



# 'New economy' is a dangerous illusion

By Bob Archer

CAPITALISM'S representatives have launched an ideological campaign based on false promises of a "new economy" offering endless growth based on technical developments.

US president Clinton and British prime-minister Blair were busy at the meeting of world political and business leaders at Davos in Switzerland at the end of January urging them to embrace the "new economy".

In fact these promises are empty air. The problem is that leaders of workers' parties and unions are hypnotised by this ideological offensive which tends to sow confusion about the real nature of capitalism and disarms the working class.

The theory peddled is that a hectic development of new technology, particularly in the "weightless" sphere of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can enable capitalism to overcome its contradictions and evade the banal necessity of extracting surplus value from the working class.

French socialist minister Christian Sautter compared the dynamism of the "new economy" with Europe after Gutenberg invented modern printing. Sitting next to him at Davos, Wolfgang Zillesen of the business consultancy Arthur D. Little promised that a second industrial revolution was underway.

But every indication is that the persistence of capitalism social relations prevents the development of technology from benefiting the majority of mankind.

Even leading businessmen admit that the headlong pursuit of new technology will lead to even greater inequalities between rich and poor.

Unlike the first industrial revolution, modern technological development has so far had a devastating effect on society, throwing armies of human beings out of work and leading to a huge increase in the parasitism of capitalist banks and finance houses.

It also leads to even more voracious competition, resulting in the destruction of industries, sackings and speed-up and longer working hours under worse conditions.

All the claims for the "new economy" were mocked at the beginning of February by a call from the Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) for the pen-

sion age to be raised - a clear and simple example of social regression.

The headlong application of new technology threatens the environment in a variety of ways which shout out for human society to intervene to prevent a catastrophe which is already underway.

Technique develops in an interaction with social relations, which are the essential part of the matter.

(Many of the inventions which pioneered the industrial revolution, such as mineral engineering and the steam engine, were made in Germany, but could not at the time be brought to fruition because the outcome of the political struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was the victory of the local princes and grand dukes.

These techniques could only be exploited in England because the bourgeoisie under Oliver Cromwell had successfully defeated royal absolutism in the Civil War.)

The evidence that there is any substance at all in the "new economy" is extremely tenuous. Clinton's main argument is the persistent boom in the United States over the last ten years. But the same ten years saw increasingly violent crises elsewhere in the world. While the Japanese economy has suffered a decade of stagnation, 1997 saw the outbreak of an enormous and destructive crisis in South East Asian economies some of them deeply involved in "new technology".

In fact, if the worship of e-commerce and the "new economy" prove anything, it is that capitalism is trying to flee from the "old technologies" because it cannot overcome the contradictions inherent in them.

All the time the tendency is for the rate of profit (which is extracted from the working class) to fall.

But, whatever they claim, it is the process of capital accumulation involving labour which underlies all the capitalists' wealth. The more they try to avoid this the more they intensify the problem.

The American boom is based for one thing on a huge movement of capital into the US, which is consequently enormously indebted to the rest of the world.

At the same time it rests on "clawing back" gains that the working class made over decades and centuries. The boom in America accompanies a real deterioration in social life. That part of the US work-



**CHECHENS in Britain led a march through London at the beginning of February to call on Russia to withdraw from Chechnya. The march was organised by a number of socialist groups in the UK**

ing class which is still working has to a great extent been transformed into "working poor". Almost 40 per cent of them are in casual employment and in marginal, unskilled jobs.

This is a boom tied up with an enormous expansion of stock-exchange prices. As one

industrialists admitted very anonymously recently, "we can no longer fulfil what the stock market expects of us". There are real anxieties about a collapse in share prices, but the magic roundabout is whirling round too fast for anyone to get off.

It is time to launch a counter-offensive against the ideology of the "new economy". All those who stand for Marxism should pick up the challenge and fight in the workers' movement and the anti-capitalist movement to show how people are duped by this kind of propaganda.

Workers' International to Rebuild the Fourth International is entirely ready to take part in such a campaign and will any case carry on a struggle to unmask the deliberate mystification spread under the guise of the "new economy".

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## SUPPORT THE AUSTRIAN OPPOSITION AGAINST THE EXTREME RIGHT

Demonstrate outside Austrian Embassy in London 19 February

The National Civil Rights Movement, Anti Nazi League and the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism call upon you to demonstrate your support for the alliance of oppositionists in Austria. They are making their voice heard against the inclusion of the extreme right Freedom Party in the coalition government, and are planning a massive demonstration in Vienna on 19 February.

6.30 p.m. Saturday 19 February  
AUSTRIAN EMBASSY  
Belgrave Mews West, London, SW1.  
Nearest Underground: Hyde park Corner

# WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!





**Supporters of Ilhan Yelkuvan in London supported the international campaign with a rolling hunger-strike.**

## Ilhan released from solitary confinement

ILHAN YELKUVAN, a member of the Turkish communist organisation DHKP-C, has managed to have his solitary confinement in jail in Hamburg lifted.

He maintained a hunger strike for over sixty days until his cruel treatment by the German authorities was changed.

On 2 February the German authorities announced that Ilhan would be transferred to another prison and share a cell with two other Turks. He will be allowed to work and enjoy the same rights as other prisoners.

Ilhan, who was jailed on trumped-up charges over the shooting of a member of the MHP (Grey Wolves) fascist party in Wilhelmsburg in Germany, had been placed in solitary confinement because he chose a political defence of his organisation at the trial.

Judges decided he should be completely isolated from other prisoners in case he influenced them politically.

This was after they had disqualified one of Ilhan's lawyers from defending him on unstated grounds.

Ilhan started his hunger

strike, a fast till death, on 30 November 1999.

Supporters throughout Europe engaged in rotating hunger strikes in solidarity with him. Twelve Turkish and Kurdish prisoners in Germany joined his action. Eleven DHKP-C prisoners in France and Belgium joined week-long hunger-strikes in his support and more than a thousand political prisoners from several political parties in Turkey refused food for two or three days in solidarity with Ilhan.

A motorway on the German Dutch border was for a while blocked by DHKP-C supporters and the Goethe Institutes in London and Holland were briefly occupied.

The DHKP-C conducts an armed struggle in Turkey against the government but members in Western Europe live and work peacefully in their adopted countries.

Nevertheless, DHKP-C and its predecessor Devremci-Sol were among Turkish and Kurdish organisations banned by the German government in recent decades.

The ban on DHKP-C was

confirmed by CDU (conservative) minister Manfred Kanther in 1998. (Kanther's party is now been shaken by accusations of massive corruption).

Behind unfounded accusations that the DHKP-C resorts to gangsterism and terrorism lies the German state's fear of an organisation which openly advocates the abolition of capitalism.

Ilhan's struggle against solitary confinement was a matter of principle. Solitary confinement was intended as a weapon to gag him politically and is in any case a cruel and inhuman punishment which should be repugnant to all socialists.

The British government is planning, in its proposed new terrorist legislation, to ban political organisations which have links with groups prosecuting armed struggles abroad.

Despite many and deep disagreements with DHKP-C, Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International supports its civil and political right to freedom of expression and organisation and congratulates them and Ilhan on the improvements in his conditions that have been won.

# "A real and widespread pressure for change"

**DOT GIBSON reports  
on the NCRM  
in conference**

THE first conference of The National Civil Rights Movement (NCRM) was held in Sheffield on 22 January.

Explaining that the NCRM is "independent of Government and government agencies", the constitution adopted by the conference continues: "The NCRM is a nation-wide network of individuals and families dedicated to the struggle for racial justice and human rights. In particular (it) is committed to challenging the discriminatory criminal justice system and institutional racism in all its forms."

The Macpherson Inquiry, to investigate the racist killing of Stephen Lawrence and the police handling of that tragedy proved to be a turning point in the way millions of people respond to racism. More important, the fight of Stephen's parents to reveal the attempted cover-up of the racist nature of the killing and the despicable role of the police gave confidence to other black families.

We have seen the brave and stubborn battle of conference chair, Sukhdev Reel for justice in the death of her son Ricky; and the Menson family whose untiring work revealed and brought to justice the racist murderers of Michael. Among others who testified to the conference were: the families of Christopher Alder, Liban Ali, Farhan Mire, Satpal Ram, Anthony Green, Edgar Fernandez, Zaeem Hussain, Robert Hammil and the Families of those killed in the Hillsborough football disaster.

The conference passed a resolution of greetings to the march in Derry commemorating those who were killed on Bloody Sunday. This would be delivered by a delegation from the NCRM.

There was a report from the French organisation *Collectif de Lutte Contre Les Violences Racistes et Sexistes*: their speaker welcomed the establishment of the NCRM's European co-ordination, and said that she could do no better than explain a particular case to reveal the whole problem.

A Mauritian woman was stopped and taken to the police station by Paris police who said they suspected her of drunk driving. When released 24 hours later, she contacted her husband who took her to hospital where she remained for ten days after an operation to remove a "present from Paris". This was the description given to a piece of

rubber truncheon left in her vagina by the four policemen who raped her.

Michael Mansfield QC reported that the NCRM:

"...was born out of meetings in West London in the autumn of 1998. Large numbers of mainly black families who had suffered similar injustice...gathered together to share their experiences and to prepare their representations for the second part of the Macpherson Inquiry. There was a strong grass roots consensus that the momentum and the solidarity being displayed should not be dissipated and fragmented. In the past, individual, case campaigns have played an important role, but the Lawrence case has touched a wider public, both black and white, with a singular message of hope and empowerment. There was at last a real and wide spread pressure for change."

The black families could collectively take their struggle into their own hands, instead of being isolated and represented by others. That has been, and is, the change which is expressed in the NCRM. The constitution adopted at Sheffield states:

"The NCRM believes that to be effective the individuals, families and communities directly affected, must guide the struggle against racial oppression and injustice. The NCRM will support campaigning activity organised around individual cases of racial injustice only if this takes place with the participation and leadership of the families affected. The NCRM will seek to include and encourage the participation of a wide and diverse range of people."

Those nominated for the national committee were required to give a written reason for their wish to take part. This committee has not been elected to become a talking shop. Every member of it has a particular responsibility. That this is now a burning necessity, was explained in the report given by Suresh Grover and Ruggie Johnson.

Since the launch of the NCRM in March 1999, over 250 families and individuals suffering racial harassment, policing problems or discrimination had been advised; active assistance had been given to 60 individuals; and support groups had been created with 23 families seeking justice.

They detailed ten more families who will receive similar support immediately, and said that many more were expected during 2000. Official figures show that there was an increase of 75 per cent in the number or racial incidents reported nationally from

March 1998 to March 1999. By the summer of 2000 a pilot telephone help line will be launched in the north of England, followed by a national help line as soon as possible.

A resolution was agreed stating that it is "a central task of the NCRM to support community self-defence where appropriate, and to build local united front bodies to defend communities under attack from racism and fascism", and another agreed to "work with the Coalition for Asylum and Immigration Rights".

Over the last year NCRM has provided speakers to over 90 meetings, and organised its own meetings in London, Sheffield, Plymouth and Manchester. A national database of recommended lawyers, legal representatives and advice agencies has been drawn up.

The importance of strengthening the "alliance between families, lawyers and activists" was a central theme in the preparation of the conference. A London-wide Criminal Justice Forum met and formulated major resolutions which now inform the work of the NCRM in its fight against state attacks on democratic rights.

Immediately the NCRM campaigns for the implementation of the recommendations of the Macpherson Report, which are in danger of being tailored by the Labour government to remove the most critical of these recommendations. There will be a national meeting in London on 19 February to assess the results of that Report one year on.

It is no secret that state security provides governments with the intelligence for legislation to plug every "gap" in the law which could give the majority some democratic rights over the minority who have the power. We have already felt the lash of "Thatcher's laws" and now we are witnessing "New Labour's laws".

Mansfield referred to "Perhaps the most remarkable of all recent proposals that present a direct attack on freedoms of assembly, association and speech". This is the new Prevention of Terrorism Bill which extends the definition of terrorism to: "the use, or threat, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause of action which involves serious violence against any person or property, endangering the life of any person or creates a serious risk to the health and safety of the public, or a section of the public".

"So, it seems" said Mansfield, "if you do it purely for the money that's fine, you escape this definition. Mainstream organised robbery provides less of a threat? Other organisations however will be proscribed as a result of this definition, and speaking at a meeting where a member of a proscribed organisation is also speaking, as John Wadham of Liberty has recently pointed out, would be an offence under Clause 11 (3b) of the Bill, attracting ten years imprisonment."

This legislation is aimed at the developing mass movement which the state and New Labour fear more than anything. Mansfield summed up:

"So long as the voice of opposition remains isolated and insular, it can be marginalised — once it has the mantle of a mass movement, it can occupy centre stage and concentrate the minds of authority on the changes that will make a difference to the victims of injustice. Herein lies the strength of the NCRM."

# Opposition to Health cuts grows

## NHSSF must organise National demo

**By Simon Burgess**

THE CAMPAIGN for a new hospital in Crawley England received a welcome boost when the Mid-Downs Community Health Council (MDCHC) voted to reject plans by the local Area Health Authority (AHA) to close key hospital services in the town. The proposed cuts will mean the loss of up to 120 beds, the closure of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Accident and Emergency Services (A&E), and the Maternity unit.

The Health Authority wants to transfer a reduced form of these vital services to the East Surrey Hospital (ESH) at Redhill which is already overstretched and has some of the longest waiting times in the country. The increased distance that patients would have to travel means lives will be put at risk.

MDCHC voted to refer the cuts package to the Health Secretary, Alan Milburn thus placing the decision squarely with the New Labour government.

But as many members of the Crawley Hospital Campaign have pointed out, Blair's government has closed more hospitals and spent less on health care than the Tories did. The forthcoming

delegate conference of the NHS Support Federation must take a decision to organise a national demonstration against the continuing round of health cuts.

The success and popularity of Crawley Hospital Campaign has worried the local Blairites — at a

recent Labour Party selection meeting where a member of the campaign was seeking nomination for the forthcoming local council elections, they mobilised to defeat him, and subjected the campaign treasurer, Christine Earnell to racist insults.

## Reclaiming the Struggle

**The Lawrence Inquiry one year on**

**A one-day conference organised by the Institute of Race Relations, The Monitoring Group and the National Civil Rights Movement**

**The Macpherson Inquiry report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence was the result of years of campaigning by families who had lost their loved ones to racist violence and had been failed by the criminal justice system. One year on, those families are still fighting for justice. This conference will look at the present 'post-Macpherson' context and aim to answer the questions which the anti-racist movement now needs to address: How can we reclaim the momentum which the Lawrence Inquiry started? How can we rebuild a political framework for young black people? What is the future of the anti-racist struggle?**

**Sat 19th February 9am-5pm**

**Conway hall, Redlion Square London WC1**

**Contact: Reclaiming the Struggle c/o Monitoring Group 14 Featherstone Road Southall Middlesex UB2 5AA or call: Jagdish on 020 8843 2333**



# The Irish worker – compiled by John Steele

## No Surrender of weapons

For many people it is a remarkable surprise that the New Stormont administration in the north of Ireland has lasted even eight weeks without a major hiccup. Given the underlying contradictions it can be nothing but a government that stumbles from crisis to crisis until the next massive social upheaval blows it away altogether.

Now, as we go to press, it seems inevitable that the issue of decommissioning of IRA arms and explosives will force the British government to suspend the Stormont Assembly indefinitely.

David Trimble, the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party and the First Minister at Stormont, has already written a post-dated resignation which he will undoubtedly be made to activate by his party's leadership when it meets on 12 February. In these circumstances Blair will have no choice but to

resort to direct rule from Westminster.

For many in the Ulster Unionist Party the demand for the surrender of guns by the IRA is only another attempt to have Sinn Fein thrown out of its government positions and to smash the whole concept of sharing power with nationalists.

But, also, many Protestants who accept that the old days of Unionist one-party rule have gone forever cannot understand why an organisation that is, in its public statements, "committed to peaceful methods", wants to retain its weapons.

And this reflects the dilemma facing the leadership of the Republican movement. There can be no question but that Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness and the other Sinn Fein leaders want the IRA to disarm.

In the intensive talks with Trimble that led to the

formation of the executive, Adams and McGuinness were saying that they could achieve decommissioning once the devolved government was up and running. All their current talk that the IRA must decide in its own time hides the sharp and growing differences in the Republican movement on this issue.

Irish newspapers are continually giving reports of automatic gunfire, particularly in border areas, and claiming that this can only be the IRA testing and training with weapons and that the intention was to advertise the organisation's opposition to any form of decommissioning.

There can be no doubt about the widespread resistance to surrendering weapons among IRA volunteers, and there are fears of further defections to the breakaway Real IRA if the leadership should override their views.

This opposition was underlined last summer when the IRA quartermaster, who comes from the a border county, organised the importation of a large number of guns from the US. These included new automatic weapons and sniper rifles.

Socialists should be resolutely opposed to the demand that the IRA hands in its guns and explosives to the state. To argue and fight for this opinion is not to condone the methods of the IRA which increasingly concentrated on actions which spread terror among communities—bombs in main streets, shopping arcades, and railway stations and the intimidation and killing of civilians who worked for sections of the state.

Over the years of the current stage of the nationalist uprising, as the political position of Irish Republicanism became clearer and Sinn

Fein confirmed that it sought a deal with the representatives of British capitalism, the IRA moved away from a community-based movement to an elitist force. It was not capable of defending the Catholic working class from the loyalist killer gangs.

But neither this criticism of the methods of the IRA, nor the fact that Sinn Fein does not have a socialist programme, should mean support for the handing in of weapons.

The demands for their surrender are part of the propaganda onslaught that says the removal of partition and the victory of socialism can be attained through exclusively peaceful and parliamentary methods.

The British state and the enemy class live in fear of an armed organisation which is part of a movement around a programme of

socialist demands. This has been confirmed in the recent release of state papers which show how in 1969 the Dublin government worked to split the IRA and create the Provisionals which they hoped would be an anti-communist foil against an "organisation committed to the establishment of a workers' Republic".

With the support of nationalist politicians, north and south and the Catholic clergy they successfully gave birth to a movement which they could not control.

To hand over the IRA's arsenal at the insistence of these forces of reaction would be a further setback.

The nationalist communities should demand that the weapons are placed under their control and should be used only with the agreement of their leaders after open debate in the community.

## The lessons of the civil rights movement in the north of Ireland

By Jacky Vance

IN HIS SPEECH at the first conference of the National Civil Rights Movement, held in Sheffield on 22 January, Michael Mansfield QC drew parallels between the state's horrific abuses of civil rights in Britain and its regime in the north of Ireland.

He explained that all the attacks on human rights—the violence, discrimination and prejudice; the institutional racism; the wanton use of stop and search powers by the police; the beatings and deaths in police custody; the rigged convictions—were, "in no way the monopoly of the black community and can be echoed by white families in Ireland."

This connection with the situation in Ireland provides a very positive and encouraging element for the building of a movement that brings together all those fighting against the injustices of the British state machine and it is to the credit of the initiators of the Civil Rights Movement that they have made this link.

From its early meetings representatives of Irish campaigns for justice, such as members of the family of Robert Hamill, have been made welcome and given a platform. Robert Hamill, a Catholic, was kicked to death by a loyalist gang in Portadown while RUC officers watched.

There are, of course, many differences between the situation in the north of Ireland and Britain. From its inception in 1921 the six-county state discriminated against Catholics, denying them many of the basic democratic rights and backing-up vicious, repressive legislation with an armed police force and B specials.

In the developed capitalist country of Britain the ruling

class, through its dominant position in the world markets and the super-exploitation of its colonies, was able to make concessions and was forced to grant many of the democratic rights that are now under attack—the right of assembly; the right to a trial by jury; the right to strike and picket; the right to a hospital bed and medical care when ill, etc.

There has, of course, always existed widespread discrimination and police brutality against black people. Now it is part of the wider onslaught on civil liberties which includes the removal of many things that were taken for granted, (a home help, a public library close to home, affordable public transport, etc.) and which is a sharp reflection of the crisis of British capitalism.

As yet the situation is still not the same as in the north of Ireland. In the relationship of class forces in Britain large sections of the working class contin-

ue to demonstrate their strength and the long tradition of liberalism continues to produce radical lawyers and solicitors fighting for democratic rights.

And, above all, the fight for civil rights in Britain doesn't threaten the very existence of the state and its structures as it did—and will continue to do—in the north of Ireland.

But there are many signs that some of the lessons of the struggles for civil rights in Ireland are being replicated in Britain. Michael Mansfield, incidentally, drew attention to this when he commented on a report, "Searches in London", which disclosed that during 1998/1999 black people in London were six times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people.

This compares with five times more likely in the previous year. So despite the killing of Stephen Lawrence and the pledges to combat institutional racism within the Metropolitan Police, the

harassment and maltreatment of black people by the police is increasing.

The Macpherson Report into the Lawrence killing cited this definition: "the term institutional racism should be understood to refer to the way that the institution, or organisation, may systematically or repeatedly treat or tend to treat people differentially because of their race. So, in effect, we are not talking about the individuals within the service, who may be unconscious as to the nature of what they are doing, but it is the net effect of what they do."

Mansfield was complaining that, despite all the promises and the legislation, the situation of black people on the streets was getting worse. But, increasingly, it is clear that no matter how many laws are passed they will not remove the racism inherent in a police force defending decadent capitalism and its social crisis.

In the struggle of the Civil Rights movement in the north of Ireland which began in 1968 all the demands were, eventually, formally conceded. But, in practice this was shown to be virtually worthless particularly for working-class Catholics. The repressive and discriminatory laws were replaced by legislation and a changed situation which severely diminished the gains.

The main Civil Rights demands were:

- One person, one vote in local council elections. In these elections the vote had been confined to householders and their spouses. When the franchise was widened to include everyone of voting age in a house many councils produced nationalist majorities but they were stripped of all meaningful powers and left with the libraries, parks and leisure centres. Control of education, health and housing was given to government-appointed quangos.

- Abolition of the Special Powers Act. This legislation—the stated envy of the South African apartheid regime—was replaced by the even more repressive and anti-democratic Emergency Powers Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act.

- Abolition of the B Specials. This paramilitary police force, an adjunct of the Unionist Party, was replaced by the Ulster Defence Regiment which had to be disbanded because of the anti-Catholic actions and links with the loyalist killer gangs and was itself replaced by the Royal Irish Rangers whose members continue to demonstrate that they see their role as an armed, anti-Catholic force.

- Ending of discrimination in employment. All the Fair Employment legislation has produced little change. The Catholic unemployment rate is currently two-and-a-half times that of Protestants.

An early lesson of the Macpherson Report is that, just as in the Irish struggles, the British state, in the face of the growing campaign for democratic rights and against police brutality, strengthens its centralisation and authority, making it difficult to implement the "good intentions" of the liberal legislators.

The B Specials were disbanded but in their place came the Royal Irish Rangers, complete with British army uniforms and weapons. This unit proudly displays an Orange Order banner.





# Open Letter to "Socialist Outlook" from Workers International Press

## Support CATP London Assembly Candidates

# Some are more equal than others!

WE ARE writing this Open Letter because we oppose, and hope to change your mind about your decision not to support the London Underground workers' candidates in the Greater London Assembly elections. Instead the London Socialist Alliance (LSA) is standing candidates against them.

Like you, we in Workers International welcomed the formation of the LSA, but we believe such an alliance should complement and not replace the actual developments in the working class. When the LSA heard that tube workers had decided to stand candidates in the London elections, the only proper decision was to give them united support. That would have created the conditions for building the sort of unity workers want us to build.

The Labour Party came into existence one hundred years ago because of the desire of a mass working-class movement for a political voice. Today New Labour has disenfranchised the working class completely. We are at a historic turning point when workers begin to look for political solutions to their problems and address the burning need for a new party of the working class.

Such a party cannot be based on an alliance of left groups. It can only come out of a mass movement encompassing broad expressions of discontent and action with the working class at its head. This movement is now coming into existence as thousands of campaigning groups, acting on a myriad of issues, begin to take on an "anti-capitalist" character, and link up with sections of the working class who are in irreconcilable opposi-

tion to New Labour.

It is in this context that we understand the decision of the RMT tube workers. They have already gone on strike three times, and now see the chance to continue their fight against the Blair government's privatisation plans by standing candidates against New Labour in the London elections.

What better way to achieve a real alliance of the socialist groups with the working class? What better way to challenge every reactionary policy of the government? For the breaking up and handing over of London's tube system to private contractors — profit before people — is the essence of this New Labour government.

The most important task of an alliance of socialist groups is to go forward to develop alliances with workers, assisting them to gain political independence. By opposing the tube workers, the LSA acts to obstruct that political independence. It is disappointing that *Socialist Outlook* has fallen into that trap.

At LSA meetings, your members have described the tube workers' decision as "important", i.e. of great significance. They have not explained why they consider this to be so, but they have announced that nevertheless they will not support them because:

the CATP has only a single-issue policy and the LSA cannot subordinate its comprehensive socialist platform to this;

it is sectarian for one group of workers to take forward their own struggle thus preventing the whole working class from being represented; transport workers are not the only ones under attack by the Labour govern-

ment — the National Health Service (NHS) and not London Transport is likely to be at the centre of the election;

the CATP does not have the funds, or the organisation for a professional campaign, whereas the LSA has these things.

It is pure abstraction to say that the CATP's policy is only a "single issue". This takes no account of the history and content of the campaign. The CATP was founded by the RMT Regional Council (representing 7,000 London Underground workers) some 18 months ago and soon had affiliations and a membership throughout the London labour movement.

Trade unionists, old age pensioners, environmentalists, Labour Party and some other political activists attend its central London meetings and fight for its aims in their own organisations and districts. Although the CATP is independent of the RMT its elected officers are also leading London Underground workers on the RMT national executive committee and divisional council.

It is of course true that London Underground workers are not the only ones under attack, and the crisis in the NHS is a major issue. **But it is the London Underground workers, leading a major section of a big union, who have decided to take their fight against this government into the election.**

This is a historic decision, opening up the whole question of the link between the trade unions and the Labour Party. Working-class independence does not develop in a uniform manner. (The "referee" blows his whistle and the game starts!). The real



The CATP banner on the plinth of Nelson's Column during a march in London

movement of the working class does not take place according to a plan drawn up by socialist groups.

Last year six sacked Thameside care workers broke the bounds of their industrial struggle by standing against New Labour in the

local elections. Today the leaders of the 7,000 London Underground workers decide to do the same. They do so under the watchful eye and with the support of other sections of workers.

This so-called "single issue" therefore centralises all the struggles and can play a major part in galvanising the working class, enabling it to take its rightful place at the head of the developing mass movement. Yet you tell the tube workers they are sectarian because they are only opposing the privatisation of their own industry!

You would not stand candidates on the CATP slate unless there was agreement to print "London Socialist Alliance" on the election material and the ballot paper, and to adopt the LSA's "comprehensive socialist platform". This platform, you say, shows that it is the LSA which represents the interests of the whole working class.

First a socialist programme is not, and cannot finally be, one that is drawn up by committees, or even conferences of the socialist groups and then presented as representing the whole working class. A working-class programme can only be derived and developed in the actual experiences of the working class itself as it builds its independence and strives for its own party.

London Underground workers are entering the election, not only against privatisation, but for their own plan for the industry. This is how a socialist programme is developed in and through working-class action.

Second, the possession of a socialist platform is no guarantee against sectarianism. To ascertain whether a socialist group is sectarian, it is necessary to know its relationship to the working class. Through the CATP, the London Underground workers invited socialist groups to join their fight against New Labour in this election campaign.

For years the so-called "left"

has been wishing for just such a possibility to break out of isolation. Now, when the tube workers open the way, you do not simply fail to grasp the opportunity, you positively reject it. You insist that it is up to these workers to join the LSA! Workers may be, and are, facing a crisis of leadership, but they will not suddenly jump into bed with a political group just because that group proclaims itself to be their true representative.

You even opposed the formula put forward by the Socialist Party representatives in the LSA (which we supported). Knowing that the CATP had decided to place its 11 candidates on the PR list, and not wishing to oppose the tube workers, they proposed that the LSA stand its candidates in the 14 constituencies to avoid a clash. In this rejection you were joined by the Socialist Workers Party, Workers Power, Alliance for Workers Liberty and the Communist Party of Great Britain.

You seem to consider that "all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others"! One of your representatives said that he was sure the CATP (unlike the LSA) would not have the resources for a professional campaign. The tube workers would probably be forced to drop out of the election.

If you really thought that the tube workers had such difficulties, why didn't you propose that the LSA assist them? Any socialist organisation worthy of the name would not be competing with workers, but would be assisting them.

However, do you really think that leading RMT members cannot organise?! Do you really think that it is not possible for London Underground workers to raise the resources for their campaign?!

We can only conclude that you are becoming so mesmerised at finding yourself in a larger circle of left groups that you are losing sight of the working class.

# Brazil solidarity with Kosova miners

**BRAZILIAN** trade unionists have responded to the appeal for solidarity made by the Trepca miners of Mitrovica in Kosova.

The appeal of the Trepca miners' union, dated September 1999, pointed out that the rich mineral deposits in Kosova had been "social property" under the Yugoslav constitution. However, all Albanian employees were locked out of their jobs in 1990.

The appeal continued: "Throughout these last years our trade union has tried to protect miners' property and assert the right of miners to return to work. For several years this protest was directed at the Milosevic regime. Now we have a problem — French KFOR troops have occupied our mines and metal processing plants and refuse to allow us access..."

"We have drawn up plans to resume production...but unfortunately the International Community does not seem to recognize our rights and is treating us as tenants in our own property".

The full text of the appeal is printed in WIP no 17, October 1999.

The response to the appeal from Brazilian trade unionists reads:

*To the Miners' Union of Mitrovica and to the Trepca miners*

*We join the campaign you propose:*

1. To organize delegations between trade unions all over the world and the miners' union there, in order to obtain fuller information for our brothers and sisters and to get a proper picture of the current position of miners in Kosova

2. To distribute the existing appeal in trade union publications and among our membership

3. To organize material aid for the militant miners and their families, including collecting donations

4. To use every conceivable opportunity to influence leading figures in politics, the trades unions and society in our country to work for the miners to regain access to their work places and control over the same

We await further information in order to know precisely how we can start to help you

Jose Maria de Almeida (member of the national executive of Central Unica dos Trabalhadores do Brasil - CUT-BR), Junia Gouveia (member of the national executive of CUT-BR), Dirceu Travesso (member of Sao Paulo state executive committee, CUT-SP), Francisco



de Assis Cabral (member of the leadership of executive committee of CUT-SP), Antonio Donizetti Ferreira (President of the Sao Jose dos Campos engineering union, CUT-BR), Joaquim Aristeu (Director of the food workers' union of Sao Jose dos Campos, CUT-BR), Jose Carlos (President of the drivers' union of Sao Jose dos Campos,

CUT-BR)

Maria Aparecida de Silva Lamas (Director of the postal workers' union of Sao Jose dos Campos and Campinas), Sirley Gomes (Director of the chemical workers' union of Sao Jose dos Campos and Jacarei)

Antonio Ribeiro Duarte (member of the united federation of Brazilian oil-workers)



# Notes on capitalism and crime

In these notes on current work in hand, NICK LEE summarises some of the thoughts of a Marxist social scientist.

SEVERAL things are happening at the same time, it seems to me, and the concept that brings it all together is Istvan Meszaros' notion of 'destructive self-reproduction'. His idea is that capital, in order to survive, has to constantly tear up the things it has produced (cities, communities, elaborate social organisation, etc.) in favour of barbarism. As regards crime, capitalism increasingly has to break its own rules of civilised conduct, upon which it rests, in order to secure its own reproduction.

1. Legal and illegal capital are increasingly indistinguishable. Criminal money in the strict sense is less important than 'flight capital' escaping to deregulated offshore funds using the same channels of communication and mechanisms as criminal money-laundering. At the same time the banking sys-

tem increasingly opens itself up to criminal funds. Organised crime is no longer a deviant route to capital accumulation (or as Daniel Bell once expressed it, the 'queer ladder of social mobility'), it is rather one of the main methods of operation of capital in general.

2. Organised crime becomes itself less a peripheral irritant than an increasingly important political and economic force — as a section of the bourgeoisie. The Russian mafia comes to mind. Unlike the old 'robber barons' of the early stages of capitalism, these people do not invest in productive capital but the opposite — asset stripping and salting away fortunes into western banks where they will function essentially as fictitious capital seeking to reproduce and expand by speculation. M-M' replaces M-C-M'.

3. In the increasing areas of

the globe that imperialism has devastated and cannot develop into stable regions, criminal gangs and criminal economies play an increasing political role as the revival of 'archaic' forms of power and authority, such as personal loyalty to a leader. We witness the rise of warlords like Burmese drug dealers, the late lamented Arkan in the former Yugoslavia, Hussein Aided in Somalia, and so on. These people may rule on behalf of capital or stabilise those areas vacated by capital. They blur into more stable military dictatorships, etc. Their military forces may be a mixture of privatised mercenary armies, arms acquired through drugs dealing and supplied by organised crime, and fractions of traditional armies (as with Arkan). There is plenty of information on this subject in Mary Kaldor's recent book 'Old and

New Wars' (Blackwell, 1998).

4. The working class itself, particularly the permanently unemployed and poverty-wage sectors, and peasants and small farmers too, develops a new relation with criminality. Frederick Engels' view of crime as brutalisation and at the same time primitive rebellion, and the view of crime in early capitalism as social resistance held by E.P. Thompson and others, now become important again but in a more complex way. Crime is an option as work and an income source. Local communities often benefit indirectly from drug sales at the very same time as drug dealers organise a reign of terror and armed force. Work and job search at the bottom of the ladder (often sub-contracting) intermixes criminal and non-criminal elements—drug dealing, mini-cabbing, smuggling, gardening, robbery,

building work etc. all combined in a single 'job' for many young people now such that the two become indistinguishable and interdependent. This contradictory relationship between crime and work, crime and resistance is also evident on a wider global level. Thus the Kosovo Liberation Army did indeed defend the communities against Milosevic and his thugs but at the same time it is also true that they were heavily involved in drug dealing and have substantial connections with international organised crime.

5. Finally the 'war against crime' conducted by the state becomes a futile 'war' against increasingly larger sections of capital itself. The relative autonomy of the state is strained to breaking point. To wage war on crime, the state is increasingly put in the position of waging war on both capital and labour. This is resolved by on the one hand attempting to turn all institutions into crime control institutions (the banks on the one

hand and local communities on the other—neighbourhood watch, crime watch, etc.) but at the same time falling over backwards to emphasise the 'deviant' nature of organised crime as aliens, evil underworlds, etc., while in fact business as a whole is increasingly engaged in such activities. This produces a crisis for criminal justice agencies. They become increasingly authoritarian but at the same time the object of their focus blurs. The state cannot wage war on capital as a whole—it depends on it! Likewise at the other end of the spectrum policing the poor becomes increasingly the management of the 'dangerous classes' rather than the pursuit of criminals in the old sense. But the myth has to be maintained that it is just this. Hence the row over stop and search, which is useless for catching criminals but a necessary tactic in policing the poor and unemployed youth as a general group. The one has to appear as the other.

## Wave of money scandals rocks politicians

by Bob Archer

FINANCIAL scandals have engulfed a number of bourgeois politicians in and out of government.

German Social Democrats are implicated in accepting favours from West LB, a leading bank, while investigators following up illegal payments to the conservative CDU leader Helmut Kohl now find a link to former French socialist president Mitterrand and discredited finance minister in the Jospin government Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

Strauss-Kahn had to resign last year when his name cropped up in connection with improper payments by administrators of a student welfare fund.

In Israel, the One Israel coalition, led by the Labour Party, is accused of channelling donations through special non-profit-making organisations to evade state controls on election financing.

Meanwhile both president Ezer Weizman and former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu have been accused of using their public office for personal gain and circumventing laws on party finances.

The former Russian president Boris Yeltsin secured immunity for prosecution before he handed over to acting successor Vladimir Putin. However, Swiss investigators are anxious to interview a close accomplice of Yeltsin's, Pavel Borodin.

Borodin is implicated in creaming off money that belonged to the Russian government and stashing it in Swiss bank accounts. Instead of going to modernise Russian industry, the money is used to refurbish the Kremlin, which is a huge piece of real estate in its own right.

The contractor involved, the Kosovar Beghjet Pacolli, has

been accused of bribing Yeltsin and his family by underwriting their credit cards.

Meanwhile in Britain, wealthy businessman Geoffrey Robinson is suffering a lot of unwelcome publicity following attempts to conceal huge deficits at a company he is connected with. Robinson made an undeclared loan to right-wing minister Peter Mandelson to help him to buy property in a fashionable part of London.

Robinson is prominent because of his part in forging a 'business-friendly' image for Tony Blair's 'New Labour' party, a move which involved sidelining left-wingers in the party, diminishing the right of members, branches and affiliated trade unions to influence party policy and shedding references to socialism and public ownership in the party's rules.

The question is asked how much money from business went in to manipulating the Labour Party so that Blair could prevail.

### Corruption

The corruption of politicians who act as mouthpieces for capitalists and oppose the interests of workers and others is intimately linked with the character of capital in the imperialist epoch.

A case in point is the German arms manufacturer Thyssen Industrie AG. Early in the 1990s the firm sold 36 armoured personnel carriers to the Saudi government. In their tax returns they claimed that they had had to disburse DM220 (about £70 million at today's rates) million in bribes to secure the deal.

The German tax authorities are realists. They do not object to German firms bribing politicians to secure deals of this sort. However, they do insist on knowing who got bribed when, what for, and how much they

actually got. If they know all this, they allow the corruptor to write the bribe off as legitimate expenses.

The claim made by Thyssen AG saved the firm about DM150 million (about £50 million) in taxes.

On this occasion Thyssen Industrie AG refused to supply more than sketchy details about the person bribed and the services performed for what was one of the biggest bribes in the history of German exports.

German journalists suspect they got away with it because the then finance minister, Heinz Schuesser, was at the time a member of Thyssen's supervisory board.

When the actual middle-man came under suspicion for other reasons, the whole business started to come unravelling. This was what triggered the investigation which is now ruining leading figures in and around the CDU and even further afield.

Big industrial concerns like Thyssen are in no way immune from the contradictions of capitalism. Above all they are affected by the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. The more they wriggle and manoeuvre to overcome this fundamental trend, the more they themselves push against the concepts of 'legality' established by capitalist society itself.

The same tendency was at work with the scandal in Britain, which erupted with renewed vigour when it was revealed that the management at TransTech, the firm of which Geoffrey Robinson had been a director, had been concealing a huge claim from a customer, Ford. Ford wanted a lot of money because TransTech failed to deliver parts.

Corruption and crime have roots deeply embedded in the social relations of capital. To remove the corruption, the capitalist system itself has to be uprooted.



## Producing for the black market

MAJOR tobacco companies deliberately produce vast amounts of cigarettes which will be smuggled into countries to avoid bans or high taxes.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, part of the US Center for Public Integrity, claims that major producers invest millions in producing cigarettes for smuggling into Africa and into Asian countries like Afghanistan, Bangla Desh, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos,

Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines and China.

Recent reports indicate that a huge proportion of the loose cigarette-rolling tobacco smoked in England is bought in one small town in Belgium and smuggled into the UK, crossing the Channel on ferries and through the Eurotunnel. Tobacco companies supply the wholesalers knowing full well the products are intended to evade UK taxes.

Tobacco is only one commod-

ity which is produced in order to be smuggled, nor is this a new departure for capitalism.

In 1841 the British government (defending free trade principles) successfully waged war on China and forced her to abandon a ban on opium imports from British-owned plantations in India.

Investigators estimate that during the 1990s cigarettes to the value of nearly £500 million were smuggled into China.

**WORKERS INTERNATIONAL PRESS is keen to encourage discussion on the issues raised on this page.**

**NICK LEE'S notes seemed particularly important to us because against bourgeois accounts of the origins of crime they clearly relate the phenomena of crime and social decay to the most intimate, essential area of capitalism itself, the process of the reproduction of capital.**

**However, Workers International Press would like to raise a question about the "notes". Surely it is nothing new for capitalists to "collide with their own standards of civilised conduct"? The process of primitive accumulation was accompanied by massive slavery and genocide, where "enterprise" and piracy were often**

**the same venture.**

**Marxists in the earlier part of the last century, analysing the onset of imperialism, concluded that the question of working class revolution was urgently posed because humanity faces progress to socialism or deepening barbarism. The last century provided more than enough experience of the latter. What, therefore are the specific questions that need attention today, apart of course from the necessary restating in today's experience that crime arises out of capitalism and that the bourgeoisie itself goes to great lengths to conceal this fact?**

**Send your comments to: Workers International Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 4ZS, UK, or email wirfi@appleonline.co.uk**



## Letters to Workers International Press

### No sanctions, no bombing and no delinking against Iraq

ON 22ND JANUARY 2000, the Greater Manchester Coalition Against War and Sanctions on Iraq held a national co-ordination meeting. The chairperson of the meeting Colin Rowat, from Cambridge University, attempted to stifle the discussion and separate the issues of the bombing and sanctions on Iraq. The reason for this is that the organisation the chairperson represented, The Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq (CASI), opposed the US/British sanctions but not the bombing of Iraq on the grounds that: "Just look at how many people the sanctions have killed, one maybe two million and look at how many the bombing has killed, only about one thousand." Further to this CASI is not opposed to military sanctions on Iraq and therefore opposes the right of self-determination of the Iraqi people. To take these positions is a gross act of support for imperialism. How could the US and British governments keep sanctions on Iraq without the use of the navy and airforce? Sanctions can

have little meaning outside of the almost continuous bombing campaign and the stopping of aid ships to Iraq. Regardless of how many bombs have been dropped (and it is many more than Rowat would have us believe)—sanctions only exist because of the military aggression. Between 16 and 19 December, 1998, US and British warplanes dropped more than 1,000 bombs and missiles on Iraq. Many of the bombs, which were and are dropped, use Depleted Uranium that increases the devastation and human misery in the area and neighbouring countries. The issue here is whether economic and military sanctions should be de-linked, and allow Washington, perhaps through some UN body to enforce military sanctions. Such a position blames the victim not the aggressor, since December 1998 until the end of September 1999, the US and British dropped 10,000 tons of explosives. (Information taken from the International Action Centre in New York).

Do Iraqi people including the women and children have the right to defend themselves against this bombing or not? Does Iraq have the right to fire back? Anyone who wants to

save Iraqi lives must say yes! This use of military sanctions also means that the US and Britain can prevent pencils, batteries, X-ray machines, ambulances, computers and even enriched powdered milk, which all supposedly could be used in warfare, from reaching the Iraqi people. Meanwhile the bombing destroys houses, roads and water supplies.

The recent changes by the Clinton administration have not been to end economic sanctions on Iraq—as some are reporting. Iraq refuses to accept weapons inspectors because they are not monitors but are CIA agents. Scott Ritter, a leader of an UNSCOM inspection team, resigned in August 1998 and revealed the CIA's role in January 1999. He said, "On our team are nine covert operatives from the CIA's covert activities branch." International Action Centre.

Instead of telling Iraqi people not to defend themselves we should support initiatives like campaigning to break the sanctions, make direct links and assist directly the hospitals, schools and communities in Iraq. We should salute the thousands who marched in Baghdad on 17 January to protest at US/British policy. Demonstrators came from the USA, Spain, African and Arab countries. Some later visited hospitals,

schools and universities and took much needed aid.

How can anyone, including CASI, think it is better for the Iraqi people to die by one act of genocide instead of another act of genocide? We should be linking with all those in this country abroad who want to support a growing movement against sanctions and war on Iraq.

Hussein Al-alak.

### Jospin like Schroeder

BOB Archer's article on Germany (WIP 20) said that German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder was carrying out a "massive but hidden attack on the working class".

You could say the same about France's "socialist" leader Lionel Jospin. He, too, must attack workers' rights and conditions, but cannot do so openly (he remembers what a great opposition the plans of his predecessor aroused).

Jospin pretends to be the workers' friend but all his policies make life worse for them.

People were glad to see a legal 35-hour working week. However, many are now worse off because of the changes.

Now the government has made a great health reform in France. At last we have Couverture maladie universelle

(CMU)—universal health care. Anyone who is ill can go to the doctor or the hospital for treatment.

But the government unfortunately "forgot" to provide any money to pay for this. They are even closing hospitals and clinics that are not "efficient" as they say.

Of course the nurses and doctors are forced to strike because they do not have what they need to do their jobs.

Daniel Carton, Paris

### Party leadership

I welcome Dot Gibson's "contribution to the discussion" (WIP 20 January 2000) and hope it will provoke thought and further articles on the need for a new party of the working class.

Towards such a discussion I would like to make a point of clarification.

In the second paragraph, fourth column of the article, Dot says: "An international and centralised democratically-organised party led by the working class and its socialist allies is needed..."

Although it is true that the working class can and must form alliances with socialists to found the new party, once that party exists there is no longer "an alliance" as such.

The party has members,

not "workers and their socialist allies". No doubt the leading committee will be comprised of members with different experiences, e.g. workers and intellectuals, but that is no longer "an alliance", it is a party leadership

Balazs Nagy

### Impressive Resolution

Enclosed is \$20 for at least five additional Draft Resolutions. I found it very impressive and would like to put it in the hands of former IWP comrades and sympathisers with whom I have contact.

I am seriously thinking, if I am up to it, of attending the Third Congress. I'll write to you further about this, but I intend to renew my passport in the meantime. Maybe Herb will attend this time too.

Please send the Resolutions by return mail if possible. Your comrades are doing a wonderful job. Thank you.

Pauline Lewin, Philadelphia

**Send your letters to: Workers International Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 4ZS Email: wirfi@appleonline.net**

# Croatians bury Tudjman's nationalist party

by Charlie Pottins

CROATIANS, who interred President Franjo Tudjman amid state-promoted "national mourning" at the end of 1999, have buried his right-wing nationalist Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) party under a landslide electoral victory for the opposition alliance led by "reformed Communist" Ivica Racan and his Social Democratic Party.

In a 75 per cent turn out, voters in the January parliamentary elections gave Racan's Social Democrats and their Social Liberal allies more than 56 per cent of the vote, and nine out of eleven electoral districts. Smaller opposition parties with which the alliance intends to work gained another 16 per cent. Leaders of the HDZ were reportedly stunned by the size of their defeat.

The HDZ's nemesis continued in the first round of presidential elections on January 24, their candidate, former Foreign Minister Mate Granic conceding defeat after early results showed him trailing third, with 21.5 per cent of the vote, behind 65-year-old Stipe Mesic, Yugoslavia's last president, who had gained 43.64 per cent, and Social Liberal leader Drazen Budisa, with 29.79 per cent.

These two face a run-off on February 7, but whichever wins, both are already committed to alliance with Racan's new government.

Tudjman and his HDZ had ruled Croatia from independence in 1991, imposing their will on the country's institutions and media, conspiring with Serbia's Milosevic to carve up Bosnia and Herzegovina, and enriching themselves while "ethnically cleansing" Serbs.

Claiming a monopoly on patriotism and denouncing opponents as traitors, the HDZ government embarrassed its Western backers by shielding war criminals and continuing its grip on parts of Bosnia, where it collected Croat nationalist votes to outweigh working-class opposition in Croat cities like Zagreb, Split and Rijeka. This time neither the patriot nor "expatriate"

ploy sufficed. Nor did personal smears against Racan, or scares that his victory would mean a "return to Communism". Only in Vukovar and the Krajina, which suffered most from Serb nationalist aggression, was the HDZ able to keep its vote, by claiming credit for regaining Croat lands.

Elsewhere, having seen the HDZ's arrogant flag-waving covered worsening corruption, unemployment and poverty, with returning soldiers facing the dole, the mass of people, as well as democratic intellectuals, decided it was time for a change. "The people have spoken," said Social Democrat leader Racan, adding: "We were aware of the citizens' feelings. We'll do our best to justify their confidence."

Croatia's election result was welcomed in Bosnia. "The political situation in the region is better than it was yesterday", commented Bosnian central government co-chairman Haris Siladzic, who had been declared persona non grata by the Tudjman regime. Mirza Hajric, an adviser to President Izetbegovic said it was "good news for Bosnia and Herzegovina... With a new government we should have more in common." Tuzla region MP Sejfuiddin Tokic, deputy head of Bosnia's Social Democratic Party, hoped it would encourage Bosnians to vote for "pro-European, multi-ethnic parties" in municipal elections due in April and in general elections in October. In Serbia, opposition parties said Croatia's election results offered hope for change throughout ex-Yugoslavia. Serb refugees from Croatia were optimistic that the new government would make it easier for them to return home.

Under Croatia's constitution, and with some constituencies having to re-vote because of alleged "irregularities", it will be at least a month before the new leaders can take over. They are not optimistic about what they'll find. "Of course we have a program of political and economic change," said Ivica Racan, "But we'll have to see what the real situation is with the budget and everything else. It will be much

worse, I think."

The economy is in depression, unemployment is well over 20 per cent, there is a budget deficit and \$10 billion national debt, and the state pension fund from which almost a million Croatians are entitled to draw is pretty well bankrupt.

Young people seeing no future under Tudjman's corrupt regime were emigrating in droves. Now Croatian workers, pensioners, and youth want changes, but so do the imperialist governments and banks, and their requirements will be bound

to clash with working people's aspirations.

The Clinton administration is hinting there may be loans, providing Croatia does as it is told. Social Democrat Racan fears voters' expectations are too high.

He says people tell him "we know it will be difficult for you, and that you must change many things in Croatia, but don't change yourself." The Social Democrat leader says he can promise "honest government, at least". Vowing to follow a "modest and moderate" programme,

he says his priority will be to revitalise Croatia's economy, and has proposed a 17 per cent cut in government spending.

Croatian workers will not object to the government selling off Tito's holiday villa on Brioni, which Tudjman had made his own, or cutting subsidies to the nationalist mafia in Hercegovina. But such steps are unlikely to satisfy the foreign banks.

"We're really entering a period of instability," said Damir Matkovic, a television journalist. "It's a sort of paradox, but real

freedom has come. And the problems the HDZ is leaving are so deep and complicated you can't solve them quickly or without real pain." But whose pain, those who suffered and sacrificed already, or those who enriched themselves from corruption and war?

The Workers International must congratulate Croatian workers on their victory over the nationalist Right; and warn them that, as in Britain when the Tories were replaced by Blair's "New Labour", their real struggle has only just begun.

## Victory for sans-papiers

from the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)

Efforts to unionise by a group of immigrant workers in the US were undermined when their employer fired them and decided to "tip off" the Immigration and Nationality Service (INS).

But now the workers have received \$72,000 in compensatory damages in a settlement between the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the operators of the Holiday Inn Express in downtown Minneapolis, USA.

Though they still face deportation the "Sans Papier's" victory aids others in the "secret" work force.

The newest champions of organised labour giggle a lot. They also blush mightily at the newfound attention and the prospects of travelling to Chicago soon to appear on a popular Spanish TV morning talk show broadcast worldwide.

"I think its 'Despierta America' (Wake Up, America)", Reyna Albino, 24, says almost apologetically before hiding her

face in her hands.

Reyna and her three cousins — sisters Estela, Evertina and Rosa Albino — might seem to some like unlikely American heroines. They are undocumented workers (Sans Papiers). They don't speak English.

They clean toilets and hotel rooms at wages that would insult most American adults. They represent the "back-of-the-house" workers — the open-secret work force of chambermaids, kitchen cooks and waterboys who for generations have sustained the USA's restaurant and hotel service industry.

On Thursday 8th January 2000, the four women and five of their former co-workers received \$72,000 in compensatory damages in a settlement between the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the operators of the Holiday Inn Express in downtown Minneapolis.

The hotel had fired the workers and reported them to the Immigration and Naturalisation Service shortly after the workers voted to form a union and begin contract negotiations.

### Freedom & Justice for Samar & Jawad

**We attach details of a forthcoming vigil and public meeting in support of Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh, Palestinian political prisoners wrongly imprisoned in British jails.**

**Further details available from our website, <http://www.freesaj.org.uk/>**

**On Thursday 17th February there will be a Candlelit Vigil opposite Downing Street. The vigil will take place between 3.00-5.30pm. At the vigil the 200,000 signatures from the Palestine & Lebanon Petition will be presented to Prime Minister Tony Blair by a special delegation from Palestine.**

**After the candlelit vigil there will be a public meeting at the House of Commons (Room 14) Westminster. The meeting will begin at 6.00pm and go on to 8.30pm. The speakers at the meeting are as follows:**

**Dr. Haider Abdel Shafi: Head of the Palestine Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, Dr. Eyad Sarraj: Secretary-General of the Palestine Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights (a founder of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme), Tony Benn MP, Family Members, Gareth Pierce: Defence Lawyer**

**Freedom & Justice for Samar & Jawad Campaign  
BM Box FOSA, London WC1N 3XX**

The settlement is the first of its kind since agency officials pledged to give undocumented workers more protections against workplace abuses. Local employment lawyers believe the settlement will embolden steps to protect such workers nationwide while forcing employers to exert

more care in who they hire.

The EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) got involved after Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union Local 17 filed a complaint accusing the hotel of retaliating against the workers for organising.



**Uttar Pradesh power sell-off**

# Determined action protects power jobs

By Bob Archer

POWER workers in the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh have forced a delay in moves to prepare their industry for privatisation and won guarantees that jobs, conditions and trade union rights will be protected.

Thousands of workers were jailed when they struck against plans to 'corporatise' the Uttar Pradesh State Electricity Board.

Backed by the World Bank, the state government wants to break the board up into separate generation, transmission and supply businesses. This restructuring is seen as a prelude to full privatisation and is opposed by the majority of workers in the industry.

(The move is similar to tactics used to privatise British Rail in the teeth of opposition from workers. Looking back, trade union activists in Britain report that the decisive moment, which caught rail workers off guard, was when the network and the various activities like engineering, track maintenance and running the stations were hived off

into separate entities.)

Some 90,000 power employees were on strike for more than ten days because of lack of consultation over the future of the industry. There is no doubt that there is massive opposition among the workforce to privatisation and the consequent speed-up and jobs cuts. Previous privatisations have also been used to limit trade union rights and even de-recognise unions.

Those arrested included union leaders A.K.Singh and Shailendra Dube. The state government sacked many of the strikers and sent army engineers in to staff power stations. Scabs were also recruited to replace those sacked and arrested.

The strike was nevertheless effective and the state experienced electricity and water supply cuts. Power workers all over northern India held work stoppages to protest over the sackings, and international protests were mobilised by the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), representing 20 million members worldwide.

The strikers only agreed to return to work following negotiations at the end of January. Strike leaders 'hoped that the Administration will honour the feelings of its employees' on the subject of corporatisation and the government agreed to release all imprisoned workers immediately.

It is in fact likely that the break-up of the board will be deferred for a while, union sources claim.

All court actions against strikers were withdrawn and wages have been paid in full and continuity of service protected.

It is agreed that there will be no retrenchment of any employees. All the various categories of casual and contract labour have been included in this guarantee. Conditions of service will be at least equal to present provisions.

The current pay negotiating system will be maintained, preserving collective bargaining in the industry.

Agreements reached with unions before the dissolution of the Electricity Board will also be complied with after restructuring.

Pensions and other such payments due to workers will be guaranteed by the state when restructuring takes place.

Trade unionists everywhere will watch with lively interest to see if the Uttar Pradesh workers have really preserved their jobs and conditions through this bitterly-fought struggle. No doubt the World Bank and Uttar Pradesh government, supported by the banks who want to get their hands on the electricity industry there, will think up a new line of attack shortly.

A significant phenomenon is the much bigger public profile of the ICEM, who produced a stream of email and other information about the dispute from their office in Brussels.

Reinforcing the international bodies grouping trade unions in a particular industry is a natural response to the increasingly international activity of capitalist firms and banks.

A strong international organisation of militant trade unionists in all countries and all trades able to initiate solidarity action across frontiers is still a vital necessity to strive for.



Karl Liebknecht

## Fury over Liebknecht-Luxemburg ban

LEFT wingers in the German Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) have protested angrily about the party leadership's acceptance of a police ban on this year's commemoration of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

The two founders of the German Communist Party were murdered in January 1919 by counter-revolutionary paramilitaries working with the German army.

The anniversary is always marked by a graveside commemoration and march in Berlin which intensely annoys the authorities.

During the late 1920s the demonstration was often banned, but workers were able to hold the commemoration despite police violence.

Even in 1934, after the Nazi takeover, workers defied the SS and brownshirts to attend a commemoration.

This year, however, the party leadership yielded to pressure from Berlin's city senator for home affairs, Werthebach, to cancel the demonstration.

Werthebach is hated by left-wingers in Germany because, as a former Verfassungsschutz (political police) officer he has a record of spying on socialist organisations.

Munich members of the PDS condemned the chair of the Berlin PDS, Petra Pau, for her behaviour over the question.

Not only did the PDS leadership accept the ban on the demonstration, they joined together with the police to send demonstrators home. Leading local officials who made the long journey from Munich to take part in the demonstration angrily asked if the PDS leadership was seeking to become an organ of social control in the former east Germany.

The PDS leadership is revising the party programme to jettison embarrassing references to socialism. There is considerable opposition to this among the party membership, but so far no voice has been able to unite this opposition into a viable force.



Rosa Luxemburg

# Japanese dockers defend centre

JAPAN'S Ministry of Labour has announced an amendment to the legislation covering dock labour. At present additional dockers are supplied when needed by the Port Labour Security Centre, a public office which provides registered dock workers.

Under the amendment, stevedoring companies will be allowed to dispatch their own men, by-passing the Centre. The Centre will be eliminated and 130 workers employed by it will be sacked.

The All Japan Dock workers' Union is opposed to this move as it will lead to a deterioration in working conditions and a reduction in the number of dockers.

The union has organised a series of one-day stoppages and a demonstration and rally in Tokyo. The union General Secretary, Akinobu Itoh, can be reached on Fax +81-3-3733-8825 or E-mail aki-itoh@peach.plala.or.jp for more information and messages of support.

Below we reproduce the resolution the union carried opposing the amendment

January 18, 2000

Resolution to Oppose to the Adverse Amendment to the Dockers' Act

The Ministry of Labour has informed us of their views on amending the Dockers' Act. The contents are considerably different from what was being deliberated by the Port Labour Committee of the Central Employment Security Council over the course of a year since June 1998. Furthermore, the Ministry is unilaterally demanding that we approve the proposed amendment during a single meeting with the Port Labour Committee on January 20. We object strongly to such coercion

by the Ministry of Labour.

A report by the Port Labour Committee, which had deliberated on a system that would allow for smooth, flexible permanent workers accommodations among stevedores, reads that such system "must be operated under the involvement of a public entity (Port Labour Employment Security Centre) in the interest of ensuring proper adjustment of labour demand and supply and of eliminating the entry of malevolent labour supply businesses." Although we did not assent to this report, the Ministry's proposed amendment is a worst case scenario that removes the requirement of an involved public entity, allows stevedores to engage in the dispatching business, and calls for the elimination of the dispatching business of the Port Labour Employment Security Centre, which currently operates the dispatching of dockers.

The proposed amendment by the Ministry of Labour legalizes the stevedores to mutually share dockers, which is illegal under the current law, and allows stevedores, whose work type under the Worker Dispatching Law cannot engage in the labourer dispatching business, to dispatch workers for business. If this became the case, stevedores will reduce the number of permanent workers they employ and the employment of casual workers will increase. Without the involvement of a public entity, the order surrounding employment will be largely disrupted.

By abolishing the dispatching business of the Port Labour Employment Security Centre, the Ministry of Labour's proposed amendment will result in the layoff of 130 workers employed by the centre. We cannot let the min-

istry propose the layoff of workers at a time when the employment situation is deteriorating.

The proposed amendment by the Ministry of Labour is far from "securing stable labour relations" by deregulating stevedoring business, and the amendment makes it clear that deregulation promotes the layoff of workers including permanent

workers in order to cut labour costs and will result in worse working conditions.

We will unite with our colleagues who work in ports and with those who are fighting against deregulation as a unified front to stop the undesirable amendments to the Dockers' Act. **Central Executive Committee All Japan Dockworkers' Union**

## Dockers defy navy

**Striking dockers in a dozen Indian ports refused to back down or be intimidated last month when the Indian government sent in troops and the navy. Police with canes and batons attacked dockers demonstrating outside the Calcutta Port Trust offices.**

**The dockers were demanding higher wages, rent allowances, and cost of living allowances to help them meet higher prices and fares in the big cities. Their strike hit general cargoes, although the government claimed petroleum supplies were still getting through.**

**The last wage settlement covering all port workers expired two years ago. Unions in the All-India Port and Dock Workers' Federation submitted a Charter of**

**Demands, and in August 1998 the government set up a negotiating committee. But employers were intransigent, offering less than some dockers had already gained, so that in effect wages would be cut. On December 15 the committee broke up, and the unions were workers were told to "take or leave" what was offered them. They gave notice of indefinite strike action as from January 18.**

**On January 18, as the strike began, the government ordered the Indian navy to take over Calcutta and ten other major ports. Territorial army units consisting of military reservists were sent in to do non-technical tasks, and Transport minister Rajnath Singh claimed 50 per cent of normal port work was being done.**



**FPO-Haider out of government!**

# The warning from Austria

## Political lessons of Haider's Advance

WORKERS INTERNATIONAL calls for the widest and fullest possible campaign against fascist participation in the coalition government in Austria.

A flood of protests from governments and politicians failed to prevent the entry of the fascist Austrian Freedom Party (FPO) of Joerg Haider into a government coalition with the Conservative Party (OVP).

The move has already galvanised an active protest movement in Austria. We hope that the further demonstrations called for 19 February will be widespread and powerful (see the advert on page 1).

The leaders of the European Union and the US are furious with Haider because they are trying to project the image of a "new economy" which will bring with it a prosperous and happy society where social ills are overcome by "modernisation". (This is one reason for the threats to refuse to work with him on the part of people who quite happily shake hands with Vladimir Putin or the rulers of Turkey or who supplied, for example, Suharto of Indonesia with military hardware.)

Haider and the FPO give the lie to all this. The party is a successor to the Nazi party and, although it has tried to clean up its image to get into office, its members have a nostalgic view of the Third Reich and a bitter resentment of foreigners. Haider built his reputation by exploiting German speaking Austrians' prejudices against the Slovenian speaking minority in Carinthia.

Such parties are a reminder that even in civilised Western Europe capitalism is a system of social decay and barbarism. The FPO is merely one among a number of neo-fascist organisations with considerable support, like the MSI in Italy and the Front nationale in France. There is a variety of far-right organisations in Germany and among Flemish-language speakers in Belgium, while fascist and racist groups have enjoyed occasional electoral success in Britain.

There are dangerous fascist movements in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Voters give such organisations a chance because they suffer from the effects of capitalism but are not offered the alternative of a working-class movement

with clear socialist aims.

Generally prosperous Austria is worried about the consequences of European unification and the single currency. Capitalist plans for Europe involve slashing social expenditure and intensifying competition. The middle class faces a much harder struggle to prosper in an economy where big banks become ever-more important.

Farmers will continue to suffer as agricultural prices drop and subsidies are reduced.

The huge inequalities between rich and poor nations play a specific role here. Haider exploits Austrians' fears of being "swamped" by foreign refugees.

(Many of the governments which publicly condemn Haider are in their legislation against refugees and asylum seekers stoking up racism among their own people.)

Voters grow disillusioned with a "democracy" where the two main parties share out the benefits of patronage between themselves. They see the corruption of capitalist politicians but do not see an alternative, so they turn to demagogues like Haider whose rhetoric matches their

own frustration.

Clearly more than a series of demonstrations is needed to deal with this situation. Workers International urges all the young (and old!) people who are horrified by the FPO's arrival in government and desperately want to do something to stop it to consider the political lessons.

Protests will have little effect unless the participants start finding ways to solve the lack of an internationalist political party of the working class.

At first this means strengthening the organisations that genuinely stand up for and defend immigrants, refugees, the unemployed and the victims of anti-union laws in the workplace and racist injustice at the hands of the police and the courts.

It also means helping and encouraging ethnic minority groups to organise their own self-defence against racist violence.

It means organising groups to defend working-class and immigrant areas from racist incursions.

Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International urges everybody that can to become involved in this work.



Viennese police turn back demonstrators protesting at the inclusion of the FPO in the Austrian government

## Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International Third congress, London, 17 - 18 June 2000

At our public discussion meeting in London on 31 January, a comrade asked: "I come from a Stalinist tradition. I have come to realise the strength and positive achievements of Trotskyism, but do you have to say 'rebuild the Fourth International'? I think we should say something like 'for a new revolutionary international'. In my country there are many workers' struggles, the Trotskyists are very few, and these struggles are led by other forces. Are you ready to discuss with them?" We are part of the striving of the working class to overcome its divisions and to rebuild its internationalism. We will discuss with and join in the common fight with all organisations in that struggle.

However, the working class cannot jump over the enormous destruction and confusion of 60 years during which Stalin and Stalinism were the "accepted" heirs of the Russian Revolution, simply by making a fresh start. Trotsky and Trotskyists took forward and developed Marxism against the anti-internationalist theory of "socialism in one country" and fought for working class independence from the petty-bourgeois nationalist movements and reformist leaderships. We are not making a fetish out of a number! It is true that the Fourth International is lumbered with a great many "Trotskyist" sects which give it a bad name among workers and serious intellectuals. However, we cannot go

forward, and neither can the working class as a whole, by side-stepping these and many other problems we confront. The fight of the Fourth International to establish working-class independence was never, and is not today, separate from the struggle of the working class itself. It is this that informs all our activity in the workers' movement, and it is the reason why our congress will be "open". We hope that the comrade who put the question and many other workers and intellectuals will accept our invitation to come to it. The main draft resolution for the congress has been published and the "Workers International Press" is open for comments and discussion of its contents (see advert below).

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## Spanish construction workers to strike

SPANISH construction trade unions are to hold a nationwide stoppage on February 24 and 25. The main aim is to force compliance with health and safety laws to reduce the high rate of accidents.

The unions point out that while 12 per cent of building workers suffered an accident in 1993, the figure shot up to more than 18 per cent in 1999.

The industry is booming but workers experience a constant deterioration in their working conditions. They want proper training in health and safety and an end to inaction by inspectors and the government.

However, the main killer is casualisation of the industry and deregulation of working conditions. Well over 70 per cent of construction workers are on temporary contracts and the situation is made worse by the subcontracting chain which has turned

the industry into a real jungle.

Health and safety laws and union agreements are systematically flouted on sites, while workers are often forced to accept longer hours and more intense work. "All this makes workers feel defenceless and makes it practically impossible for them to exercise their rights", strike organisers say.

The unions are demanding that the government regulate working conditions in the industry. They point out that 95 per cent of serious and fatal accidents are among subcontracted workers.

The two unions involved, FECOMA - Comisiones Obreras and MCA-UGT also point out that there will be a general election on 12 March. They pointedly ask all candidates in the election to publicly support the construction workers' demands and defend them in parliament.

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