaring hypocrisy of the Catholic Church, with its huge land holdings and secret investments, lecturing other institutions about poverty, these proposals once again assume that the profiteers can be persuaded to change their spots.

The churches are declaring the millennium the moment of the Great Jubilee. Referring to the ancient Hebrew tradition (to be found in Leviticus) of a fifty year cycle of debt cancellation and restitution, the Catholic Bishops of Britain call for large scale debt remission for the poor nations. Of course the ritual of restitution was not confined to the Old Testament but can be found in many early class societies, an echo of earlier more egalitarian phases and having a function in promoting social solidarity. But such rituals can hardly be applied to late 20th century capitalism.

The debt burden is hardly a one-off occurrence that can be wiped out as it could be in the ancient world. It is deeply embedded in whole way the world works. This is illustrated by the fact that

the debt crisis of the 1980s was followed by another – in the 1990s.

WHILE THE HIPCs were struggling to deal with their debt burden, the international money managers were busy creating a new tranche of indebted countries. Increasingly, banks were acting as brokers and the managers of British and American insurance and pension funds led a wave of portfolio investment into the emerging markets of Asia and Latin America. Fuelled by financial deregulation, millions were poured into the "emerging markets" – into stocks, banks and businesses in East Asia and once again into Latin America. Currency speculators followed. Real estate prices soared. But the speculative boom fuelled overproduction. Profit rates were hit. Eventually the investors and speculators took fright. They rushed to transfer funds back to the US and Europe. One by one the East Asian currencies collapsed. Now local businesses couldn't repay their dollar-denominated loans. Local government intervention couldn't stave off bankruptcies and closures, despite the fact that nearly \$100 billion was spent in accumulated reserves trying to prevent devaluation.

The IMF stepped in to bail out the economies. It acted more promptly and on a larger scale than for the HIPCs, to ensure that the western creditors could be paid. Nevertheless it applied fundamentally the same principles, demanding cuts in public spending and even greater freedom for financial speculators. US Treasury official Lawrence Summers urged countries to "open up to foreign financial services providers, and all the competition, capital and expertise they bring with them". In other words, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs and the like can get their hands on Asian firms at bargain basement prices.

On top of this the governments are now saddled with debt which has to be paid at over the normal rates. Once again, the working class and rural poor are the ones that pay, in lost jobs, lost savings and lost social services. They end up labouring to produce more commodities to service the debt. Thai rice exports rose by 75 per cent in 1998.

The latest additions to the family of debtor nations are the countries of the former Soviet Bloc. They too have been subject to stringent terms for loans and have had to embark on the privatisation of services as well as industries.

WHILE THE plight of the very poorest countries has attracted the attention of Jubilee 2000 and other campaigners, the East Asian crisis, and the turmoil in the stock markets last summer, have led to warnings from more orthodox economists. Most famous of these is the international speculator, George Soros, who has called for greater controls on the movement of international capital. Even the free market advocate and adviser to the emerging capitalist countries, Jeffrey Sachs, argues for a more considered approach.

The increasing number of "global Keynesians" want to prevent collapse in the developing countries. Citing the Marshall Plan of post-war Europe, they argue that the preservation of international trade and markets can best be served by encouraging expansion in these countries rather than leaving them on the margins of the world economy.

Of course marginal adjustments in international financial management and greater co-operation between the leading imperialist nations can for a time stave off further dangers of currency collapse, default and their attendant crises. But in the end, none of these measures can alter the fundamental nature of international capitalism. Capital will seek out short term profit. It will falsely boost currencies and stocks. Its protectors, the imperialist countries, will ensure that the international financial institutions intervene to bail out the banks and other investors when they get in trouble. The international working class will carry on paying the price – until it overthrows the system of the debt merchants once and for all.

## CASE STUDY: NICARAGUA

**While countries like Zaire pay the price of having loans thrust at corrupt governments, Nicaragua is still paying the price of its challenge to US supremacy. The effect of the long civil war and US destabilisation was followed by the imposition of Structural Adjustment policies. Devaluation of the cordoba and a slump in cotton prices have contributed to further decline. On top of this came the devastation wrought by Hurricane Mitch last year, destroying lives, homes, roads and bridges.**

**Yet at the same time that many aid agencies and charities delivered relief, debt repayments and structural adjustment terms were continuing to worsen the crisis. The total health budget for 1998 was just \$88 million. Four times that amount was spent on debt servicing. The IMF also demanded that bank credit was privatised, forcing the closure of the National Development Bank which funded rural producers. VAT has risen to 15 per cent, shifting the burden of taxation from the rich to the poor. Last February school charges of \$10 a month per child were levied, ending the long standing free education policy and leading to a fall in attendance. The costs of street lighting have been added to consumers' monthly electricity bills. The state utilities are being prepared for privatisation.**

**Nicaragua is at the centre of the international campaign against the debt. As the Honduran Archbishop put it "We cannot have a world run solely by the logic of profit". The problem is – that is exactly what we do have.**

# Kosovars: put n

The "peace" terms agreed by the Serbian assembly in early June amount to an acceptance of defeat by President Milosevic at the hands of Nato forces. On 16 May – two weeks before this deal was signed – the International Secretariat of the LRCI adopted a resolution on the character of the war and perspectives for its outcome. We print here extracts of the text, shortened for reasons of space.

**T**HE PRESENT war over the fate of Kosova has a dual character; the first, that waged by Nato against Serbia to enforce a reactionary peace has been carried out by means of missile attacks and bombing of a large part of Serbia's military capacity and economic infrastructure; already over 1000 Serb civilians have been killed.

The second, that waged by the Yugoslav army and Serbian paramilitaries inside Kosova to drive out its ethnic Albanian population, has led to the displacement or external exile of nearly one million people, at least 5000 executions and the unaccounted disappearance of 100,000 of Kosovar men. Both Nato and Serbia's aims and methods in these wars have a thoroughly reactionary character.

On the other hand, the resistance of the Kosovar Liberation Front (UÇK) to the rump-Yugoslav state's attempts at genocide, and the resistance of the Serb population and the Yugoslav armed forces to the Nato attacks on their country, have a progressive character.

This holds true despite the fact that the Serbs link their war to the ethnic cleansing of Kosova and the UÇK their resistance to ethnic cleansing to support for Nato bombing and calls for it to invade and occupy Kosova. It is contrary to the interests of both the Serbian and Kosovar peoples that either reactionary objective should be realised – and it is in the interests of the world working class and anti-imperialist struggle that both justified defensive struggles should succeed.

These objectives can only be achieved if the Serbian people break from Milosevic and all the reactionary Greater Serbian nationalists (Seselj, Draskovic et. al.) and if the Kosovar Albanians break from the counterrevolutionary leadership of the UÇK who in turn lean upon Nato.

What is urgently needed is the fighting unity of the workers and peasants of all nationalities, a unity which can only be based on respect for the national existence and democratic rights of all peoples. Supporters of such a strategy must aim to take power out of the hands of the corrupt bureaucrats and criminal "businessmen" who have set the peoples of former Yugoslavia at one another's throats and place it firmly in the hands of councils and militias of the urban and rural workers and poor peasants.

In short this is a programme of permanent revolution, which combines the fight for self-determination for all Balkan peoples (i.e. to state independence) with the struggle to realise a voluntary socialist federation of Balkan states.

The regime headed by Slobodan Milosevic is not waging a principled anti-imperialist struggle. Milosevic moved from systematic repression of the democratic rights of Kosovar Albanians to outright war against them in 1998. Its aim was to destroy the UÇK guerrillas.

It evolved into a plan to ethnically cleanse the strongest areas of UÇK support and the major cities. Behind it lies a "final solution" to the Kosova problem which involves the displacement – by methods of mass terror – of a majority of the province's population, the seizure of its main economic assets and the historic sites of Serb nationalism, and the settlement in these areas of the population displaced from the Krajina, Bosnia and Slavonia in 1995. This is a continuation and attempted completion of the project to create an ethnically homogeneous Serbian state. [...]

**N**ATO CAN play no progressive role in this conflict. Its war aims are not – as Clinton and Blair proclaim – to defend the human rights of the Kosovars. Rather, by using Kosova as a pretext, they aim to establish a new world order based on Nato, under the hegemony of the sole world superpower – the United States of America.

The USA fears the disorder unleashed both by the destructive restoration of capitalism in the former Stalinist world and by the effects of recurring capitalist crises. To deal with this the USA demands full freedom of action to act as the world's policeman – behind the facade of the

institutions of the "international community" if possible, unilaterally if necessary.

Just as through the IMF and the World Bank it supervises the world economically, so through Nato it hopes to create US controlled rapid reaction forces to impose compliance ("order") on "rogue" states.

In reality the US and Nato are highly selective in their choice of targets. They do not act against all violators of international law, human rights or common humanity. Such serial violators of the human rights of national minorities within their borders as Israel, Britain, Turkey, and Indonesia have oppressed their minorities, or attacked their neighbours.

They have contemptuously ignored UN resolutions: but instead of suffering bombing, missile attacks and blockades they receive armaments and aid on a massive scale – and US vetoes protect them against condemnation in the UN Security Council.

Nor is Nato's aim in the Balkans to end the tyranny of Milosevic over the Kosovars or his rule over the Serbs. In this US imperialism's actions closely mirror those with regard to Iraq in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the former decade Saddam Hussein's massacres of his Kurdish population were ignored and he was armed to the teeth as long as he was fighting Iran, then seen as the main threat to US and EU oil supplies and to the puppet regimes of the Arabian peninsula.

On a similar pattern Slobodan Milosevic – as recently as the mid-1990s – was both the USA's and the EU's favoured broker for what they thought would be the beginning of a reactionary stability in the Balkans – the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They did this despite his scarcely concealed role as the premier exponent of the attempted genocide in that country and chiefly responsible for the deaths of over 200,000 in Bosnia.

In both cases – Iraq and Serbia – US imperialism and its allies were looking for militarily strong states whose rulers held a firm grip internally to help them keep order in strategically sensitive areas – in short gendarmes, local police forces charged with keeping regional order.

In the Balkans the US and the EU need such allies to keep order between the fractious weaker states and nationalities of the region and against the working class and small peasants who have – and will again – revolted against the sufferings of capitalist restoration and the dictates of the IMF and the European Central Bank (e.g. Albania, Romania, Croatia, Serbia and Greece).

If Nato's war aims are closely related to its overall nature and aims on a world-scale then Milosevic's war aims are likewise the product of the nature of Serbia and its rulers' ambitions. Serbia-Montenegro (Yugoslavia) is a bureaucratic moribund workers' state. Milosevic and the Serbian bureaucracy played a key role in the destruction of Yugoslavia.

By seeking to strengthen Serb dominance over the federation (which involved destroying the limited autonomy of Kosova and separating the ethnic Serb areas of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) he launched the "wars of the Yugoslav succession" in which so many Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and now Albanians have lost their lives, their homes, their homelands.

The degeneration of Yugoslav Stalinism in the second half of the 1980s into a virulent, murderous chauvinism, was necessary precisely because the Serbian kleptocracy was and is not yet an established bourgeois class but a social formation still in transition from a Stalinist bureaucracy to being true owners of the means of production. To perform this transition – this final and complete expropriation of the Serbian working class – it still has to wrap itself in the tattered mantle of Titoite "socialism" but add to it the lurid colours of Greater Serbian nationalism. But the Stalinism of Milosevic was, from 1987 onwards, the Stalinism which Trotsky called in the late 1930s, "the faction of Butenko". In modern terms, in post-1991 Russia it has been called "the red-brown bloc". The national "socialism" of Milosevic is thus, for good socio-eco-

nomical reasons – far closer to Nazism than to international communism.

The foreign policy of Milosevic (and the Serbian pro-capitalist nomenklatura) was and is to aggrandise Serbia's role in the Balkans. In the political sense (and in this sense only) it is a miniature imperialist policy, not at an anti-imperialist one.

His ultimate aim is to make Serbia an indispensable partner for imperialism (i.e. international finance capital) in the region – putting it on a par with Greece and Turkey. In the long term this could even bring it the prize of EU membership. In the new millennium Serbia hopes to graduate through the stage of advanced semi-colony to become a "developing" region of a new imperialist superstate.

In this, imperialism is perfectly consistent – rejecting the national aspirations of inconvenient small nations – rejecting outright any self-determination for the Kosovars, just as it does that of the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

All imperialism demands is that the repression carried out by its gendarmes, including some of it entirely on their own behalf, does not destabilise imperialism's own exploitation of the given area or disrupt the internal situation of its other allies.

Hence the on/off wooing between Milosevic and imperialism – rough wooing, indeed, but wooing nonetheless. If imperialism has now given up on Milosevic and his clique it has not thereby given up on a Serb state strong enough to act as an ally to impose order on the region. [...]

**W**ITHIN NATO imperialism it is not united but a coalition of independent powers. As the war has proceeded, for all Nato's claims of total unanimity, there has been an evident growth of intra-imperialist tensions. This is because the war is also an attempt by US imperialism and its British shield-bearer to strengthen their hegemony in Western Europe as well as in the Balkans. The rapid resort of the Anglo-Saxon powers to military action – their peremptory pushing aside of the diplomatic initiatives which the Germans, the Italians and the French too, would have much preferred – is a way of promoting the weight and influence of the US and UK and emphasises the much weaker position of the continental European powers. In addition to resenting such Anglo-Saxon aggrandisement, Germany, France and Italy clearly wish to appease Russia's outrage at the assault on its key Balkan ally. They want, if at all possible, to reach a compromise with Milosevic – a Dayton Mark II, but with more EU influence. The German government has published post-war plans which emphasise placing the Balkans under EU (not Nato/US) dominance.

What lies at the root of these tensions is that US (and British) imperialism have a much greater global military role and more extensive economic interests – especially in the oil-rich Muslim world – which require an interventionist policy, uninhibited by the horse-trading and obstructionism of the UN Security Council.

Their ignoring of the plight of the Bosnian Muslims for nearly three years, their choice of Milosevic as the guarantor of Dayton, all left them and their puppets in the Muslim world, exposed to the assaults of the political Islamists. Thus when Milosevic – in their view – bit the hand that fed him, further appeasement of him ceased to be an option. The use-of force, despite having negative undoubted consequences for the Slav world, especially for Russia, has had undeniable positive effects in the Islamic world for imperialism.

In contrast to Britain and the US, France, Germany and Italy have a much lower military and political capacity for such intervention and tend therefore to pursue a foreign policy which relies more on "realistic" deals with existing rulers such as Milosevic. Also these countries are far more directly affected by war, regional instability and the wave of refugees than are the Anglo-American powers. Another important factor is the continental European concern to avoid a rupture in relations with Russia.

The coming to power of a post-Yeltsin pan-

# o trust in Nato

Slav ultra-nationalist regime would lead to a change of Russian foreign policy toward Eastern Europe and the EU is less able to deter a Russian military threat than is the US. Furthermore, Greece and Italy have important economic interests in Serbia and the Balkans in general. For Greece capitalist restoration in Serbia and a complete economic opening in the region offer it the possibility of becoming the equal of most of its EU partners rather than its present role as the weakest member of the EU.

Within Nato a debate about war aims has started. Naturally the return of all the refugees has become part of the demands because they constitute a destabilising factor in the surrounding countries of Macedonia and Albania. But there are several differences inside the imperialist camp. First should Nato insist on a complete withdrawal of all Serbian troops from Kosova? While this is part of official Nato policy, US foreign minister Albright has already indicated that it could be necessary "to accept realities on the ground" and to concede to the presence of some Serbian forces. Another difference is the composition and the command of the "international peace contingent" which should be stationed inside Kosova.

While Nato as a whole has already changed the formula from "Nato troops" (in the Rambouillet agreement) to "international troops" the US prefers a stronger Nato component and command; the proto-deal with Chernomyrdin concedes a "Nato core" to this force. Furthermore, while Nato has insisted that there can be no arming of the UÇK there is more tendency in the US camp to envisage using the UÇK for auxiliary military purposes than is the case within the ruling circles of Europe.

There are even serious clashes between Nato partners on the nature of any post-war Kosova administration. Germany has pressed for EU control, while the US has vetoed this and insists on diluting EU control within the framework of the OSCE (which includes Russia). [...]

**T**HE ESTABLISHMENT of an effective Nato-garrisoned colony or colonies in the heart of the Balkans is the most reactionary outcome imaginable. Nato would thereby have established its "right" to operate "out of theatre", without the approval of the UN, and to decide on the "international lawfulness", or not, of an unlimited range of policies pursued by supposedly sovereign states. This new "Monroe Doctrine" of limited sovereignty – proclaimed by Clinton and Blair as part of the Third Way – would be the final realisation of the "liberal" (in both meanings of the word) New World Order proclaimed in 1991 but which right-wing conservatives like Thatcher and Bush were unable to carry out because of their inability to hide their naked economic goals. [...]

The weaknesses of the aerial war, the many political "own goals" caused by the collateral damage and the divisions between the US and EU within Nato and within the US ruling class, makes a ground war the least likely development and increases the probability of an ultimate compromise. The Chernomyrdin-Nato talks in early May increased the chances of this: return of refugees (in reality, watered down to the right to return), an armed international force with de facto Nato command structure and de jure UN imprimatur, Kosovar autonomy within Yugoslavian sovereignty. Such a Dayton II agreement would be a blow to Kosovar hopes. The presence of Russian and other OSCE troops in blue helmets would not only "protect" them but ensure the marginalisation if not destruction of the UÇK. [...]

An imperialist peace – like an imperialist war – will not solve, or not solve for long, the terrible problems of the Balkans. Economic collapse and repeated crises, rivalries between the governing élites, all promote the growth of chauvinism and fascism. If tragedy is not to follow tragedy then the chains of economic decline and oppression must be shattered. They can only be shattered by a proletarian revolution which spreads across the region uniting Serb, Croat,

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Albanian, Bulgarian workers and peasants in building a Socialist Federation of the Balkans.

But only those workers who transcend nationalism by supporting only and exclusively the oppressed against the oppressor, who never identify an entire people with its rulers and oppressors, who seek in the workers of other nations their best friends and allies – only such people will be able to create a new future for this part of Europe: one where genocide and exploitation are banished forever. [...]

**T**HE WORLD workers' movement should recognise the right of the Kosovars to full independence. For the last ten years, in every way possible – elections, mass peaceful resistance and finally by armed struggle – they have indicated that this is what they wish. The Serb minority have the right to full civil liberties and, indeed, autonomy in majority Serb areas. They have the right to defend themselves from any pogroms or repression. But they do not have the right to veto the self-determination of the overwhelming majority of the Kosovars. Since the political parties and military organisations which have the overwhelming confidence of the Kosovars have not only expressed this wish but have actually declared Kosova independent and chosen a government, the workers' movement should put the greatest possible pressure on all foreign governments to diplomatically recognise Kosova and its government.

The workers' movement should call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Yugoslav forces and irregular Serb paramilitary death squads from Kosova and the disarming of Serb civilian militia. They should collect money – for medicine, food and weapons – to support the struggle of the UÇK and other Kosovar parties as long as the Serbian occupation lasts.

The Kosovar resistance fighters have the right to acquire arms and supplies from whoever is willing to give them – i.e. imperialist governments, Islamic governments. They also the right to take any military advantage they can from the Nato bombing campaign. Who can lead the peoples of the Balkans out of the dreadful carnage which has marked the last decade of the twentieth century? Who can prevent Nato and the likes of Slobodan Milosevic from making certain that the national struggles of oppressed and oppressor – sometimes reversing with dizzying speed – continues for decades into the new millennium? Who can prevent the explosions of the Balkan powder keg from spreading to the whole of Europe? Who can overcome the Balkanisation of the peninsula which condemns it to economic backwardness and internecine rivalry?

Only the working class of all nations and regardless of nationality, language, culture or religion can do this! But to do so it has to wrench itself from the stranglehold of the nationalists of all colours – those of the oppressed and those of the oppressor nationalists. There is only one ideology, only one party, that can do this: revolutionary communism, which proclaims the unity of the world's workers and the defence of all oppressed peoples.

As Lenin observed at the beginning of the century only revolutionary communists can be "consistent democrats" because they wish to overcome all questions of national oppression which divide the workers of different countries and because imperialism cannot even grant bourgeois democratic demands like the rights of nations to self-determination.

The co-leader of the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky, also understood that all genuine popular struggles against national oppression can only fully realise their goals under the leadership of the working class and with the overthrow of capitalism.

What the workers of the Balkans need is a revolutionary communist party with deep roots in the working classes of all the Balkan countries and the national minorities. It must have as its driving goal the struggle for working class power. Such power will not be a return to the Stalinist dictatorships over the proletariat of the

1945-1989 period but rather power based on workers' councils such as brought about the Russian revolution of 1917 and nearly brought the political revolution in Hungary in 1956 to victory.

Such councils of workers, peasants and soldiers' deputies, elected and answerable to the workplaces, would guarantee freedom for all the parties of the workers, peasants and democratic intelligentsia. In this way they can defeat counterrevolution and prevent bureaucracy. They can expropriate the new capitalists and the agencies of the multinationals and transform and modernise the old factories, mines and farms. into a democratically planned and collectively owned economy. All the peoples of the Balkans could thus unite – with the militant Greek proletariat – to create a Socialist Federation of the Balkans on the road to a Socialist United States of Europe.

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International is fighting to build such parties across Europe. It is fighting too for a new revolutionary communist international. If we had such an international today then we could already have rendered massive assistance to the Kosovars against Milosevic, to the Serbs against Nato and brought the best elements of the Serbian and Kosovar workers together to achieve these aims and to go on to fight for the socialist revolution.

We summarise our aims in the following slogans;

- Stop the Nato bombing now
- Stop the genocide in Kosova
- No ground war in Kosova or beyond
- Victory to the Kosovar national liberation struggle
- For elected refugee camp committees in Albania and Macedonia to control food and medical supplies, to prevent involuntary displacement and locate missing relatives.
- Immediate and unconditional recognition of the independence of Kosova
- Serbian troops out of Kosova. No Serbian coup inside Montenegro.
- Arms without preconditions to the UÇK
- Defeat Nato attacks on Serbia and Montenegro
- End the UN economic blockade of Serbia and Montenegro.
- Open up all countries inside the European Union to the Kosovar refugees; voluntary exiles only; no forced deportations.
- Full social security, medical, educational entitlements and full political rights for refugees
- Down with the Dayton Accords – all imperialist troops out of the Balkans
- Lift the UN blockade and sanctions against Serbia
- For republics of workers' councils in Kosova, in Serbia and in all the states of the Balkans
- Halt and reverse the restoration of capitalism – for a democratic emergency plan
- For a socialist united states of the Balkans
- Workers, peasants and youth of Kosova, fighters of the UÇK – break with your leadership which will sell out the goal of independence and attach itself to Nato which is the enemy of oppressed peoples everywhere! Build a new, revolutionary party! ■

**CAPITALISM** is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

**THE LABOUR PARTY** is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

**THE TRADE UNIONS** must be transformed by a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production. We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

**OCTOBER 1917** The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The parasitic bureaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist.

**SOCIAL OPPRESSION** is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

**IMPERIALISM** is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution—working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of the imperialist army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

**WORKERS POWER** is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51. The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

## Welfare reform

# New Labour, guilty of benefit fraud

**S**IXTY-FIVE Labour MPs voted against the government's proposals to slash eligibility for disability benefits last month. The revolt over the *Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill* rumbles on, with the House of Lords threatening to rip up Labour's plans to cut benefits for 170,000 people.

The bill includes plans to replace the All Work Test for Incapacity Benefit claimants with a test designed to reduce the numbers entitled to benefits on the basis that they can do no work at all. It also docks 50p in the pound from claimants who have a private pension worth more than £50 a week.

To sugar the pill Social Security Secretary, Alistair Darling, has pledged to increase benefits for severely disabled people, bringing their minimum income to £128 a week. Labour has also scrapped the Benefits Integrity Project (BIP), a crude Gestapo-like interrogation of those claiming disability benefits. Despite spending millions on re-testing claimants, the project uncovered virtually no fraud.

Darling claimed that money is not the driving consideration in the latest benefit cuts: but the *Welfare Reform Green Paper*, published in March 1998, outlined the key measure of success for reforming Incapacity Benefit as "a reduction in spending on Incapacity Benefit as the number of claimants falls".

The new law gives yet another kick to disabled people, who have been treated as a political football by both Labour and Tory governments in their struggle to massage unemployment figures and divide claimants into the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor.

Under the Tories the numbers claiming Incapacity Benefit grew, as did expenditure on it. It now accounts for £8 billion of the annual £100 billion social security spending and more than 1.7 million people claim it. The rise was fuelled by several factors:

- Productivity drives and the ripping up of workplace regulations meant

an increase in industrial injury and work-related sickness.

- The need to massage unemployment figures meant the Tories colluded in transferring older and long-term sick claimants from the dole to Incapacity Benefit.

- Wage pressures encouraged the practice of "early retirement on grounds of ill health" in many white collar sectors.

The Tories introduced the All Work Test for Incapacity Benefit, replacing the doctor's note with a stringent test designed to prove a claimant's inability to work.

But if, under the Tories, massaging the headline unemployment figures was the key, with Labour it is "welfare to work". The basic philosophy behind the New Deal is means-tested benefits and coercion to force all but a core of claimants into low-paid or part-time jobs, "supported" by a mixture of tax credits and minimum income guarantees. With Labour it is not the figures but the concept of employment itself that is being massaged. The poor and sick are being herded into work-for-dole schemes.

For disabled people, the divide and rule tactic now focuses on Incapacity Benefit.

Unlike other disability benefits, Incapacity Benefit is contributory: the new

law tightens up eligibility by requiring new claimants to have been working and contributing National Insurance for two years before claiming. It also requires new claimants to go through the same "single work-focused gateway" as lone parents and young people on the New Deal.

The Gestapo tactics have, in effect, been refocused on new claimants for Incapacity Benefit. This, in addition to the means testing of benefits against private pensions, is all designed to cut off "retirement on ill health" as an option for those leaving work and force less severely disabled people to join the growing ranks of the working poor.

Labour backbencher Tom Levitt defending the Bill, summed up the divide-and-rule tactic perfectly:

"This bill does address the real needs of disabled people and it finances it by redirecting some of those funds from some relatively wealthy people to those who have nothing."

As with cuts in lone parents' benefits and child benefits, means-testing is dressed up as "affluence testing": formerly universal benefits are reduced to "safety net" handouts for the very poor; meanwhile low-paid work instead of benefits is touted as the answer.

While Labour's New Deal on welfare has stirred up opposition—mainly from charities who have to pick up the pieces

—many in the Labour movement have supported it on the grounds that work really is better than welfare dependency, and that the tax credit regime is creating, via the backdoor, a universal minimum income higher than that suggested by the hourly minimum wage. Labour's insistence on "the importance of work" in combating social exclusion—harking back to the 19th century concept of the "dignity of labour"—also strikes a chord with working class communities where unemployment has blighted the whole of social life.

But the New Deal is fatally flawed. It can only work as long as economic conditions create demand for low-paid workers and the tax revenues to finance the meagre give-aways involved. It does not address the fact that the capitalist system is incapable of providing real work for all. And, by dividing benefit claimants through coercive job counselling and means-testing it is laying the basis for a radical attack on the welfare state, where means-testing and private insurance becomes the norm.

As for Labour's fight against "worklessness" and social exclusion, it is ducking the real issues. First, this will only be solved by creating real jobs on real wages. Second, it is not inevitable that incapacity to work because of disability leads to social exclusion: in a society where social inclusion is fostered through self-organisation and working class community action there are much wider opportunities for disabled people to play a part than being shipped off to a Remploy factory. Work alone is not the answer—and certainly not the demeaning and de-skilled work on offer to many New Deal victims.

If Labour's *Welfare Reform Bill* survives a House of Lords revolt the main losers will be workers who, having paid National Insurance all their lives, find themselves on the scrap-heap due to failing health. They will be hounded off benefits and into a low-skill, low paid job—or forced to live exclusively on private pension income.

### WE DEMAND REAL WELFARE REFORM

- A national minimum income for all those out of work—whether through sickness or unemployment—based on a non-means tested benefit equal to the last wage or to the minimum wage, whichever is higher
- An end to the coercive "work-focused" counselling for claimants
- Retirement at 55 as of right
- Restore the earnings link to pensions
- Raise the state pension to a minimum £200 a week
- Nationalise all private pension funds—without compensation to the corporate owners—and merge them into a single state fund under the control of the trade unions.

## FEEDBACK

■ Contact us on 0181 981 0602

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### FUND DRIVE

We have diverted our fund raising to finance the Cologne Euromarch and the Revo Youth Camp (July). Coaches, banners and accommodation—they all cost money. So send donations to the address on the left, cheques payable to Workers Power and marked "Fund" on the back. Thanks to readers in Cardiff, London, Leicester and Middlesbrough for sending in a total of £420 this month.

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