

# workers power

revolution  
against  
global  
capitalism

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## Inside

- Why we say victory to Iraq - p3
- How to stop the war - p5
- Marxists and war - why we take sides - pp6-7
- Thieves fall out: US vs France - p8
- Revolutionary upsurge in Bolivia - p10

**MILLIONS MARCHED ACROSS THE GLOBE AGAINST THE WAR. NOW LET'S STOP IT!**

# GLOBAL GENERAL

# STRIKE

# BLOCKADE THE

# STREETS

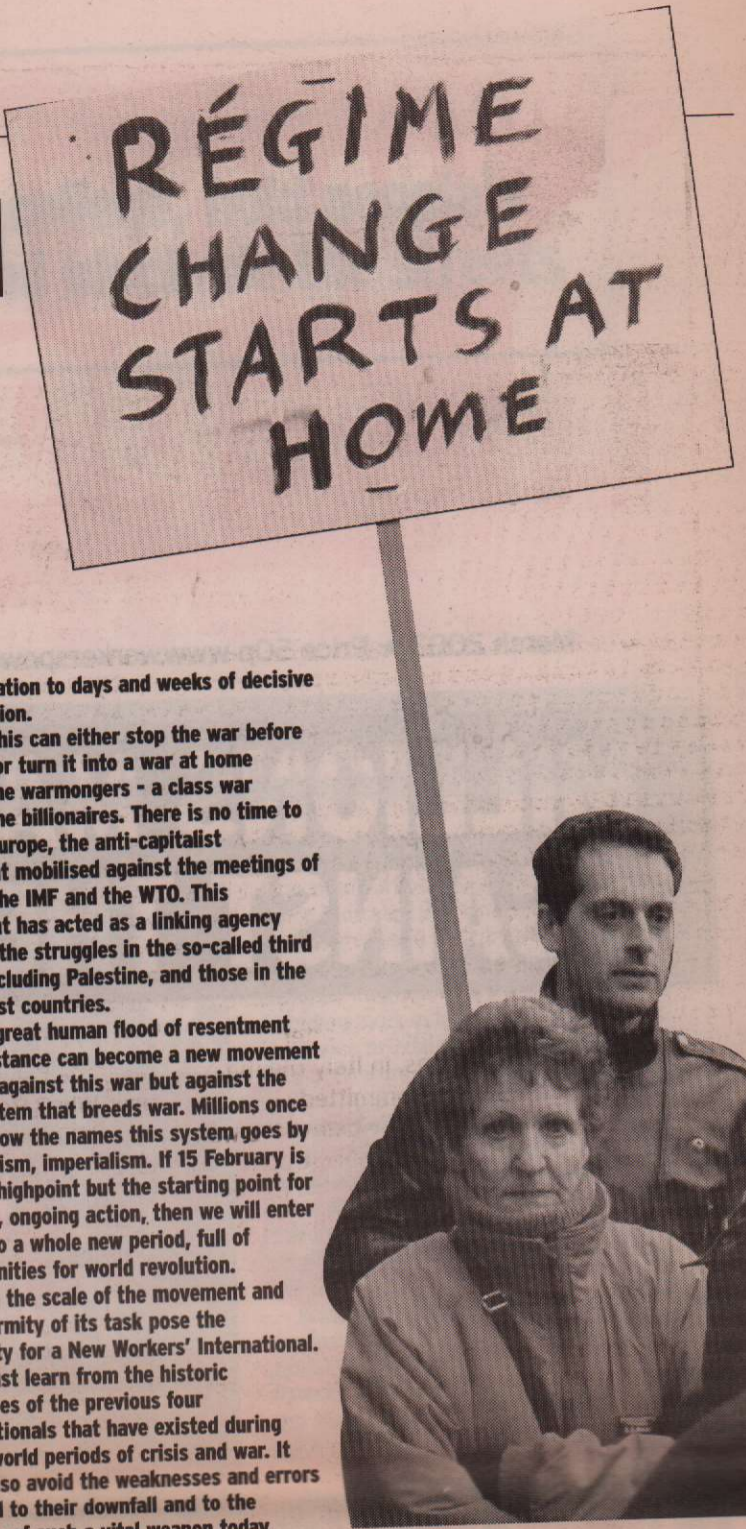
# HOLD PEOPLE'S

# ASSEMBLIES



# February 15 global anti-war demo

## The day that changed the world



February 15 was a historic day. Around the world millions of people marched to say no to a war against Iraq with demonstrations in over 600 cities. But it wasn't just the numbers. It was historic because the call to demonstrate came from new international bodies - the European Social Forum in Florence last November, the World Social Forum in Port Allegre in February. These organisations have emerged out of the anti-capitalist movement. Five years ago they did not exist, even in anybody's imagination. Today, their calls are taken up by millions.

This fact alone reveals the rapid progress that has been made in bringing together a huge coalition of forces, both old and new, both in the imperialist nations as in the countries, exploited and oppressed by imperialism. These forces are now determined to fight a system which imposes austerity, social insecurity, poverty and war.

February 15 was also historic because it heralded the rise of a massive wave of militant direct action which could bring down individual leaders, and even governments, which resist it. Combined with the massive struggles in the semi-colonial countries which three years of recession and the IMF's austerity programmes have generated, it is clear that the potential for revolutionary upheavals now exists on every continent. In short, we are entering a world pre-revolutionary period.

The blatant aggression of the Bush administration as it tries to impose its will on the rest of the world, the bitter divisions amongst the major imperialist powers in the UN Security Council and in NATO, have unwittingly invited the millions to "join in the debate".

The growing anger that the demonstrators expressed against the

national leaders, parties and parliaments that are casually ignoring their will, points to the seismic upheavals to come. The central involvement of working class people both as individuals and militant groups of the rank and file, indicates the enormous potential for change, even where the official labour movement stands aside or restricts itself to token protests.

The largest demonstrations were, naturally enough, in the countries whose rulers are hell-bent on war - Spain, Italy and Britain. But the antiwar movement in the USA is growing in strength and courage. So worried were the authorities in New York that they banned the anti-war movement from marching.

Despite Rupert Murdoch's global deployment of "weapons of mass deception", millions of people are waking up from years, even decades, of slumber. They are coming to a clear recognition that, in reality, this war is aimed at making US world domination total and seizing control of the strategic oil reserves of the entire Middle East. "No war for Oil, No war for Empire" were slogans heard everywhere.

Even if the United Nations is bribed and coerced into giving the USA and Britain the second resolution permitting an invasion of Iraq, this will convince only a handful who demonstrated on 15 February.

Instinctively, ordinary working people are revolted by the prospect of slaughtering tens, or hundreds, of thousands of Iraqi civilians in order to get the price of oil down to \$20 a barrel - what Rupert Murdoch thinks will make the war "worth it for the world economy and better than any tax cuts".

Nor would that be an end to it. Beyond this war loom the shapes of many wars to come, year after year: North Korea, Iran, Syria, Sudan. In the case of North Korea, this could even have a nuclear dimension.

If states cannot stand up in open war against the American military steamroller, terror will grow as a mode of resistance. The weapon of the weak, the weapon of despair, will not cease - it will mightily increase.

In the imperialist countries themselves, on the pretext of "protecting the homeland", civil liberties will be further eroded, immigrant populations will be harassed and terrified and democracy will be eaten away by the canker of "national security". Such a bloody prospect has given rise to the greatest wave of anti-imperialist resistance since the Vietnam War.

This movement has a revolutionary potential. It won't succeed automatically or spontaneously. We need a conscious, organised intervention by those who want the movement to realise its full potential - by revolutionaries. We should not place any reliance on the "left" union leaderships or parliamentarians who will soon wake up to the danger of being by-passed both by their own memberships and by new, more radical, forces.

Millions quite new to political life, with generous impulses but quite unsure of what to do next, could fall for the "leadership" offered by these bureaucrats and professional politicians. Sooner or later, this will create a leadership crisis within the movement. Which road to take? Towards mass direct action to stop or kick out the warmongers, or restriction to only "peaceful" and "legitimate" protest, eventually to be funnelled into "normal" electoral and trade union activities?

The burning questions now are: how to empower the millions who demonstrated across the world, how to stop the "endless war" that Bush proclaimed, and how to pull down the warmongers from the positions of power from which they wreak havoc on the world? The answer is that we have to take the step from a historic day of global

demonstration to days and weeks of decisive global action.

Only this can either stop the war before it starts or turn it into a war at home against the warmongers - a class war against the billionaires. There is no time to lose. In Europe, the anti-capitalist movement mobilised against the meetings of the G8, the IMF and the WTO. This movement has acted as a linking agency between the struggles in the so-called third world, including Palestine, and those in the imperialist countries.

This great human flood of resentment and resistance can become a new movement not just against this war but against the very system that breeds war. Millions once again know the names this system goes by - capitalism, imperialism. If 15 February is not the highpoint but the starting point for massive, ongoing action, then we will enter fully into a whole new period, full of opportunities for world revolution.

Both the scale of the movement and the enormity of its task pose the necessity for a New Workers' International. This must learn from the historic successes of the previous four Internationals that have existed during major world periods of crisis and war. It must also avoid the weaknesses and errors that led to their downfall and to the absence of such a vital weapon today.

# The world on the streets

## London

It was Britain's biggest demonstration ever - one person for every household. It was a moving experience. Vast crowds, two million strong flowing through streets of London like a mighty river in flood. In Glasgow another 100,000 marched to protest outside the Scottish Labour Party local government conference, where Bomber Blair himself was speaking. Yet another 30,000 marched in Belfast.

The slogans and mood of the demonstrators was not simply antiwar - there was a powerful anti-imperialist mood. Against a war for oil and world domination by the USA and its British stooge, against the colonisation of Iraq. Other linked issues were taken up on the placards, the banners and by many speakers at the enormous rally in Hyde Park: the need to fight the tide of vile anti-asylum seeker racism and to fight for the Palestinians against the US-backed Zionist ethnic cleansers.

At the end of the march the vast open space of Hyde Park filled up with marchers who stood for hours in the freezing cold listening to a whole series of speakers including Tariq Ali, Jesse Jackson, Ahmed Ben Bella and Muslim Anas Altikriti, spokesperson of the Muslim Association of Great Britain. The most powerful and precise call for action came from Lindsey German, convenor of the Stop the War Coalition and leading members of the SWP who said, to thunderous applause:

"Our message to Tony Blair is, if you go to war with George Bush, we will bring your government down."

She went on:

"We have to use everything in our power to stop the war. We want a mass movement of civil disobedience. We are asking you to



strike on the day that war breaks out. We want you to occupy the colleges, walk out of schools, go to your town centre and protest."

## USA

Coming less than a month after the huge demonstrations on January 18-20, the growing USA anti-war movement was on the march again, loudly rejecting George Bush's murderous war around the slogans "Not in Our Name" and "No War against Iraq." Demonstrations took place in scores of cities throughout the United States - in Los Angeles, 100,000 demonstrated in the largest anti-war protest in many years.

Using the "anti-terrorism" regulations in New York City the police banned a march from taking place, only a static rally was to take place, yet another example of the savage curtailing of constitutional rights

that has marked this administration. Nevertheless more than 500,000 protesters braved sub-zero temperatures and a "Code Orange" terror alert, to occupy the streets and protest against the war.

Police barricades prevented many tens of thousands from reaching the main assembly area. So the resulting spontaneous marches and direct action were met with police brutality: horses, clubs and pepper spray, with over 320 people arrested.

## Europe

Europe responded massively to a call which originated at the European Social Forum in Florence in November. For sheer size and country-wide spread the greatest turn out was in the Spanish state. Here marches took place in over fifty cities and towns. Barcelona and Madrid led the way

with over a million a piece and 60,000 in Seville. Total figures for Spain were truly amazing. Seven million marched according to the organisers, five million according to local press and municipal authorities.

Organisers in Italy claimed three million marched in Rome and even according to police one million marched.

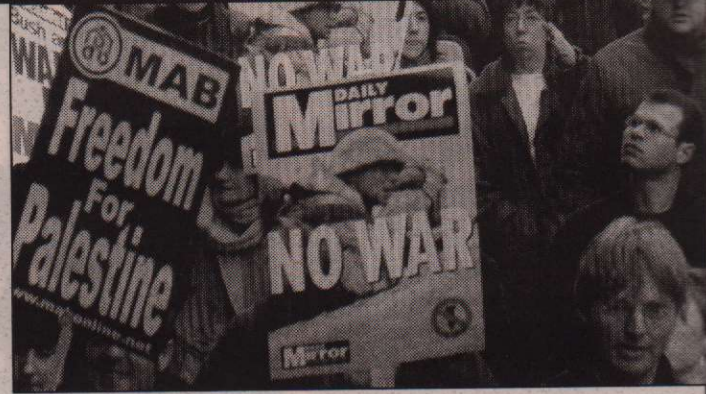
In Berlin police put the figure at half a million on the streets, despite freezing temperatures and heavy snow. Some leaders of German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's SPD took part in the Berlin protest. It was the largest demonstration since the second world war - including those around the time of the re-unification of country.

The crowds who gathered throughout Germany were in their overwhelming majority from the trade unions, the reformist parties, both the PDS and the

SPD, plus the Greens and the far left. There were also many immigrants and their political and community organisations and of course many, many young people were sent. Platform speakers expressed the name of the people - No war! But at the same time they also expressed solidarity with illusions in ministers. Schröder and cher urging them to remain "firm", calling on the UN to follow the French sponsored line of more time for weapons inspectors.

Across France about half a million marched. The Paris demonstration was mated to have had up to 250,000. In southern France, in Toulouse 10,000 people demonstrated. Police estimated that 60,000 turned out in Oslo, Norway, in bitter cold while about 35,000 gathered peacefully in Stockholm and 25,000 in Copenhagen.

# The way forward



The huge marches on 15 February were a turning point in history. Never before have 30 million marched on the same day in 600 cities against imperialism and war.

The day proved two things. First, all over the world a majority oppose Bush and Blair's war. Second, we have the numbers and the power to really stop the war - as long as we press on to mass action.

Bold co-ordinated international action is both possible and necessary. On the platform in Hyde Park speaker after speaker called for strikes. In Italy the main union federations have committed themselves to strike action against the war.

In Australia, Greece and Spain, trade unionists are debating strike action to block the participation of their governments in Bush's oil and power crusade.

From the antiwar coalitions, the unions, working class parties and social movements all over the world, socialists should push for a clear call: **Global General Strike against the war.**

The call should be raised both as a demand on the existing trade union leaders and a call to action from below. In Britain the union leaders and TUC have adopted a statement against the war which is long on words and very, very short on action.

We should demand that the union

leaders turn words into action and call for a mass walkout against the war. They will get huge support from their members if they do. And we shouldn't wait for the union bureaucrats to act, but should fight for strikes without their backing if necessary.

International bodies - like the Social Forums and the International Antiwar co-ordination meeting on 1 March in London - should also take up the call. Just as the march on 15 February was a result of a call that began at the European Social Forum, so we have to use every avenue we can to raise the call for the global general strike now. Why? Because if workers refuse to move the troops and supplies, if they refuse to build America's weapons of mass destruction or broadcast US lies, Bush can't wage war.

What about the hundreds of millions who don't work? The actions of the youth and unemployed in Argentina last year or Bolivia last month shows the way. Blockade the streets! A few hundred activists might be able to demonstrate at airbases, but far, far more important is getting the millions who hate this war to cut off the big cities.

We should **block the main roads and motorways** into and out of the cities, bring traffic to a standstill and normal business to a halt. Alongside mass strikes this would force the government to sit up and take

notice of the anger of the majority of the people in this country who are against the war. Blair patronised us when we took to the streets on 15 February; he scorned the mass revolt of his own MPs in parliament. But we could make him relent or resign if we took over the streets and walked off the job.

Like the call for a general strike this a very radical demand. But as 15 February showed, it is possible. If we think big, we can win.

Third, we need to **Hold People's Assemblies** everywhere. The call for a big delegate meeting in Westminster Hall on 12 March is a start. We need to make sure that the meeting is not just a rally or a talking shop, but a democratic centre for organising action. We should push for the People's Assembly to draw together representatives not only from local Stop the War groups, but from workplaces, colleges, schools and estates.

Every union and working class party should have representatives too. We must demand that it is really democratic and that proposals for a general strike and street blockades can be really discussed out and voted on. We should fight for the Assembly to be a new beginning for mass democratic self-organisation in Britain - that People's Assemblies spring up in towns and cities everywhere.

Above all, we should fight for Assemblies to become alternative centres of power in society. Starting from the tens of millions who oppose the war, they can also represent our other struggles and bring them together - by being regularly re-elected and recalled from below they can be far more democratic than any capitalist parliament elected only every five years. They could be the basis for a new type of power - a state based on the direct democracy of the working class itself.

Of course, key figures in the Labour Left and the unions will try to limit any Assemblies to talking shops. They will try to prevent an alternative working class democracy from coming into being. But that's exactly why socialists should fight for a different course - for alternative centres of working class and popular power and for a revolutionary challenge to capitalism.

We live in extraordinary times. Let's take advantage of them. The imperialists are divided, unpopular and losing the support of the people. The whole world burns with hatred for Bush. Let's do all we can to turn the global war crisis into a global revolution against the warmongers. Take up the call: Global General Strike, Blockade the Streets, Hold People's Assemblies. That way we can not only stop the war - we can open a global challenge to the system that causes war.

## Why every opponent of Bush and Blair should back victory to Iraq

Over the coming weeks of bloodshed, we in the antiwar movement are going to be accused of aiding our nation's enemies. They will say that by marching and striking against the war, we are putting British soldiers at risk. They will effectively accuse us of treason - of aiding the defeat of "our own" country at the hands of a foreign power.

But the people putting young soldiers at risk are not the antiwar movement - we are not sending thousands of troops to the Gulf. The people responsible are in the White House and Whitehall - and they must take the blame for every young life brought to a sudden and squalid end.

The war aims of the US government are unjust - the theft of Iraq's oil and world domination. If we oppose them we must also desire their defeat in the war.

This is because we want them to fail - to fail to seize the oil wells, to fail to intimidate regimes across the third world, to fail to

enforce the global system of debt and unfair trade rules, to fail to carve out a new order in the Middle East based on occupation of Arab land.

What about the Iraqis' war aims? Their government is not launching a war for domination of the world. Unlike the Americans, they are not spending more than all other nations put together on an arsenal of mass destruction. They are defending their country against open aggression and theft. And they have a right to!

Of course the warmongers will claim that we are supporting the vile dictator Saddam Hussein. What hypocrites. It is the socialists who have always opposed Saddam and defended the Kurds and the Shia people from his repression and murder. But the British and Americans backed Saddam. They helped put him into power. They blocked UN criticism of him when he gassed 8,000 Kurds in 1988.

Warmonger-in-chief Donald Rumsfeld - the

very man who sold Saddam his weapons in the 80s - has now offered him an amnesty and immunity from prosecution if he leaves Iraq. If they win, the US will introduce not democracy but a government under their own strict control, run by a US general.

The Iraqi people alone should decide who governs them. To do that they will need to make a revolution. They will never be able to do that while their country is occupied by hundreds of thousands of US and British troops. A revolution in Iraq is the last thing Bush or Rumsfeld want to see. A new Iraqi military dictator would be fine for them as long as he rules for the USA.

We should support the Iraqis' just defence of their country. We should do all we can by mass action to hamper and hinder the British and US war effort at home. We should not be afraid to say we want to help Iraq defeat the US and British invading armies.

A victory for Iraq would encourage

resistance to the global superpower and its corporate raiders all over the world. It will encourage working people and youth everywhere to fight back.

It would utterly discredit Blair and Bush and probably bring them down. It would strengthen democracy in the UK and the USA. It would encourage workers to fight back against the ruling elites in Washington and London and to demand our share. And it would undermine dictatorships everywhere by weakening their main sponsor in the world - America, which funds them, trains them, and arms them. Above all it would encourage revolution and the fight for global justice and lasting peace.

That's why the antiwar movement should carry on the fight and throw the warmongers' lies back in their faces.

- Solidarity with the Iraqi People
- Defend Iraq - Defeat imperialism
- Victory to Iraq!

## FROM WAR TO REVOLUTION

A series of meetings to discuss globalisation, the new imperialism and the drive to war

### ● THE DAY THE WORLD CHANGED

As tens of millions took to the streets against war all over the world, has politics changed for good? Can we actually stop the war? Are the UN, Nato and EU finished? Will the new antiwar movement become a movement against the whole system of US-controlled capitalism? Where is our world going?

### ● REBELLION IN BUSH'S BACKYARD - AN EYEWITNESS REPORT FROM LATIN AMERICA

The struggle against the CIA and US control goes on all over the world. Two

activists who have returned from 18 months travel through Central and South America - report on their experiences in Brazil, Colombia and Bolivia and of the US's role in these countries.

### ● IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST: AMERICAN ANTIWAR MOVEMENTS PAST AND PRESENT

How did the Anti-Vietnam War movement win? Come and hear about the hidden history of Black resistance and mutiny. How does the movement today compare? Can the USA ever again be a hotbed of revolution?

### ● ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE - BUT WHAT?

The last three years have seen a new movement against globalisation take to the streets of the world. But what is globalisation? And what alternatives are offered by the anti-globalisation movement? What do its writers like Naomi Klein and George Monbiot stand for? Would it work?

### ● HOW CAN WE ORGANISE THE NEW GLOBAL MOVEMENT?

The multi-million strong marches against the war took place simultaneously

in 600 cities worldwide. This was called by a new international body - the European Social Forum. Similar bodies exist in Asia, South America and the Middle East. How can we build a new global organisation and what should its aims be? Can we learn from past attempts to create global anticapitalist organisations - the first four "Internationals"?

For details of meetings ring Workers Power on 020 7820 1363 or e-mail us at [info@workerspower.com](mailto:info@workerspower.com)

## People to burn

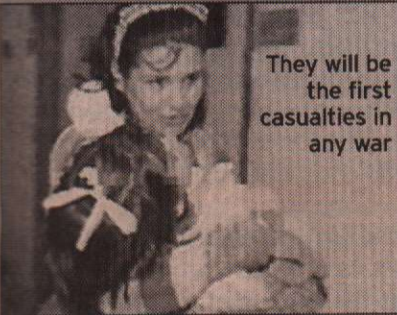
In order to "liberate" Iraq from Saddam Hussein, George Bush and Tony Blair have made it clear that it is worth Iraqi civilians paying a "blood price". When the war starts the media wing of the Pentagon, CNN and Murdoch's Fox News, will seek to ignore, deny or minimise civilian deaths. At best, "regret" will be expressed for this "collateral damage". At worst, the Iraqi themselves will be blamed for the US butchery.

"I will say to you," White House Press Secretary and Israeli citizen Ari Fleischer recently declared, "that every step will be taken to protect civilian and innocent life. The greatest risk to civilian life, of course, comes from Saddam Hussein, who has shown that he is willing to kill his own people with chemical weapons, he is willing to put his own people in harm's way as human shields."

No doubt like the Baghdad civilian air raid shelter that was scorched by a US cruise missile in 1991, killing hundreds of women and children.

The International Institute of Strategic Studies considers it likely that perhaps 10,000 Iraqi civilians will be killed for the privilege of having a US five-star General rule over them for several years at least.

The London-based MEDACT medical



They will be the first casualties in any war

charity forsee up to 50,000 casualties but in the longer term it sees many more deaths among refugees. In Afghanistan these have been very much higher than those due to the direct effects of the bombing. And the current health of the Iraqi population is a lot worse than it was in 1991 because of a decade of UN sanctions.

According to a United Nations report in January, as many as 30 per cent of Iraqi children under the age of five - more than 1.2 million - "would be at risk of death from malnutrition" during a U.S. invasion of Iraq. Close to two in three people in Iraq would be without access to clean water after a US military attack, since the U.S. military plans to target Iraq's civilian infrastructure, such as power plants and water treatment facilities - just as it did during the first Gulf War.

A military campaign lasting two to three months would cause "the collapse of essential services in Iraq...could lead to a humanitarian emergency of proportions well beyond the capacity of UN agencies and other aid organisations."

Some 10 million Iraqis would be "highly food insecure, displaced or directly affected by military action," the UN report estimates. And a severe medical crisis is nearly guaranteed, with "as many as 500,000 [requiring] treatment to a greater or lesser degree as a result of direct or indirect injuries."

One UN official told the *Washington Post*: "[T]here could be a few million refugees heading to Iran. There could be six million people in Baghdad without access to clean water or electricity. There could be millions more waiting for someone to give them food because that's what they've come to depend on...Are we and everyone else ready for that? No."

# NOT A PENNY NOT A PERSON FOR THE OIL CRUSADE

## CANCEL THE BILLIONS FOR WAR

## SPEND THE BILLIONS FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

## Money to burn

The war against Iraq will cost at least \$150 billion - enough to provide primary education for every child in the world fifteen times over.

This is the price tag for installing a US military dictatorship, keeping the country garrisoned by foreign troops and minimally restoring its shattered infrastructure over the following five years.

While Tony Blair has only set aside \$1 to kill and maim Iraqis for every \$10 from George Bush, this still comes to about \$5 billion ... at a time when the Labour government says it has no money to fund a living wage for public sector workers - including the firefighters.

Before a missile has been launched against Baghdad or a US marine set foot in Iraq, assembling the US war machine in the Gulf and Turkey has already cost at least \$13bn, according to the US Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

Even if the anti-war movement and UN opposition scupper the whole war drive tomorrow, warmongering alone will have cost US and UK taxpayers about \$25 billion.

But this is just the tip of the iceberg. In 1991, the war cost the US very little. It cost Arab states and European taxpayers a lot. Of the estimated \$80 billion dollars it cost the US treasury to kick Saddam out of Kuwait, Bush senior reclaimed 90 per cent from a grateful Saudi Arabia, and a pliant Japan and Germany. Some reports suggest the US even made a profit out of the last Gulf War.

What about this time? The Pentagon and White House are being coy about the real cost. Until the war is under way they will not put a figure on what they will ask US taxpayers to fork out (in addition to the already agreed defence spending sum of \$392.8 billion for fiscal 2003, which does not include the cost of fighting wars). Defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld however insisted last month that

the bill for death and destruction would be less than \$50 billion. Others beg to differ. Last September Larry Lindsey (White House resident economist) estimated the "upper bound" cost of \$100 to \$200 billion. This was repudiated the next day by his bosses and he was later sacked. Then two studies by Congressional committees were carried out which concluded "that the cost of a short and successful war would be around \$50 billion." This assumes wars would last no more than five to six weeks and the cost of ammunition and equipment running at \$9 billion a month. The fact that this is less than the first Gulf War is based on the fact that the forces deployed are considerably less now than in 1991. For the UK, the final cost of its 1991 adventure was £2.5 billion (US\$4.1 billion), equivalent to £3.3 billion (US\$5.5 billion) today. The 40,000 troops committed today is greater than in 1991 and is estimated to cost around £4 billion. Again, this figure would be in addition to the £24.2 billion budget allotted to the Ministry of Defence for the 2002-3 financial year. But the all these figures balloon when one adds the cost of occupying the country. The CBO estimates the cost of gar-



Stealth bomber. Costs \$2.5 billion

risoning Iraq would run at \$17 to \$45 billion per year. The CBO estimate is approximately \$250,000 per peacekeeper per year.

One expert concludes: "This figure is at the low end of the estimated cost of U.S. peacekeepers in Kosovo; it might actually underestimate the cost if the post-combat environment in Iraq is hostile and its dangers resemble the West Bank more than the Balkans. It is difficult to see how a successful occupation of Iraq could be less than five years and might easily extend for two decades. While there are no public estimates of the total, a minimum cost would be \$75 billion and an upper bound of \$500 billion over the next decade is consistent with peacekeeping operations in the Balkans and the size and scope of the task in Iraq."

But that is just the cost of maintaining in power whatever client regime the US general choose to replace them. What about money to "nation-build" - that is to restore the country's ravaged infrastructure?

Several studies have put this figure at \$25 billion to as much as \$100 billion, depending on whether the aim of the capital investment is to generate a GDP nearer to Afghanistan or Egypt.

But as William Nordhaus of Yale University has pointed out:

"Will the U.S. actually undertake the massive effort required to rebuild and democratise Iraq? In virtually every country where the U.S. intervened militarily over the last four decades, it has displayed a "hit and run" philosophy where bombing runs have seldom been followed by construction crews. The latest war in Afghanistan is a signal example. In the year ending September 2002, the U.S. spent \$13 billion on the war effort. By contrast, the total Pentagon effort has committed only \$10 million to civil works and humanitarian aid."

**"A war with Iraq will cost \$9 billion per month - the same as it would cost to provide primary education for every child in the world. After 10 weeks, the war will have cost \$20 billion - which is what it would cost to halve the number of people living in poverty globally." - from the website of charity War on Want**

## Nasty, brutish and short?

The US has about 165,000 armed personnel in the Gulf, backed up by about 40,000 UK troops. All US scenarios for the war end up with some form of capitulation by Iraq, the occupation of Baghdad, and destruction or capture of Iraq's top leadership.

### NASTY

Most experts believe that the war against Iraq will begin with an intensive bombing of Iraqi targets, focusing on command and control sites, leadership headquarters, Scud missiles, any WMD sites, communications infrastructure, and elite Republican guard troops.

### BRUTISH

The short war will include 300 to 500 Cruise missiles a day (800 of them during the first 48 hours of the war) raining down on the civilian population of Baghdad to "Shock and Awe", - a Hiroshima-style impact on the Iraqi people. During the 1991 Gulf War after 41 days of bombing Iraq this scale of human devastation was not even approached.

### SHORT?

The "quick victory" scenario sees Saddam Hussein and his top leadership captured or killed, the Iraqi ground forces surrendering quickly, and U.S. forces preventing civil war from breaking out in the south or in Kurdish regions. In this battleplan the war consists of between 30 and 60 days of air war and ground combat, followed by two months occupation.

The quick victory scenario would resemble the first Gulf War in 1991, the Kosovo War 1999, and the Afghanistan war 2001.

But a far more bloody outcome is also possible - protracted urban warfare. Retired General Joseph Hoar gave evidence to the US Senate in September 2002:

"The nightmare scenario is that six Iraqi Republican Guard divisions and six heavy divisions reinforced with several thousand anti-aircraft artillery pieces defend the city of Baghdad. The result would be high casualties on both sides as well as in the civilian community. U.S. forces would certainly prevail but at what cost and what cost as the rest of the world watches while we bomb and have artillery rounds exploded in densely populated Iraqi neighbourhoods.... All our advantages of command and control, technology, mobility, all of those things are in part given up and you are working with corporals and sergeants and young men fighting street to street. It will look like the first 15 minutes of Saving Private Ryan."



US troops train for fighting in Iraqi cities

# With or without the TUC: strike against the slaughter

**“The way for us to stop this war is by using the power of the working class” Jacky Heyman, US Dockers’ Union**

All over the world trade union federations are organising strike action to stop the US/UK war.

● 200 unions and 550 union leaders representing 130 million workers in 53 countries signed a declaration against war and for united trade union action to stop it, following an initiative by US Labor Against the War.

● From Italy, Belgium and Greece the call has gone out for an international day of workers’ action against the war on 21 March.

● The prospects for a European-wide general strike, as part of a global strike, have been enormously boosted by this call.

The task in Britain is to make this call a reality.

The leadership of the trade union movement, the TUC, has it within its power to call a general strike against war. After the carnage of the First World War in 1918, the TUC adopted rule 8(k):

“In order that the trade union movement may do everything which lies in its power to prevent future wars, the general council shall, in the event of there being a danger of an outbreak of war, call a special congress to decide on industrial action, such congress to be called, if possible, before war is declared.”

Five general secretaries took these fine words at face value. Paul Mackney of lecturers’ union NATFHE, Billy Hayes of the communications union CWU, Mark Serwotka of the civil servants’ PCS, Mick Rix of train drivers’ ASLEF and Bob Crow of the RMT transport union called on the TUC to recall a congress and plan action. But the majority of the TUC’s general council were having none of it.

At their late February meeting they

## Workplace action kit

There’s no time to lose. Anti-war activists and trade unionists need to:

● Get resolutions through branches and regions calling for a strike when the war starts.

● Submit resolutions backed by petitions of union members to all national executives.

● Get official backing from those unions and general secretaries who support the call for action against the war.

● Organise workplace and union Stop the War groups to help build for action.

● Produce workplace newsletters and leaflets putting the case against war and for action.

● Invite union leaders to address mass meetings to rally support for action.

If you can’t win a majority for strike action, there is still lots to do:

● Send delegations, with banners, to town centre demonstrations on the day war is called.

● Hold worktime or lunch time meetings on the day war breaks out, followed by mass badge wearing at work.

● In jobs and industries connected with the war machine, boycott war related work and goods.

All of these actions will strengthen support for strike action against the war. All of them will help build up rank and file confidence. And all of them will put the union leaders - left and right - under the spotlight. Are they prepared to sit back and bring shame on the British labour movement or will they enforce the will of the majority by backing strikes to stop the slaughter?

Many of those leaders will choose inaction. But strong rank and file organisation to get strike action despite them will pave the way to clearing out these bureaucrats and rebuilding the British unions as a militant, internationalist and class struggle movement.

agreed a long resolution full of anti-war rhetoric but without a single proposal for action - even the most minimal. Their only concrete suggestion is to ask for a meeting with Blair to urge him to restrain George Bush - ignoring the fact that Blair has made clear that he is every bit as desperate to kill innocent Iraqis as Bush.

It was right of the five anti-war union leaders to demand that the TUC act. But it would be cowardice if they use the general council’s inaction as an excuse to do nothing more themselves. We need to do two things:

● Pile the pressure on the TUC through resolutions, lobbies, letters and petitions to call a general strike against the war.

● Start organising the forces that back industrial action so that we get strikes the

minute the first bomb is dropped on Iraq, with or without TUC backing.

The Motherwell train drivers, members of ASLEF, have already blazed the trail by refusing to drive a train full of munitions. Mick Rix supported his members doing this. He should now make clear to all of them that they must follow the Motherwell lead. Likewise Mark Serwotka of the PCS can throw a huge spanner in the works of the war machine by instructing his civil servant members to shut down the military and secret services’ computer and spying systems. They can’t fight without munitions and they can’t plan without their communications system. Organised workers have the power to stop both.

Any workers taking action should receive

the full backing of their unions and the TUC in the event of any government intimidation or victimisation. Acting to stop the slaughter is the right of every trade unionist - they would be acting with the authority of the great majority in this country. It is Blair who is flouting the people’s will.

The best way to make such action count is to stop it from becoming isolated. If we strike as one the trade union movement can break the will of the government to carry on with war, can spread hostility to the war amongst the troops and paralyse the normal functioning of society. At the Hyde Park rally on 15 February, Bob Crow, of the rail union the RMT, took up this theme. Pointing to the fact that Blair was ignoring the democratic wishes of the majority he said:

“If war does break out we should turn around and say that we are prepared to occupy our industries and not be prepared to allow a war to take place ... we need to take united industrial action if need be.”

To build for such united action the general secretaries opposed to the war need to convene an alternative general council to the TUC if this Blair-loyal body refuses to act when the shooting starts. Indeed there are more than five unions opposed to the war. The FBU, for example, is affiliated to the Stop the War Coalition, as is Unison. These seven unions represent almost two million workers. And if two million workers go out on strike, millions of other workers who are bitterly against this war will rally to the strike call.

Lives are at stake. Not just a few but hundreds of thousands. This is no time to observe ancient etiquette about letting the TUC decide what the labour movement does. If the TUC is prepared to take its cue from the majority and act against this war all well and good. But don’t rely on it. Organise an anti-war trade union council to build for a general strike. We have the majority with us. We can win.

## The People’s Assembly and the general strike

A general strike against the war would pit the working class against the British government, its state forces and the billionaire bosses they serve.

If workers strike to stop the war the state will retaliate. First it will use the anti-union laws, passed by the Tories but kept by Labour, to ban our strikes, seize union funds and imprison militants. At the same time it will use the police to break up our strikes, pickets, blockades and demonstrations.

Too much is at stake for Blair to do otherwise. He has failed to convince us to follow his bloody lead. He will try to impose it on us by whatever means he can.

That is why, as we go into this battle to stop the government, we need to be clear about its implications. It may begin as a battle to stop the war, but could easily develop into a battle over who rules the country. After all, back in 1974, faced with a strike over pay by miners, the government turned it into a struggle over who rules the country. Any strike over a war poses this whole issue even more starkly.

That is why the call from the Stop the War Coalition for a People’s Assembly, with a first meeting scheduled in London for 12 March, is so important. Such an assembly can provide an alternative, authentic and direct democracy representing the millions who oppose this war.

A big London-based assembly, dominated by the top brass of the labour movement and their allies, is not in itself enough. To be really representative, it needs to be based on delegates from thousands of local people’s assemblies in every town, city and community across the country. And it needs to be fully democratic.

That way it will not only discuss - it will decide, above all on action like a general strike and street blockades. And the best way to organise and prosecute such a strike is through rank and file councils and assemblies that can represent the vast majority of the people of this country, the working class.

The task of the day is to build local people’s assemblies; it is for those assemblies to become truly representative of the working class communities and workplaces. We need to turn the local and national assemblies into organising centres of the struggle.

If they draw into their ranks all those fighting against the war, against racism, against the oppression and exploitation the system inflicts on us, then the people’s assemblies will be so much more than talking shops. They would become an alternative pole of power. Then if the government asks the question, “who rules?”, we could answer “we will! - make way for a working class government based on our mass assemblies.”

# New Party - the debate begins

There has never been a better chance to break Tony Blair’s control over the working class movement.

Millions of Labour voters oppose his bloody war. In an unprecedented challenge, 121 Labour MPs voted against war in parliament last month. Everywhere trade unionists are sick of donating millions every year to a party that attacks workers, holds down our pay, sells off our services and bombs third world countries.

So which way forward to free the labour movement of Blair and Blairism?

There are three options on offer. In Workers Power’s view, only one would work.

### Option One: Reform the Labour Party

Most of the antiwar MPs and left wing union leaders want the old Labour Party back. Instead of Blair’s open pro-business and pro-Bush stance, they want a party opposed to privatisation, committed to more social justice and diplomacy instead of aggressive war.

Their approach will be to gather the forces they need to mount a challenge to Blair’s leadership at the Labour Party conference over the next year or two.

This is a really dangerous route. It is slow, relying on what’s left of democracy inside New Labour to go through a series of votes and debates that could last until well after the war is over. It could miss the chance to take advantage of the mass opposition to

Blair now on the streets.

It is weak, running the risk of relying on a ‘big name’ challenger to Blair like Clare Short or even Gordon Brown, who could be getting ready for an opportunist bid for personal power. We’d be left with someone no better than Blair, someone who has backed all his attacks on working people.

It is no answer. This is because Old Labour was never a socialist party and always did deals with the capitalists rather than fighting to change the system. It is through decades of failed Old Labour reforms that only tinkered with the system that we ended up with a bosses’ man like Blair in charge.

Instead, we can use the current crisis to rally all the forces in the movement - trade unionists, local Labour parties, antiwar activists and youth - to a new party, one that really represents the working class.

### Option Two: Set up a New Party from above

Antiwar MP George Galloway says: “Either there has to be a regime change in the Labour Party or Mr Blair will succeed in breaking the Labour Party. If he breaks the Labour Party, the need for a labour party will not have gone away. Some of us will be prepared to rebuild a labour party from the wreckage”.

By saying ‘a’ labour party rather than ‘the Labour Party’, Galloway appears to be calling for something more than reforming New Labour - for setting up a new work-

ing class party. If he takes this path, how will things go forward?

One possibility is that he and other MPs and union leaders will announce the formation of a new party from above. They will set its rules, establish its policies and then simply call on people to join it.

The problem with this is two fold. First it would not draw on the existing levels of mass organisation at ground level. People across Britain are involved in antiwar committees, campaigns and local initiatives. Left wing organisations, union branches and Labour wards need to take part in the process of forming a new party - not just be presented with something already laid on from above.

Second, this approach would leave hundreds of thousands on the ground excluded from a democratic process of deciding what structure and what policies we want and need. The policies of a few MPs and union leaders would be presented as a fait accompli. The danger would be creating yet another reformist party like Old Labour - albeit on a radical sounding programme. It might not even have the chance to debate out how we can really break capitalist power and change the social system altogether.

### Option Three: Build a New Workers’ party from above and below

This is the best way forward. In every workplace, every town and city, on every



It’s time to break from Blair

estate, everyone who supports a new workers’ party should come together. Unions, antiwar groups, dissident labour wards, left wing groups like the Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist party, anti-racist and community campaigns - could all link up nationally.

The People’s Assemblies could be drawn in to build a New Workers Party from below as well as above.

Unlike the other options, this way working class people could speak out for their concerns and shape its policies. That way the new party could stand a chance of developing a programme for real social change - for a revolution to take all power out of the hands of the capitalists and into the hands of the majority, through a workers’ government based on mass people’s assemblies.

# Marxists and war



Workers Power has marched with millions against the war. We agree with many who marched that war is horrible and devastating. But when the fighting starts, we will take sides against our own state. *Jeremy Dewar explains why*

Marxists want to banish war from the face of the earth. We want an end to the massive human suffering it causes: the loss of life, the physical and mental injury, the senseless wholesale destruction of houses, schools, hospitals and facilities. In this we agree with the pacifists we have been marching with against the war.

Marxists stress that it is working class and poor people from each nation that are forced by poverty or conscription to do the killing and the dying. The rich and the powerful reap the rewards of victory and escape the horrors of defeat.

The effects of war are so devastating that warmongers the world over try to hide its reality from the civilian population. That is why the incineration or burial alive of between 100,000 and 200,000 Iraqi conscripts in the last stages of the 1991 Gulf War only came to light after the event, thanks to a few courageous journalists and photographers. Such images of death and destruction would turn the population of even the "winning" nation against such a war.

Unlike our rulers revolutionary Marxists have never tried to glamorise war in order to justify it. We tell the truth. A part of that truth is that war is an inevitable product of a society divided into classes and a world divided into competing capitalist nations.

Pacifists – at least the consistent ones – oppose all wars on principle. Socialists do not agree. They believe that armed conflict – civil war and even certain wars between states – are a "cruel necessity" in the struggle to overthrow oppression and exploitation. Necessary because the rulers and exploiters will never give up their power peacefully or voluntarily. Cruel because all wars involve the death of the innocent and horrific destruction. The pacifist alternative would be to refuse the fight the oppressors.

Therefore we do not equate all forms of war as being equally immoral. The resistance of the ANC in South Africa was not "equally wrong" as the military actions of the racist apartheid army. The fighters of the Warsaw ghetto were not "as bad as their enemies" when they took up arms against Nazi occupation and genocide. The Vietnamese war against the USA was not equivalent to the war waged by a mighty superpower to destroy their independence. The moral issue is determined not by whether a side uses force, but

whether it is justified to do so.

Marxists distinguish between wars waged for oppression and exploitation and those waged against it. In short we "take sides" between the oppressed and the oppressors, always supporting the former and opposing the latter.

We do so because our aim is a world without oppression and exploitation. Such a world will be free of the national and class divisions which cause war. But to achieve this we will have to fight arms in hand.

## PROGRESSIVE WARS

So how can we tell which wars are wars of liberation, truly progressive or defensive ones, since all warmongers try to present their aggression as just the opposite? After all, Blair presents his war as a "war of liberation" and his drive to war as a "push for peace". To get behind the lies and propaganda we have to examine the objectives, the policies and the social character of the combatants.

Clausewitz, a 19th century German soldier and military philosopher, provided an important insight into wars when he wrote: "We see, therefore, that War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means."

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky all agreed with Clausewitz. War was not the breakdown of politics or diplomacy but their continuation by other – violent – means. Writing during the carnage of the First World War, Lenin noted that the key questions were "what caused that war, what classes are waging it, and what historic-economic conditions gave rise to it."

Lenin drew the conclusion that there were indeed just and unjust wars. In the category of "just" wars he included wars fought by nations oppressed by imperialism. Thus Ireland's Easter Uprising and subsequent war for independence deserved the support of socialists. However he characterised as a reactionary war the World War that was then being waged between the major imperialist powers. Germany and Austria were fighting Britain, France and Russia to seize each others colonies, in order to exploit and oppress them.

He recognised that the question of "who fired the first shot?" was useless in deciding who the real aggressor was since the weaker side, faced with mounting preparations for war by the stronger, might seize the advantage of a surprise attack. In any

case given propaganda and provocations it may be very difficult to decide who actually started a war until much later.

He wrote: "This is a war firstly to fortify the enslavement of the colonies by means of a 'fairer' distribution and subsequent more 'concerted' exploitation of them; secondly, to fortify the oppression of other nations within the 'great' powers, for both Austria and Russia (Russia more and much worse than Austria) maintain their rule by such oppression, intensifying it by means of war; and thirdly, to fortify and prolong wage slavery, for the working class is split up and suppressed, while the capitalists gain, making fortunes out of the war, aggravating national prejudices and intensifying reaction, which has raised its head in all countries, even in the freest and most republican."

The imperialist system described by Lenin – and the wars waged by the "great powers" of that system – still retain the same reactionary characteristics he observed nearly one hundred years ago. The principal difference is that since the Second World War most of the oppressed countries have been transformed from colonies into what Lenin called semi-colonies. Colonies have won state independence, often by hard national liberation struggles. But most remain totally subordinated to the economic power and political pressure of imperialism, which is exercised through the IMF, the World Trade Organisation and the great "transnational" corporations. Most are militarily so weak that they cannot stand up to the imperialist powers if they are threatened. Thus their political independence remains an empty shell. They are indeed semi-colonies.

Occasionally, however, such states can "go rogue", in George Bush's phraseology. That means that they take isolated actions that conflict with the interests of imperialism. That is what General Galtieri of Argentina did when he invaded the British colony of the Falklands Islands in 1982. It is what Saddam Hussein did when he seized Kuwait in 1990. Both miscalculated that the USA would turn a blind eye, because they had up to then performed big services for Uncle Sam – the former by wiping out 30,000 socialists in Argentina's dirty war of the 1970s, the latter by tying down Khomeini's anti-American Iran in a bloody eight years of war.

Of course these regimes are reactionary dictatorships – just like the many, many others that do the bidding of imperialism

and never stray from the path of loyal subordination. Thus when imperialism goes to war to get "its" property back or to teach rogue semi-colonial states "not to mess with the USA", it cannot openly explain that these are its objectives. Instead, it claims it is waging a war of liberation against "tyrants" in the name of "democracy" and "civilisation". Galtieri, Milosovic, Saddam suddenly become the "new Hitlers."

Marxists recognise that this "democratic" pretext is a bare-faced lie. In each case imperialism has used and backed the dictators in question when it suited them. Only when they went against imperialism's will and threatened to upset its world order – the profits of its multinationals or the stability of the regions it seeks to control – does imperialism turn against these regimes.

Marxists have a clean conscience. We fought these dictators while they were allies of imperialism and we will continue to fight them even when they become its enemies.

## OPPRESSION OF NATIONS

The concrete question in imperialist wars is not the fate of the dictators themselves. Thatcher had no wish to overthrow Galtieri, Saddam Hussein was kept in power courtesy of George Bush and Milosovic was backed by the US between 1989-97 in order to bring stability to the Balkans after the break-up of Yugoslavia. What is at issue is the subordination of an oppressed nation to the will of imperialism. If imperialism succeeds, it represents a defeat for workers and oppressed peoples on a world scale.

The Gulf War in 1991 was fought by George Bush Sr to keep Iraq in this subordinate state and to end any threat to US exploitation of the area. The same goes for George Bush Jr's war.

The imperialists' claim that they were fighting for democracy against a cruel dictator was a lie. Kuwait – the country invaded by Iraq and "liberated" by imperialism – was also a dictatorship in which workers and peasants were denied any democratic rights whatsoever. Its royal family, restored by the "liberation", set about reinforcing its dictatorship under the protection of the USA and Britain – including expelling tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians.

Of course Marxists did not support Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. But we were against imperialism's war on Iraq, a war waged for oil and political control of the Gulf region. We supported Iraq's war against

# why we take sides

## Italy: stopping the death trains



Italy has already witnessed the outbreak of direct action to stop the war.

On 21 February, munitions and military equipment trains began entering Camp Darby, a huge US military base near Pisa. From there they go to the Italian ports for shipment to Turkey and Iraq. The Italian Coordination of the European Social Forum issued a call for acts of civil disobedience to halt the "Trains of Death".

The next day hundreds of protesters began to stop or slow the trains, first at Ederle, near Vicenza. Despite police intimidation and threats, the protest actions have spread to other towns—Grisignano di Zocco, and Campo di Marte, near Padua. Trains were blocked for hours

and others forced to change their routes.

Another train was stopped in Verona, until police charged and dispersed the demonstrators. Other track blockades were organised in Porto San Pancrazio, Brescia, Bologna and Fornovo, near Parma. In Pisa there were demonstrations at the military airport and in the centre of the city. The British consulate was occupied in Turin. To the forefront in these actions have been the Tuscan Antagonisti, the Disobbedienti (formerly the White Overalls) and militants of the mass Rifondazione Comunista – the Communist Refoundation Party. Union members – especially dockers – have promised to halt the ships.

Action by rail workers and dockers is

critical, but the government of Silvio Berlusconi will bring down heavy repression if they were isolated. This shows the importance of a call for a general strike to stop the war. Nor should this await the outbreak of war. If any workers are victimised for taking action now, all workers should walk off the job in solidarity. The largest federation CGIL, the metal workers' union FIOM and the militant COBAS union have pledged strike action in the event of war. The local social forums – which have sprung up all over Italy as mass centres of resistance – should act with local unions to get action rolling

Across Europe we should follow the example of the Italian protests and halt the machinery of death.

and the establishment of the world's first workers' state. But even the establishment of such a state, in a single country, will not finally eradicate the horror of war, unless the revolution can survive imperialist attacks and spread to other countries and across the world.

Today we Marxists call openly for the defeat of the US, British and other imperialist forces when they bombard and invade Iraq. Does this mean we are pleased to see British soldiers slaughtered on the battlefield or dying a horrible death in a chemical attack? Of course not – we would much rather stop the war before it begins. In fact, if there is one group of people who have contempt for the lives of British soldiers, it is the British ruling class, which has steadfastly refused to compensate soldiers who suffer from Gulf War syndrome, an illness brought on by the drugs they were given to fight in the desert.

### DEFEAT OF IMPERIALISM

Nevertheless, if it comes to war, we want to see the British and American troops defeated, because it would be a serious blow to the most aggressive, exploitative and bullying force on the planet. It will be a body blow to Ariel Sharon and the Israeli killing machine in the Middle East. Those corrupt dictators and politicians from Saudi Arabia to Colombia who have sold their people and their resources for the Yankee dollar will immediately feel less secure. It will embolden sweatshop workers the world over. Racists, union-busters and privateering fat cats will see the heavyweight champion floored. We can all take heart at that.

Does it follow then that we should be in favour of a successful defence of Iraq? Some – like American writer Noam Chomsky – don't think so. They echo the words of Jack Straw and other apologists for war, who say that a victory for Iraq would strengthen the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and be a defeat for the Iraqi people.

Let us make one thing clear. We are in favour of the revolutionary overthrow of Saddam Hussein by the Iraqi people. Even today. Especially today, since his replacement by a workers' and poor people's government would enormously facilitate the defence of the country and undermine imperialism's pretenses for attacking it. Socialists were in favour of his overthrow in 1980 when he prepared to invade Iran with US and British backing. We were in favour of his overthrow in 1989 when he gassed 30,000 Kurds, an act which Ronald Reagan rewarded with a billion dollar aid package, an act which Margaret Thatcher refused to allow the House of Commons to debate.

But this is a task for the Iraqi people alone. Brutal dictators from Iran's Shah to Romania's Ceausescu have been overthrown by the very people who, we are today told condescendingly, "cannot do the job themselves" and need George Bush and Tony Blair to do it for them.

In fact, the one thing that has kept Saddam in power these past dozen years has been the West's policy of brutal sanctions and continual military attacks. The obvious fact that the USA and Britain want to "liberate" not the Iraqi people but their oil wealth has strengthened Saddam, allowing him to pose as the defender of his country against imperialism. Any opposition to Saddam that has the interests of the Iraqi people rather than the US multinationals must refuse to ride piggy back on a US invasion and instead defend Iraq against imperialism. How? By agitating for Saddam to arm the whole people, not just his loyal

Baathist guards, by challenging Saddam's claim to be the only force defending his country, by winning the respect of the people through commitment to the struggle and thus preparing the way for his overthrow at the next – hopefully very soon – stage.

Revolutionaries positively side with semi-colonial countries when they are attacked by imperialism. So too they side with states in which capitalism had been overthrown even if the regime there is not a workers' democracy but a bureaucratic dictatorship. Thus we defended the USSR, even under the rule of Stalin and his successors, because of the economic and social character of the economy (nationalised and planned) was not capitalist but working class.

The working class needed to make political revolution to create workers' democracy; but they also needed to preserve and transform the planned economy from imperialist attack. Today most of these states – Russia, China, Eastern Europe, have seen capitalism restored, bringing mass unemployment, insecurity, gangsterism and Aids in its wake. But Cuba and even North Korea remain bureaucratically degenerated workers' states. That is why we defend them against imperialist attack. We wish to see the attacks on them defeated – by their own people – but also by a worldwide mobilisation to hamper and sabotage the effort of "our own" imperialist rulers and "our" armies.

Until the socialist revolution is victorious on a global scale – freeing the world from the economic and national competition that causes war – the capitalists will resist each and every workers' revolution because they threaten their fortunes, their privileges and their power. Civil war to defeat them will be necessary. It is a stage towards the creation of a world free from war, and such an objective justifies the use of warlike means.

That is another reason why Marxists are not pacifists and are not in favour of general and abstract calls for "peace" or "disarmament". We know we cannot defeat a powerful enemy other than by revolution and civil war. To win such war we need arms. We are for the disarmament of the bosses by the armed working class. As Frederick Engels put it: "the working class was to overcome the bourgeoisie it would first have to master the art and strategy of war." To say otherwise is a deception, one that will result in wars without end.

Revolutionaries understand that what begins as a war between two capitalist camps does not have to end that way. Wars, by their nature, draw the masses of ordinary people onto the stage of history whether they be marching the streets of London with a placard or fighting in the streets of Baghdad with a Kalashnikov. This sense of empowerment leads people to start asking what the war is for and why our rulers should dictate its outcome.

The anti-war movement in the West is already extraordinarily strong. As it moves from million-strong marches through blockading railroads and ports to strike action, it will become with each step more aware of its power to stop not only this war, but the system that creates war – capitalism. At the same time, we work hard to show the workers of Iraq that they are supported by millions on the streets and should demand that the defence of the country is put directly into their own hands.

In other words, wars create the conditions for revolution.

imperialism. This was a progressive resistance – even though it was being waged under a leadership which we want to see destroyed by the workers and peasants of Iraq.

Only by a class analysis, an examination of the politics of each war, can we understand why some wars are just and some are unjust. Only thus can we determine which side we are on, if any.

This method has proved vital for revolutionaries in many wars, but none more so than the two world wars of this century. Both, despite the pretended "anti-fascist" character of the Allied camp in the Second World War, were unjust wars as far as Britain, the USA, France, Germany, Japan and the other imperialist states were concerned.

Neither world war was fought to preserve democracy. Both were fought in order to re-divide the world for exploitation between the imperialist powers. They were unjust, imperialist wars. Hitler's rise to power was in part a result of the seizure of all of Germany's colonies after the First

War and the imposition of crippling war reparations. This led to deep economic crisis in 1929-33. When Hitler came to power in 1933 and smashed the trade unions and the political labour movement, the British, French and US ruling classes applauded. Only ensued when he began to lay hands on France and Britain's semi-colonies in central and eastern Europe and threaten their African and Asian colonies.

### DECEIVING THE PEOPLE

As Lenin put it with regard to the First World War: "Picture to yourselves a slave owner who owned 100 slaves warring against a slave owner who owned 200 slaves for a more 'just' distribution of slaves. Clearly, the application of the term 'defensive' war, or 'war for the defence of the fatherland', in such a case would be sheer deception of the common people... Precisely in this way are the present day imperialist bourgeoisie deceiving the peoples by means of 'national' ideology and the term 'defence of the fatherland' in the present war between slave owners for fortifying and

strengthening slavery."

Lenin formulated a policy for Marxists that went beyond simply analysing the class character of wars and supporting or opposing them. He developed the policy of revolutionary defeatism – waging the class struggle in your own country against your own bourgeoisie and bringing about its defeat and overthrow. This was to take advantage of the war crisis, to create the conditions under which imperialist war could be transformed into a civil war, a war by workers against their own ruling class. He argued: "A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, cannot fail to see that its military reverses facilitate its overthrow... Socialists must explain to the masses that they have no other road of salvation except the revolutionary overthrow of 'their' governments, and that advantage must be taken of these governments' embarrassments in the present war precisely for this purpose."

The successful application of this policy led directly to the Russian Revolution

# Thieves fall out

The bitter row in NATO between France and the United States was the most severe division in the imperialist alliance for forty years. It signified resistance by France and Germany to the USA's plans for the world and Eurasian land mass in particular. It suddenly brought to the surface all the economic and diplomatic conflicts of interest between them that have lain dormant since the end of the Cold War.

France and Germany refused to back the US and UK request to "defend Turkey", arguing that NATO action would commit the alliance to war before the weapons inspectors in Iraq had issued their second report.

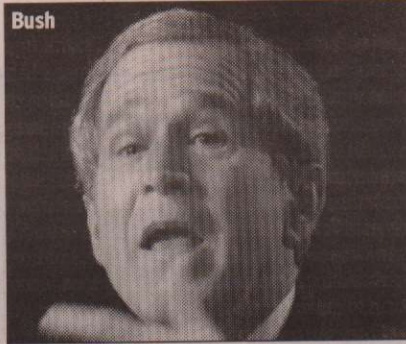
Although the whole dispute over NATO help to Turkey was soon papered over, it is a near certainty that the United States will now allow NATO to fall into further disuse as an instrument of its military policy. Donald Rumsfeld announced that the Pentagon is seriously considering closing all its bases in Germany and moving them to the "new Europe", meaning former Stalinist states like Poland and Czech Republic.

The rift between the US and the leaders of the European Union has torn up the template of international relations and heralds greater inter-imperialist conflicts in the years and decades to come.

Behind the NATO row lies France and Germany's opposition to the impending war. They are trying to check the exercise of unbridled power by the United States.

The crisis in NATO has been simmering since the end of the Cold War. NATO was founded in 1949 as a military alliance of the USA and European imperialist states against the USSR and East European states under its control. Its second purpose was to subordinate the EU to the long term domination of Washington. With the re-unification of Germany and the withdrawal of all the Soviet armed forces from Eastern Europe, its raison d'être seemed over. That is why over the last ten years the US has preferred not to pursue its foreign policy through NATO when it can avoid it.

In the Balkans between 1995-99 the US either intervened directly or via the UN. In the days after 9/11 NATO did indeed invoke its charter to the effect that an attack on the USA was deemed an attack on all NATO members. But this was at NATO Secretary General George Robertson's initiative. It went down like a lead balloon. To include the alliance would be to give those Europeans a voice in the White House's plans for Central Asia. No way José, Jacques, Gerhard, et al. The US simply froze NATO out of its war against



Afghanistan. This was a blow for Lord Robertson who had precisely tried to refashion NATO as an alliance that could act "out of the atre", which means outside Europe.

In fact the whole concept of NATO being broadened to allow these operations as a way of redefining and re-legitimising itself has been sunk by the unilateralism of the new US administration. It wants to replace these permanent alliances with ad hoc "coalitions of the willing", or, more accurately, "coalitions of the bribed and bullied".

The US administration and its think tanks of foreign policy "intellectuals" are busy fashioning a new ideological justification for its "go it alone" stance. It tells us that nation-



alism in Europe is inherently prone to the genocidal violence that devastated the continent in the first half of the last century; the US gurus claim multilateral ties and institutions are needed to prevent a resurgence of wars in Europe.

But the USA's brand of nationalism is, of course, totally "progressive", infused with benign concepts of Liberty and Justice. Look, they say, there has not been a war on the American continent for well over a century-overlooking a few interventions by the Marines and coups courtesy of the CIA. These too, no doubt, were due to the irritating habit of Latin American states to "fail".

Nor must we forget that the USA is is

charged with a manifest destiny from the Almighty and is in Bush's words, "Good". It simply does not need any restraining. Thus the world has nothing to fear from its unilateralism and its disdain for such "entanglements" as international law.

Combine this overbearing nonsense with a smash and grab raid on the oil resources of the Gulf and Central Asia, the scorning of the United Nations and the humbling of NATO and it is no surprise that it has provoked a reaction. There will be sharper clashes between the main imperialist powers as they seek to carve out more of the world's resources for their own use. A new conflict-ridden period of re-dividing the world has begun.

Blair's move in getting the EU applicant states of Eastern Europe, plus Berlusconi and Aznar, to sign up to a pro-US declaration set alarm bells ringing in the chancelleries of France and Germany. Donald Rumsfeld's scornful comparison between the "Old Europe" and the "New" poured fuel on the fire. But the USA will not find it as easy as they think to set European states at each others throats.

Washington's alliance with "New Europe" will cool when the eastern Europeans recall that their application to join the EU will be decided in Paris, Brussels and Berlin, not in Washington or London. And these clashes have destroyed at a stroke Blair's ambitions to "lead Europe" towards the Anglo-American neo-liberal model of privatisation, cuts and the dismantling of welfare.

Of course, France and Germany are just as much imperialist vultures as the US and Britain, even if their appetites have to be a little more modest today. Their plans for Iraq are also hostile and predatory. They prefer slow strangulation of the Iraqi people to a shot in the head - for now.

France has two national interests in Iraq. First, are oil, defence and other markets. France, together with Russia and China, signed important oil concessions with Baghdad early in 2002. These will no doubt be torn up by General Franks after he settles in to one of Saddam's presidential palaces

Second, and more important, France understands that a U.S. occupation of Iraq would shift the global balance of power even more in the favour of the United States. So, as we go to press, France seeks to build support for a proposal to reinforce the UN inspections. The French proposal, which is intended to stave off U.S. military action, calls for doubling or tripling the size of the UN inspection agency, increasing the frequency of surveillance flights and expanding the role of UN security guards in the monitoring of suspected weapons sites.

The French proposal calls for the recruitment of accountants, archivists and teams of custom officers, who would be granted authority to monitor the goods entering Iraq, to prevent the importation of weapons-related material. A new intelligence bureau, employing as many as 10 analysts, would be established to analyse reconnaissance imagery and to assess intelligence provided by national agencies.

In short it is an intrusive, aggressive interference in Iraq designed to undermine and eventually unseat Saddam Hussein, as surely as missiles will.

Socialists should line up with neither side in this transatlantic feud. It is an escalation of inter-imperialist rivalry - a clash for power and resources between our exploiters. This rivalry is set to deepen and threatens humanity with wars far more destructive than ever. We must use the enormous successes of the antiwar and anticapitalist worldwide mobilisations to build a New International, a world party of social revolution. As the capitalist thieves fall out, the workers of Europe, America, Africa and Asia are joining hands to overthrow the masters of war.

## Hans Blix & the inspectors



Since November UN weapons inspectors have been pouring over every part of Iraq looking for weapons of mass destruction. Now more than 300 are searching. Nothing of major significance has been found. No "smoking gun", just some aged dog-eared documents on nuclear bomb-making, a few harmless missile casings. Despite all the sophisticated monitoring equipment available to the USA they have found nothing. Colin Powell's pictures and taped calls presented to the UN in January were judged somewhere between inconclusive and laughable as proof.

Failure to properly account for destroyed stocks of sarin gas and anthrax supplies in 1998 and a "conviction" that Saddam is

hiding mobile biological weapons making equipment is all that is left on the charge sheet.

Worse, every time Hans Blix, the inspections team's head, makes a new demand - allow unrestricted spy plan overflights, let us talk to your scientists without minders, destroy your al-Samoud 2 missiles - and Saddam agrees, the US and UK dismiss his compliance as a "cynical" manoeuvre.

Each time this happens it only confirms in the minds of millions that the whole exercise is a farce, a badly disguised excuse to invade Iraq whatever the inspectors do or do not find.

Millions in the anti-war movement do -

wrongly - want to see Saddam disarmed. They do not see Baghdad as a regime that threatens either its near neighbours or the west.

They see Hans Blix's team as getting results - in short, containment works. Whereas war with Iraq will certainly increase the threat to the mass of western citizens as a result of the increased support for terrorism that it will generate in the Middle East.

But the point for Bush and Blair is not whether Iraq possesses such weapons or that it disarms but that it should be occupied and controlled as a regional base for the next stage in imposing a grand imperialist settlement on the region.

## Nations united in bribery

George Bush rues the day he allowed Tony Blair to persuade him to "go down the United Nations route" on his journey to Baghdad.

The Washington "hawks" resisted the idea last autumn and now are fuming that the fight around a new resolution in the security council is delaying their military timetable.

It started as a harmless concession to Blair to get some veneer of international support for US war aims and fill in the long months while the army of invasion was assembled in the Gulf. But now it has rebounded on Washington. France has used it to impede the USA's imperial ambitions while advancing its own.

Whatever the outcome this month of vote on the draft joint US/UK resolution, the United Nations is already holed below the waterline, its legitimacy as the source of the "will of the international community" gone forever.

Bush has threatened the UN time and again: either do as we say or become "irrelevant" and go the way



The thieves' kitchen - The Security Council

of the impotent League of Nations between the world wars. If Washington's money and might fails to bribe and bully the rest of the security council into sanctioning war, the US will ignore its decisions and proceed to exclude the UN from a meaningful post-war role. It will probably starve it of funds and bypass it as a forum for major diplomatic moves in future.

If the security council succumbs to browbeating, then the millions around the world who do not want this war will refuse to take the UN's independence seriously.

Washington is deploying all its weight to get its way. Bush and Blair are trying to secure nine votes for their plan - a majority of the 17 members of the security council. They have promised Bulgaria that

they will recognise its "market economy" status, to fast-track its integration into WTO and become eligible for grants and aid.

Angola, Chile and Pakistan are being offered other inducements, equally lucrative. No doubt they all will be reminded of the US ambassador to the UN's words to Yemen's diplomats when it voted against the US at the time of the 1991 Gulf War: "that was the most expensive vote that you will ever make."

Bush hopes that getting enough of the non-permanent members of the Security Council on board will persuade China and Russia to vote for the resolution. It believes this will force France to at least abstain, for fear of being completely carved out of Iraq under a US military-led administration.

For all these reasons, opposition to the war must not tie itself to the fate of the outcome of the vote inside the Security Council. A UN "mandate" for the war will be nothing more than imperialist power politics.



# Why Bush wants to grab Iraq

Why is the US President so determined to conquer Iraq whatever the consequences, and what are his plans for the Middle East? Michael Gatter of the Austrian paper *ArbeiterInnen Standpunkt* explains

In a recent speech George Bush outlined his vision for a "liberated" Iraq after a US victory. According to this the country will become a model for democracy and wealth for the Middle East. Forget his empty words but read between the lines to understand the goals of US imperialism.

You can't understand Bush's plans for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq without understanding his longer-term strategy. The war is not only about oil.

Of course Bush's election campaign financiers Esso, Texaco and Halliburton want to be rewarded and expect profitable contracts to exploit Iraq's oil fields.

But while control of the Iraqi oil fields would be a welcome gain for US imperialism Washington aspires to much more. US imperialism is determined to spread its hegemony and to dominate over the whole world.

The right-wing think tanks such as Project for the New American Century – where most of the key members of the present administration developed their plans in the 1990s – talk of re-ordering the whole Middle East with its huge oil and gas resources and its geo-strategic location.

Bush does not bother to disguise the fact that after Iraq, Washington will go for "regime change" in many more countries. The president's envoy for Afghanistan and Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, made this clear: "In transforming Iraq, we would take a significant step in the direction of the longer-term need to transform this key region as a whole."

Bourgeois analysts – not bound by the rules of diplomacy – are much more open about US imperialist goals. Think-tank Stratfor's George Friedman explained what is at stake for his masters: "The conquest of Iraq will not be a minor event in history. It will represent the introduction of a new imperial power to the Middle East and a redefinition of regional geopolitics based on that power. For all of the diversity in the region, there is a common geopolitical theme. If the U.S. invasion is successful, Washington intends to occupy Iraq militarily, and it officially expects to remain there for at least 18 months – or to be more hon-



## Stability not democracy

In late February at a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee US General Eric K. Shinseki said that a military occupying force for a post-war Iraq could total several hundred thousand soldiers. He maintained that any post-war occupying force would have to be big enough "to maintain safety" in a country with "ethnic tensions that could lead to other problems." Washington believes "democracy" could have a destabilising influence on the region.

Bush does not want to hand over a defeated Iraq to the divided and

factional Iraqi opposition composed of pro-Iranian Shiites, feuding Kurdish forces, deserting Baath functionaries and generals, and exiled Iraqi millionaires. So after its victory General Tommy Franks, the head of the US Central Command, is to establish military control until a US administrator is appointed.

Kanan Makiya, an adviser to Iraq's main opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress, has revealed to *The Observer*, that America has dumped its commitment to bring democracy to Iraq. Instead, under

pressure from Saudi Arabia, the Arab Gulf states and Turkey, Washington is preparing to leave Iraq under the control of President Saddam Hussein's Baath Party.

The infrastructure of Saddam's ruling Baath party would remain largely intact, with the top two officials in each Iraqi ministry replaced by US military officers.

The chairman of the Iraqi National Congress, Ahmad Chalabi, who many people had expected to become Iraq's new president, has attacked Washington's proposals.

est, indefinitely. The United States will build air bases and deploy substantial ground forces – and, rather than permit the disintegration of Iraq, will create a puppet government underwritten by U.S. power."

Friedman argues that if the United States

is victorious, then the entire geopolitics of the region will be redefined. Every country that borders Iraq will U.S. and British troops along their frontiers. The US will be able to intervene into any country in the region with covert forces based in Iraq.

Washington could threaten overt interventions as well. And, so long as either Turkey or Kuwait will permit transport of military hardware across their land into Iraq, there would be no need to use bases in other countries in the region.

Friedman concludes: "In short, a US victory will change the entire balance of power in the region, from a situation in which the United States must negotiate its way to war, to a situation where the United States is free to act as it will."

The Paris paper *Le Point* rightly pointed out on 21 February: "Although the US crusade against Iraq is aimed at disarming and removing Saddam Hussein, its strategic goal concerns Saudi Arabia...beyond disarming Iraq, beyond even the former Mesopotamia's oil potential, it is the future of Saudi Arabia, the pivotal center of the Arabic Orient, that is causing the drums of war to beat at the White House. It is in Riyadh that the financial, oil and strategic keys are to be found to this new Middle East that the Americans want to redraw. To achieve this, and to try and reform Saudi Arabia, they need a friendly rear base that is secular and potentially powerful: Iraq."

The re-ordering of the region is considered imperative after 9/11 since the administration believes that it cannot go after al-Qaida without occupying Iraq. This is not because Iraq "harbours" al-Qaida (they are sworn enemies) or that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction will fall into bin Laden's hands (Iraq has none of significance and they are easier to obtain from Pakistan or Russia). It is because controlling Iraq allows Bush to re-order the whole region from which the mainsprings of support for al-Qaida originate.

Bush knows that no matter how much money is poured into the Office for Homeland Security, however much "racial profiling" of US citizens they do, they cannot protect the US from being attacked again like 9/11. A year after occupying Afghanistan they cannot even find bin Laden. So occupying Iraq is an essential but preliminary step in a grand long-term imperial game plan. The agreed National Security Strategy adopted by the White House last autumn makes it plain; the national sovereignty of all other countries, all other peoples' democratic rights, are subordinated to this US goal. And this makes it a reactionary imperialist project.

## The Iraqi Communist Party: waiting to serve Bush

A particularly disgusting example of the "progressive" opposition in Iraq is the Stalinist Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). In the 1970s it collaborated – following the instructions of its masters in Moscow – with the Baath regime and was rewarded with several posts. According to the disastrous strategy of stages the Stalinists politically supported the "anti-imperialist" regime in Baghdad to "strengthen the camp of "progress" in the world. Naturally the relationships between the main national classes and imperialism are much more complex than the simple black and white schema of Stalinism. If the oppressed classes miss the opportunity to overthrow the bourgeoisie in time, they will be suppressed. There is no static state of truce between the oppressed and the oppressor. In the end the semi-colonial bourgeoisie will submit to

the stronger hand. And this is imperialism if the world proletariat fails to overthrow it.

So when the wind changed and Baghdad had wrung as much as it could from the USSR, Saddam Hussein sacked the Stalinists and later turned to imperialism, mainly France and US. The Stalinists were repressed and executed.

When the USSR's Gorbachev collaborated closely with the US, the ICP followed suit. Like their masters they supported the deadly UN embargo against Iraq in autumn 1990, which has caused the silent murder of one and a half million Iraqis over the past 12 years.

For many years they did not openly oppose the UN embargo. And today they equate the dictatorship in Baghdad with the biggest terrorist sitting in the White House in Washington. Today the ICP continues

to call on the United Nations and the "international community of states" to help them overthrow Saddam Hussein and to disarm Iraq. They call the UN to intervene in Iraq and to hold "free elections". In fact these are all figleaves for imperialism to intervene and invade Iraq.

True, revolutionary communists want to overthrow the murderous Baath regime. But not on the bayonets of imperialism – only by the Iraqi people and against imperialism.

Even under the looming mass murder of the Iraqi people by the US superpower, the ICP is not prepared to defend its country. Quite the opposite they have links with the pro-US "opposition". In fact they are hoping for a place in a post-Saddam Hussein regime based on the bayonets of US imperialism. They are prepared to serve as colonial puppets. They are stooges in waiting.

## Turks eye prize of Kurdish territory

A military victory of US imperialism would be a severe defeat both for the Iraqi people and the world-wide growing movement against the US empire. But this does not mean that it would open a honeymoon period for US imperialism. Quite the opposite: it would be a victory bearing the seeds of future defeats.

First look at the fragile alliance the US is building at the moment. In the north 3.5 million Kurds want self-determination. Under the post-1991 conditions they were able to establish some kind of autonomy.

In an agreement between Washington and Turkey, thousands of Turkish troops will enter northern Iraq, ostensibly for humanitarian purposes. Turkey, with its own disaffected Kurdish population, wants its military to occupy northern Iraq to prevent Kurdish groups from seizing the oil-rich northern city of Kirkuk and proclaiming an autonomous Kurdish homeland.

The two Kurdish parties which have

controlled a mountainous enclave of northern Iraq since 1991 insist that they want only a regional government. It now seems that their militias will play virtually no role in liberating Iraq and that, following pressure from Washington, they will leave the job to the American military. Turkey is anxious to squash any Kurdish aspirations since it has its own rebellious Kurdish minority which could be inspired by its brothers and sisters' achievements.

Similarly the Shiite opposition in the South wants to achieve more rights and since it is backed by neighbouring Iran it is in a strong position.

So all in all US imperialism has no intention of federalising the Iraqi state in the near future. They will try to co-opt a few oppositionists and representatives of the minorities. But basically they will try keep a strong, stable state as a spring board for their future operations in the region.

# Rebellion shakes Bush's Bolivian stooge

A revolt of workers and peasants has halted President de Lozada's IMF-inspired austerity plan, writes Keith Harvey. But to beat more off more attacks from de Lozada and his US allies the masses must take power

Two days of massive anti-government protests last month left at least 23 people dead in La Paz and El Alto.

The protests were triggered by the government's planned imposition of an income tax of up to 12.5 per cent on wages.

The government claimed the tax hike was necessary to meet the demands of the International Monetary Fund.

The February actions were the culmination of six months of growing rebellion against the government of Sánchez de Lozada, a conservative, US-educated millionaire businessman from the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR) - Bolivia's traditional bourgeois nationalist party. He was elected as president by the congress last August and is a key ally of Washington and a loyal servant of the IMF.

Evo Morales of the Movement to Socialism (MAS) was supported by huge numbers of workers and peasants and was effectively robbed of the last June's presidential elections. During the campaign, Morales pledged to stop paying Bolivia's foreign debt and to nationalise industries sold to foreigners during the past 17 years.

After the elections, while the congress was still debating who

should be president, the US Ambassador to Bolivia, Manuel Rocha, brazenly threatened that if Morales was installed, the United States would cut off all economic aid and postpone a \$6bn project to build a pipeline and liquefaction plant to export natural gas to the United States. He even compared Morales to Osama bin Laden and claimed he was linked to drug trafficking.

On 22 January, Morales and peasant leader Quispe announced on that they were forming a "Joint Chiefs of Staff of the People" and launching a campaign to oust Sánchez de Lozada from office by strikes and a nation-wide campaign of roadblocks.

On 12 February about 10,000 police officers, nearly half the nation's total force, joined the protests by striking against the tax raising measure. Violence erupted during protests against the tax outside the presidential palace. Students from Ayacucho high school gathered outside in the Plaza de Murillo, pelting it with stones, shouting "resign or die".

Other protesters also threatened the US Embassy. A march by the police to the presidential palace was met by a fusillade of shots from the army and striking police, sheltering many of the demonstrators, returned fire.

A general strike called by the



Bolivian military attack police and other demonstrators

Confederation of Bolivian Workers (COB) on 15 February took place demanding that Sánchez de Lozada get out of office. More than 10,000 people, teachers, farmers, unionised workers and the urban poor demonstrated in the city's streets. They were soon attacked by tanks, bullets and tear gas and were

dispersed only after some hours of fighting. By early afternoon eight were dead and more than 10 injured with bullet wounds from shots fired by army snipers posted on the rooftops of buildings and in the streets around the Presidential Palace.

The government only defused the

crisis - temporarily at least - by cancelling the plans to raise income tax, giving the police a big pay rise and paying the families of officers killed during the fighting \$10,000 each. Clearly this will not increase the solvency of the regime.

Obviously the mid-February police strike, which threatened for two days to create a situation of dual power in Bolivia - had to be settled; otherwise a nation-wide revolutionary uprising was on the cards. But the situation is far from settled. The COB has threatened to call a general strike. The economic crisis is deep and insoluble. The IMF still demands austerity from its puppet.

Bolivia is passing through an intense revolutionary crisis. The workers and farmers, the youth and urban poor need to create popular assemblies and launch an all out general strike with road blockades. The morale of the police is obviously weak and sections of them could be won over to the side of the people again - with their arms.

Only a workers and peasants' government, based on the armed people, can stand up to the IMF, cancel the debt, throw out Lozada and the bourgeois toadies to imperialism and give the revolution in Latin America a mighty thrust forward.

# Poverty and death in city of carnival

Dave Ellis reviews *City of God*, directed by Fernando Meirelles, and on general release

*City of God* is a movie set in the favelas (shantytowns) of Rio de Janeiro with a style that could be described as Tarantino crossed with Ken Loach - cartoon violence laced with social realism.

It is the story of drugs gangs, poverty and violence in Brazil's post-war slums.

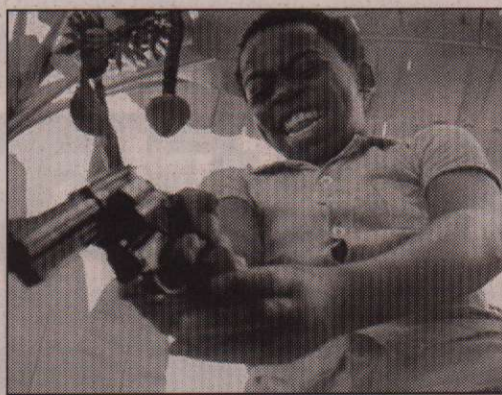
As with *Loach*, the director, Fernando Meirelles, used a mainly new cast. Almost all of the actors are from a drama group for poor youths. They were trained in acting and improvisation for six months before shooting the film.

The main narrator is Rocket. He takes us through the lives of a number of characters who get involved with the favela drugs gangs and charts their involvement with his life from the 1960s. The *City of God* (Cidade de Deus) is an urban housing project built to move out the poor from the "picture postcard" districts of Rio.

Without proper construction and no maintenance it quickly turns into a slum. There is no electricity and no services, with only dirt tracks for roads but, as Rocket says, the rich and powerful don't care because now the poor are out of sight and out of mind. Meirelles himself said that the film is all about social exclusion.

The favelas of Brazil have grown during the past 30 years. In Rio, a population of 5.8 million (about 20 per cent of the city), are believed to live in these favelas. At the same time, the gangs have grown up equally rapidly. There are an estimated 11,000 gang members in Rio of which about 50 per cent are under 18-years-old. The level of violence is appalling with 3,000 shot dead each year in Rio alone, a situation so bad that it is worse than in Colombia, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone.

The mindless body count would not disgrace an Arnold Schwarzenegger film, but the violence is also used to great effect. At one point the drug overlord Li'l Zé decides to put a stop to the activities of a small



gang of street robbers, the Runts, because there are no "rapes and robberies" on his turf. The Runts are only children but when Zé's gang catches two of the youngest members the punishment is vicious. They are shot in the foot and then Zé decides to blood one of his new recruits, telling him he has to choose which one of the two children to kill.

The film is at its best in revealing the contradictions of gang life. In the beginning the gang members just stick together for protection and to get money to survive. It shows the Robin Hood element of many gangs that start up in poor areas. When Rocket's brother and two friends hold up the gas delivery truck, one of them shouts out to the locals gathering to watch "who wants gas". Immediately, people unload the van of its canisters.

As the gangs become stronger they impose their own variety of discipline on the favela. The police do nothing so long as the drugs do not overstep the boundaries and venture into the middle class or rich areas of the city. Corrupt police officials skim money from the drug business and also make a killing by selling the gangs weapons. The favela gangs became so pow-

erful that eventually the police cannot enter. These "no go" areas are occasionally visited by the police, and military, in "invade and occupy" style raids. Yet this has only happens when the gangs started to act as a parallel state. As long as the gangs keep things under control in the poor areas, the capitalist state could live with this.

Inside the favela, the gangs do bring some kind of order. Some residents point out they have not been robbed for years. Not only this but in a number of the Rio favelas the most powerful gangs pay for public transport, clinics and even cultural centres.

Yet this goes hand-in-hand with complete control by the drug gangs. The exploitation of young women through prostitution is commonplace. Nobody is allowed to organise without the agreement of the gangs. They rule and the local drug overlord is the dictator - while Li'l Zé boasts there are no robberies or rapes in his area he himself commits rape.

However much gangs are born out of the survival and protection needs of the local population, without mass participation and democratic organisation they become the self-seeking power base of the few in the interests of the few.

*City of God's* description of wider society is poor, especially as it will be an introduction to life in Brazil for many audiences. The question of the rich and poor runs seamlessly throughout the film but other questions are barely touched upon. The life of women is not dealt with. In fact the film doesn't develop the women characters at all. One, Angelica, is only shown when Rocket has a love interest in her and then when the "cool" gangster Benny gets involved with her. After Benny is shot we see no more of her. When the girlfriend of another character, Knockout Ned, is raped we follow his quest for revenge but we don't see any more of her.

Racism is shown as we see a glimpse of the richer world at offices of the Rio paper where Rocket has a job.

Rocket wants to be a photographer so after he finishes delivering papers he goes along to paper's photo lab where he knows one of the workers who used to live in the *City of God*. All of the staff at the offices are white but Rocket, a young black man, manages to get an internship and work as a photographer for the paper.

While the rest of the film shows the harsh reality of life in the favela, at this point it becomes a fairy story of how Rocket is able to fulfil his dreams in becoming a photographer thanks to the benevolent attitudes of the middle classes which allows him to escape the *City of God*.

This is not accidental. Meirelles has said he made the film for the middle class. Meirelles may not have set out to make a film with a directly political message but *City of God* does tackle important social issues in Brazil.

It follows the Brazil of the past few decades yet during this time the most single important development in Brazil has been the rise of the workers movement and in particular the growth of the Partido Dos Trabalhadores (PT) which of course includes the election of Lula as President, an ex-metalworker. There is not a single reference to this or to what any of the residents of the *City of God* think about this yet this is based in a city where the PT Governor, Benedita Da Silva, is a black woman who came from a favela and became a founding member of the PT through a struggle to get running water and electricity for her favela.

Imagine making a social commentary film about a poor estate in Britain during the 1980s and forgetting to mention Prime Minister Thatcher and the class struggles of that decade!

His message is clear by omission. The way to improve this situation is for the rich and the powerful to become benevolent and not for the workers, the landless peasants and the urban poor to organise and take matters into their own hands.

# Colombia: the second front in the USA's 'War against Terrorism'

Francesca and Paolo are two Workers Power supporters who have spent the last six months involved in the Colombian people's struggle against neo-liberal terrorism. Here they explain what is happening

**WP: What is the situation on the ground for activists?**

**P:** It is very difficult at the moment because the recent election of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez in August 2002. He is an extremely far right independent, who's programme is completely US backed, IMF dominated and based on very severe repression through the use of illegal paramilitary right-wing groups. Uribe's interest is to open up the whole of Colombia to the invasion of foreign multinational companies, mostly American-based, for his own personal gain and the Colombian oligarchy. Within that there is a lot of repression of any opposition by a three-pronged attack by police, military and paramilitary groups.

It's very much like the old 1970s dictatorships, military juntas, which you had in Argentina and Chile. There just isn't room for opposition. In Colombia, they have the highest rate of [trade] unionist assassination in the world. Social movement leaders, community leaders are murdered; people are displaced.

**F:** Uribe connected strongly with the whole 'war on guerrillas' only after September 11th. Before his policy was more on the peace talk side, but after September 11th Uribe radically changed his propaganda and became the principal campaigner of the 'war on terror', effectively the war on

the guerrillas. At the same time the US starting talking about Al Qaida infiltration into the Colombian guerrilla movement. He uses this opportunist banner of the war on terrorism.

**Can you tell me the effect that Plan Colombia, which is financed to the hilt by America, is having on the Colombian population?**

**F:** The Plan Colombia is the military arm of ALCA (FTAA: Free Trade Area of the Americas). The two are completely interconnected; you wouldn't have one without the other. Why? Because one of the hidden agendas of the ALCA is to put the Amazonian region (includes Venezuela and Bolivia) under the control of the UN. To do that, the US and its multinationals need to protect themselves against the insurgency.

Plan Colombia was sold to the Colombian people as a 'social project' to aid their poverty. So the Colombian government was allowed to borrow \$4.5 billion from the World Bank. As ALCA progressed and the US needed more access to the region, then Plan Colombia metamorphosed into a 'war on drugs' and the social chapter of the Plan Colombia was removed. So the Colombia people are effectively financing a war within their country. A war against themselves.

**P:** So for example, Monsanto or Dupont,

or another big multinational like BP or Coke, want this region in Circa Boliva that is super rich in oil and minerals. Unfortunately there will be indigenous communities that are living there. Because Uribe and the government don't want to be seen doing any of this work – he needs to maintain this clean image – they will send in the paramilitaries.

The paramilitary troops will make incursions into these villages and tell them they have 24 hours to get out. They will kill the community leaders to teach a lesson to the others. These people are displaced to barrios in urban areas and the paramilitaries burn the community to the ground.

**So how closely linked are the paramilitaries with the military?**

**F:** They are very close. Sometimes they can be the same people. For example, the paramilitaries made an incursion into El Borde, a village in a dangerous area of Colombia because it sees paramilitary, military and insurgency action.

One of the villagers managed to get through to the local army brigade. The paramilitaries got out of the area. About an hour later, the army came in on these Black Hawk helicopters, got out and it was the same blokes that had been wearing the paramilitary badge.

**What are the ramifications of ALCA?**

**P:** ALCA is driven by American interests to extend NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) from Tijuana to Tierra del Fuego born of the fact that America needs a area of enormous biodiversity and cheap labour; somewhere that they can completely rape and pillage. It's an agreement that has been signed behind closed doors.

It will pave the way for multinationals to intervene into a country without adhering to sovereign national laws. They don't have to respect labour laws, they don't have to respect environmental laws, etc. So that's the plan: to open up the whole continent to exploitation.

It's a two-prong programme for there is ALCA and there is also the PPP – Plan Puebla Panama – which is about opening trade corridors through Central America.

Not only is the plan signed behind people's backs, but the people themselves are paying for it. It is being paid for by privatisation of national industries and by an increase in VAT. In Mexico for example, the VAT is 16 per cent on food, medicine and books. The money is coming out of the people's pockets and they are driven into deeper misery because of it.

**F:** This is not just an economic project but also a political project. It's about putting Latin America under US domination, tak-

ing any power of decision making away from the people of these countries. It's about creating an army of low paid workers in order that the US can compete with China, which has just entered the WTO.

**How do you see the future of Colombia? What do you think is the way forward?**

**P:** I think ALCA will come in and it could produce a spark that will ignite the people en masse so they will come into struggle. Because the people are already angry and starting to organise – in Bolivia, in Ecuador in Argentina – this will have greater momentum. In some places they have gone so far as to overthrow governments, but there is a political vacuum and the same people come back into power.

This is the same in Colombia – the lack of an organised political force. But the real question is how to get around the severe repression?

**F:** I think that the answer will lie with international help and solidarity. The Colombian movement looks very much to itself and does not actively try to develop international links. Their idea is that they will solve their own problems and then they will look outside.

I think the people of Latin America must link up with the workers of Europe and America and make the struggle global.

# Palestine - come and join our fight

Saif Abu Keshek, 21, has been active for the best part of his life in the struggle against the occupation of Palestine. He is a co-ordinator for the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) in Nablus, West Bank.

Max Watson talked to Saif on 23 February about the ISM, the Intifada, and the coming war with Iraq.

**Tell me about the ISM.**

ISM is an international solidarity movement. It's an international and Palestinian led movement taking action against the occupation. Internationals started doing campaigns in August 2000. In 2002 the movement decided that we would have a full-time presence in all the areas.

**Where does the ISM come from?**

Four people founded the ISM after an action against the occupation in Nablus. It was decided that the movement should be Palestinian led as it is the land of the Palestinians, and it should be different from all other movements. Its agreements are based on consensus. Group decisions and individual activists taking part and being trained have the same voice as any other members – it is non-hierarchical. We have few rules – we are non-violent so we do not carry weapons. Also, in respect for the culture of the Palestinians, we do not drink alcohol and we do not have relationships inside the group and we abide by decisions made by consensus. Any questions about the decisions made can be discussed again at any future meetings.

**What are the Arab states doing to help the Palestinians?**

It is clear that for over two years of the intifada the other Arab nations have not done anything for us. But this is the governments. As a people they will move and

they might not accept the way their governments work and they should put pressure on their governments to act.

**How do you feel about the PLO's approach and what will happen if Iraq is attacked?**

I think any kind of negotiations with the West are so far no good. The position of Israel is clear – Israel takes care of Palestine and the US takes care of Iraq. They are talking about transferring the Palestinians – but it might be a massacre. It might be a new attack as on many other occasions.

**How do you see the future of the intifada?**

The intifada resistance will go on forever. Fifty-five years of war and they do not give up and lose hope – the opposite. They are a very strong people, willing to lose their lives – 2 years of intifada – 2 and a half. They will continue even though many people get killed. I don't think the Israelis can stop the Palestinian by power. If they want to they can try to transfer the Palestinians but they have already created so many refugees. There is no where else to go. So the choice is to fight or die. They will never give up.

**How important are the links with the Jewish organisations?**

The Israeli groups should organise actions against the occupation inside Israel



so the government will see that their people do not want the occupation. We know Israelis who do actions and they want to come to Palestine. We have many friends inside Israel and we welcome them here to fight with us. The human rights organisations are important as we are in touch all the time. If there are people stuck at a checkpoint we tell them and there is a huge effect from time to time. It is also important that they do actions inside Israel as well.

**Do you think the tactic of suicide bombing is a just retaliation to the collective punishment faced by Palestinians?**

Suicide bombing is the second disaster in Palestine. The occupation is trying to entrench suicide into Palestinian culture. People see people killed all the time. It does not make it better for them it makes it worse. The hatred grows in them, and they hate the other side ... they want to have their revenge. This is a big problem. I don't think that the suicide bombs are the right choice ... but the Israeli government put this choice into the hand of the Palestinian people. They forced the Palestinians to choose the suicide bombs.

**What would you say to people who want to support the Palestinians but cannot go to Palestine?**

I would say to all people to come to Palestine. There is nothing to lose except to stop the disaster that is going on there. Also I would say to them if you are not able to go there to see for yourself there are many things that need to be done. Anyone can work on the media, collect funds to support us. And each time you hear about a friend who has been detained, you can call the relevant embassy in Israel... There are many roles.

# workers power

## IF THERE IS AN ATTACK ON IRAQ

Walk out of your work or college, hold people's assemblies, demonstrate and blockade the streets

# Blair's war at home

## ASYLUM: LIES, DAMNED LIES AND THE BRITISH PRESS

Every day the tabloid press has another headline attacking asylum seekers. New Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett has not only failed to challenge these lies, but reinforces them with new laws stripping refugees of their rights.

So using material from the Refugee Council and the Home Office itself, *Workers Power* nails five of the gutter press's blatant lies.

● **"Asylum seekers are swamping us on a small island."** – Fact: Britain's population would be falling but for immigration – in fact, the number of people in Scotland is already dropping. In almost every decade since the first UK Census in 1801, more people have permanently left Britain's shores than have settled here.

● **"We're taking more than our fair share."** – Fact: Among the 15 European Union states in 1991 Britain ranked only 10th in terms of the number of asylum applicants relative to size of population. Less than 2 per cent of all the world's refugees and asylum applicants were in the UK; more than 70 per cent of all displaced people remained in so-called "Third World" states.

● **"Britain is a soft touch for an army of scroungers."** – What would spur someone to come to Britain for the staggering sum

of £37.77 a week? This is what a single asylum applicant currently receives if she or he is "fortunate" enough to receive a basic support package from the government's National Asylum Support Service (NASS). The figure is 30 per cent below the woefully inadequate level of income support, equivalent to the official poverty line. The government moved with the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 to strip those who lodge "late" applications of any right to claim support from NASS or any local authority Social Services Department.

● **"Asylum seekers? Criminals more like."** – A report from those notorious bleeding hearts at the Association of Chief Police Officers shows that level of criminal behaviour is no higher among asylum applicants than in the general population. But asylum applicants have proved to be more vulnerable to violent crime according to the same analysis.

● **"Bogus asylum seekers are draining millions from public services."** – No doubt some people who apply for asylum in Britain do not meet the criteria of the 1951 Geneva Convention, which Tony Blair wishes to abandon. But if "economic migrants" are seeking refugee status this reflects the fact that immigration controls have blocked



any "legal" entry to Britain. The statistical data compiled at the bequest of the Home Office indicates that immigrant workers generally make a net contribution to the Treasury's coffers. In 1999-2000, for example, "migrant workers" in Britain paid £1 billion more in taxes than they received in service provision. Over the course of the past 50 years especially, immigrant workers have been crucial to the NHS and a wide range of other public services.

The case for refugees and immigrants should not rest primarily on the basis of evidence about their real or potential contribution to a capitalist economy. They are among the foremost victims of a new world "disorder".

Western states wage wars to maintain the dominance of a comparative handful of global corporations, even as those same states try to block entry to Western Europe and North America to the relatively privileged minority who make it to "the gates of the west".

The Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers (CDAS) has been circulating an open letter opposing the media offensive against refugees. This is available online at [www.defend-asylum.org](http://www.defend-asylum.org) or by post from CDAS, BCM Box 4289, London WC1X 3XX

## VICTIMISATION OF TRADE UNIONISTS

Steve Godward, firefighter

A leading militant in the Fire Brigades Union, Steve Godward, of West Midlands FBU, was victimised during the recent strike action.

The bosses accused Steve of industrial sabotage during the dispute.

At an appeal hearing, the bosses hastily withdrew several of their claims. But on one issue – Steve removing appliances from the fire station – they stuck to their guns and have now sacked Steve.

Steve was ordered, by one of the managers now involved in sacking him, to make phone calls to other stations asking for the appliances in

question to be removed for safety reasons. This was verified by several firefighters who were given the same order by the same boss.

This is a clear victimisation of a man dedicated to the cause of the working class who tried to prosecute the FBU strikes vigorously.

The fact that Labour councillors voted against his appeal should come as no surprise. Steve was a Socialist Alliance candidate in the last general election. As Steve put it: "As you can see this is a political tuck up."

So far the FBU have been silent on Steve's case. After all, the union had suspended him from office on trumped up charges prior to the start

of the dispute.

This should alert every FBU member who took strike action in pursuit of a democratically agreed wage claim that Gilchrist and the executive are back-peddling. If they reach a settlement that does not include the reinstatement of Steve and other victimised militants, then the special FBU conference on 19 March must throw that settlement out.

- Pass a resolution in support of Steve. Contact Steve on 07958 215584 25 for a model resolution.
- Send protests to the Fire Chief, Mr Knight at: [CFO.Knight@wmidsfire.gov.uk](mailto:CFO.Knight@wmidsfire.gov.uk)
- Send any resolutions passed to the FBU Executive Council

Candy Udwin and Dave Carr, Unison

Candy Udwin and Dave Carr of London Unison have both been expelled from the union. In a letter to Dave and Candy, who both work at University College London Hospital, Ian McLaughlin, secretary to the appeal panel, said that their expulsion is immediate.

We are asking every Unison member to e-mail Dave Prentis, general secretary of Unison, [d.prentis@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.prentis@unison.co.uk), asking him to reverse this witching-hunting decision by the Blairites in the union.

All Candy and Dave did was to fight against privatisation. The decision taken by Unison is now going to open a serious rift

between the rank and file activists and incumbent leadership.

Dave Prentis when becoming general secretary promised to end the infamous Rule 1 investigations, which were used by Blairites in Unison to attack the left. Dave Prentis and the NEC still have a chance to reverse this decision.

What Unison has done will give a green light to the employers to pick off our branch officers and the people who keep Unison going.

We urge every Unison member to campaign for the reinstatement of our key activists.

● For more info go to [www.unisonunitedleft.org.uk](http://www.unisonunitedleft.org.uk)

## Get active, stay active, join Workers Power

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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Last month saw thirty million people march against war.

Across the globe the working class is coming together. Globalisation has forced workers and activists from different countries and continents to unite, work and fight together. There have been huge Social Forums of resistance in Europe at Florence, in Asia at Hyderabad and in South America at Porto Alegre.

Together with the LRCI, which is represented on the European Social Forum, Workers Power campaigns to bring these movements together into a New

World Party of Socialist Revolution (a "New International").

This is a momentous time, one of those times when the true nature of the world we live in suddenly becomes clear to millions. Capitalism is revealing itself to be a system of war, conquest and global inequality. By taking to the streets against the war, hundreds of thousands of people are showing that they have seen through the lies.

Take the next step and join Workers Power. Phone us on 020 7820 1363 or e mail us at [paper@workerspower.com](mailto:paper@workerspower.com).

### JOIN US!

- I would like to join the Workers Power group
- Please send more details about Workers Power

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### Manifesto for World Revolution



The new draft programme from the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. Price £1.50 (including p&p). Available from Workers Power, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to Workers Power