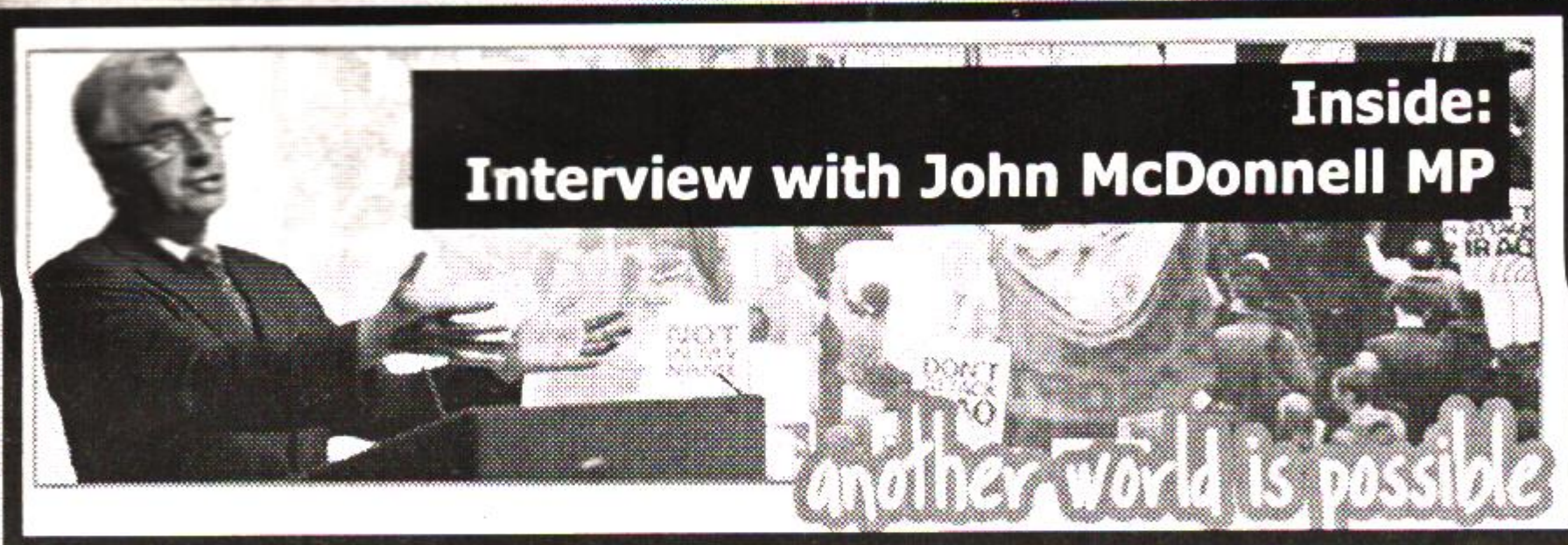


Hands Off Venezuela Conference - Saturday 4th Nov.

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Revolution in Mexico

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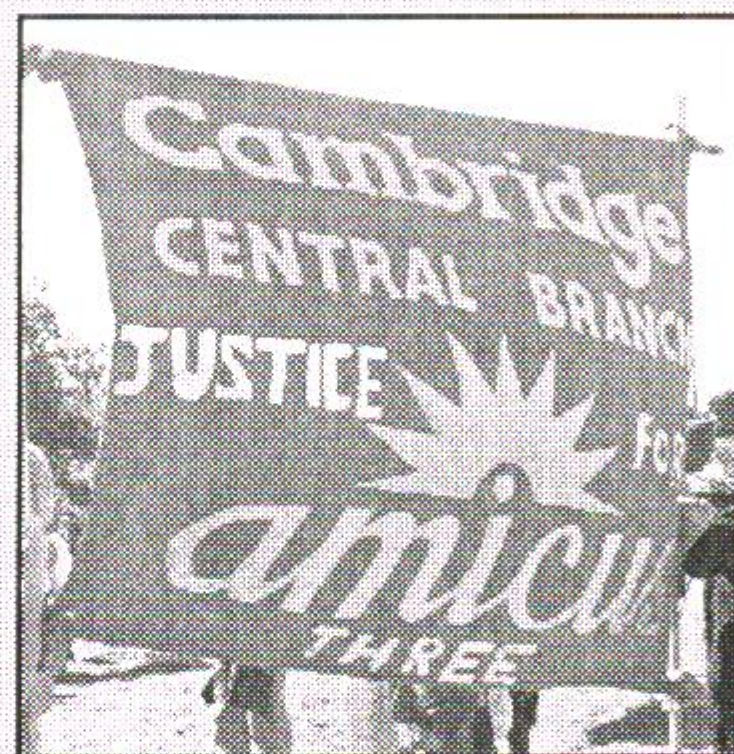
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Hands Off Venezuela 2nd National Conference

Saturday 4th November, 10am - 5pm

**UCU Headquarters
 27 Britannia Street
 London WC1X 9JP**

Speakers from Venezuela:

Francisco Rivero (National Director of Ideology of the Movement for Direct Democracy) Ronny Pante (General co-ordinator of MEI, Movimiento Estudiantil Integracionista)

Other speakers include:

John McDonnell MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Jeremy Dear, General (Secretary, the National Union of Journalists), Ruth Winters, (President Fire Brigades Union), Tony Kearns, (Assistant General Secretary, Communications Workers Union), Gemma Tumelty (President of the National Union of Students) Alan Woods (Author of "The Venezuelan Revolution"), Speaker from the Bolivarian Circles, Speaker from the Venezuelan embassy

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The Deadline for Issue 147 is October 20th

Blair Is History, Socialism Must Be The Future

Blair trotted up to the podium for his final speech as Labour leader to the appropriate strains of James' 1991 hit "Sit Down". Still clinging on to office by his fingernails, Blair's grand finale was completely overshadowed by the backstage manoeuvres in the race for 'the succession'. The Blair era is drawing to close not with a bang but with a great deal of whimpering. The claims and counter claims, by Blairites, Brownites, etc, of plots and coups make entertaining subject matter for newspaper leader writers, but hold little interest for the rest of us. Most working people watching the public school parlour game that passes for politics in the New Labour hierarchy can only shake their heads in disgust at the blatant, unapologetic, and self-serving careerism of these creatures.

The media concentrates on this gossip from behind the scenes. They studiously avoid mention of left candidate John McDonnell. For now they try to ignore him as 'irrelevant', and concentrate instead on Blairite in-fighting.

This is not an accident. The Mail, Murdoch, and co are more than happy to tear shreds out of the Labour Party. The ruling class has used the Labour leadership to serve their ends for as long as they could. The capitalist class is more than happy with the way Blair and Brown have represented their interests. They have no problem with Brown - the myth that he was somehow to the left of Blair has all but evaporated. They do, however, have a problem with the mounting opposition on the backbenches, and, even worse, over their shoulders, the growing opposition of the trade unions and the working class to their policies. A Brown Labour government could not be relied upon as a solid enough base to push through the attacks on the welfare state, and on jobs, pensions, wages and conditions that enfeebled British capitalism requires to maintain its profits. As a result the ruling class and its media are reverting once more to supporting the bosses' first eleven, the Tory Party.

The Tories now consistently lead Labour in the polls. Yet on specific policies those questioned do not support Tory policies, neither those of Blair, nor those of Cameron. Instead they demand troops be withdrawn from Iraq; privatisation be stopped; vital services be nationalised, and generally

support the programme being put forward by John McDonnell's campaign for the Labour leadership. This demonstrates that the only way Labour can guarantee to stop the Tories winning the next election is to adopt socialist policies.

When the media does mention the left campaign it is only to sneer that it cannot succeed. Yet this is a serious challenge. In a poll conducted by the Electoral Reform Society at TUC Congress, 59% of delegates backed John McDonnell. A focus group of Labour supporters convened by BBC Newsnight revealed that he was level-pegging with Gordon Brown. Brown remains the favourite to win with the backing of the mass media and cabinet ministers (but notably not yet Blair himself). Nevertheless the campaign for the Labour leadership furnishes an excellent opportunity for raising and discussing socialist ideas throughout the labour movement.

Raise Marxist ideas

There could be as many as one million people entitled to vote for the Labour leadership. The MPs and Euro MPs get one third of the vote; individual party members get another third; and affiliated trade union members, who all get a vote too, comprise the other third.

Yet there are still some groups who will insist that the Labour Party is a bourgeois party, no different from the Tories. Well some bourgeois party this where rank and file trade unionists and party members get two-thirds of the vote! What are we to conclude? Are the rank and file members of Labour bourgeois? Are the rank and file workers in the trade unions?

Obviously the left's campaign will not have the resources at its disposal that Brown, Reid or Johnson would have. Therefore, trade unionists, Labour Party members and activists around the country should get busy organising meetings, inviting John McDonnell to speak, creating opportunities to discuss the socialist ideas needed not only to defeat the Tories, but also to begin to tackle the problems facing working class people.

Socialist Appeal supporters should support to this campaign enthusiastically. We must grasp this opportunity to raise Marxist ideas throughout the movement.

The programme being advocated by John McDonnell - opposing the war in Iraq; ending privatisation; for trade union rights and civil liberties; the abolition of tuition fees, and so on, would represent an immense step forward on the policies pursued by Blair and Brown. The task of Marxists must be to put flesh on its bones, to take these policies to their logical conclusion.

One of the principal reasons for the existence of a separate Marxist tendency within the labour movement is to act as the memory of the working class. The experience of Blairism has inevitably created a nostalgia for previous Labour governments. An essential part of preparing for the future of the labour movement, once Blairism is finally buried, must be a sober appraisal of the past. For this purpose rose tinted glasses are of little use. We must learn the lessons of previous periods of Labour history, not only the successful reforms, but also the failures, especially the failure to make those reforms permanent.

The most vital lesson is that it is not sufficient to tinker with the capitalist system. We will fight for any reform in the interests of the working class. The central lesson of the whole of Labour history, however, must be that not one of those reforms can endure if the capitalist system remains intact. What the ruling class are forced to give with their left hand they will always snatch back with their right at the earliest possible opportunity. This lesson is more important today than ever. Capitalism cannot afford the reforms won in the past so it is systematically undermining and destroying them. Therefore there is little room for the granting of new concessions. They can still be wrung from the bosses through industrial and political struggle but they will not be long lasting. The only way to guarantee universal free health care and education, full employment, decent pensions and the other advances John McDonnell's campaign is demanding is to take the purse strings of society out of the hands of the minority and place them at the disposal of society. That means taking the commanding heights of the economy into public ownership, and planning them rationally, scientifically and democratically. The struggle to defend or gain any reform must be seen as part of the struggle for the socialist transformation of society. □

Merseyside Firefighters Strike Against Cuts

By Ray McHale, Chair of Ellesmere Port & Neston TUC, (personal capacity)

Around 1,000 Merseyside fire-fighters have now held their third consecutive 8 day strike, with more strikes planned from the 28th September - 6th October. They are striking to resist 120 fire-fighter job cuts, the loss of 15 control staff, and the withdrawal of 4 fire-engines from night cover. They believe that this 10% cut in the work-force not only threatens the lives of the public, but also the lives of the fire-fighters who are left to tackle the fires.

On Friday 15th September 4,000 fire-fighters from all over the country, and several hundred other trade-unionists, marched through Liverpool in support of their Merseyside colleagues. Led by hundreds of Merseyside Fire-fighters and their families, the marcher passed through the town centre, to a rally at St George's Plateau. On the way they received strong public support from office workers, bus drivers and shoppers.

Speaking at the rally local FBU Secretary, Les Skarratts, referred to the fewer than a hundred non-union members who are maintaining the service during the strike. If these people joined the action with their colleagues the dispute would be over in an hour. They all took action in the national pay strike, but now they say they can't strike to defend the service.

The strength of national trade union support was shown by the presence at the rally of Tony Woodley (TGWU General Secretary), Bob Crowe (RMT General Secretary) and Billy Hayes (CWU General Secretary). All expressed their unions' full moral and financial support for the dispute.

Addressing the rally, FBU General Secretary, Matt Wrack made it clear

that the dispute on Merseyside reflected a national situation. The abolition of national fire safety standards has - as the FBU predicted - allowed a number of Fire Authorities to come forward with cuts, under the guise of modernisation. In Merseyside these amount to cuts of £3.5 million. Generally these involve reductions in night cover, based on the fact that they receive fewer calls at night. However, it ignores the fact that more of the calls at night lead to people dying. Fire-fighters will not enter burning buildings unless at least two crews are present, to ensure proper back-up. Less cover therefore means more lives will be lost.

Matt Wrack pointed out that there had already been a dispute in Hertfordshire over proposed cuts, and these cuts had affected the very stations that had been involved in the massive Buncefield Oil Depot fire. Staffordshire were currently balloting for action, and other areas could soon follow. Ruth Winters, FBU National President, made it clear that the national union was fully behind the dispute in Merseyside as part of the national fight against reductions in the service.

With the morale of many FBU members severely dented by the 2003 Pay Dispute it is vital that Merseyside, and other areas, are given the full support of the national trade union movement. □

Donations to the strike fund can be sent to:

Merseyside FBU, The People's Centre, 50 - 54 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, L3 5UN.

Tube Workers Won't Accept More Delays

By A London Underground Worker

London Underground Management and the rail unions have been at loggerheads at ACAS for the whole of September. Six months have passed and still no agreement on this years pay deal, which the unions submitted in October 2005. The unions want a one year pay deal with no strings. Management wanted us to be tied into a 4 year deal and introduce performance related pay for all staff. Management are now insisting that train drivers agree to work later at weekends, following the Mayor's announcement to a change in trains' running times in May 2007, without any regard for staff.

Talks have broken down, the Transport Salaried Staff Association have accepted a three year pay offer of 4% in the first year, and 3% or RPI + 0.5% for years two and three. The Railway Maritime & Transport union and the Associated Society of Locomotive Enginemen & Fireman have rejected the offer until management offer adequate compensation for working later for drivers.

Management are being belligerent and not increasing the compensation of three days extra annual leave for the change in working practices. They have stated that no one will get a pay increase until train drivers agree to changes unconditionally. We know from past arrangements that unless the detail is finalised now, our concerns over staff safety, staffing levels and how staff are supposed to get home, will not be met.

The unions are one step away from balloting for industrial action. Underground workers know that later this year management want to introduce a more draconian attendance and disciplinary procedure. Clearly Ken Livingstone is backing Management's harder attitude. He has already declared that his staff takes too much sickness and must be dealt with! □



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AMICUS Leader Shifts Further To The Right

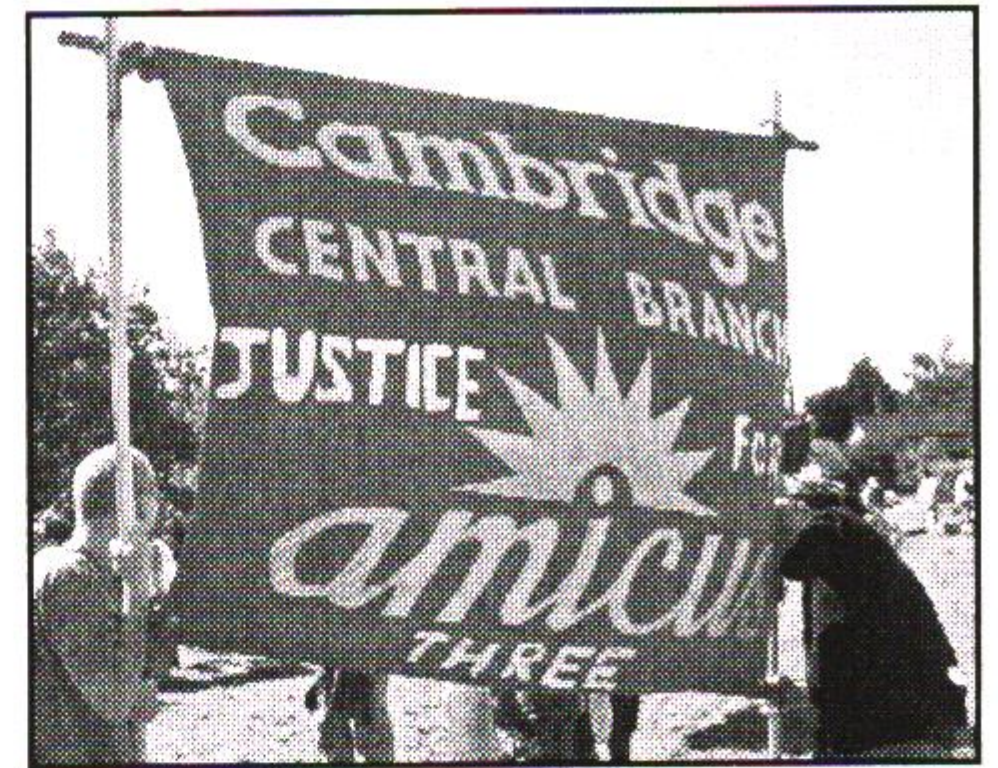
By an Amicus member

At a fringe meeting at the Brighton TUC last month the General Secretary of Amicus, Derek Simpson, announced that John McDonnell, the left wing contender for the Labour Party leadership, was "Some no-hoper driving Brown further to the right". He obviously forgets that only four years ago he was regarded as a no-hope candidate in the contest against Sir Ken Jackson for General Secretary. The following day in the *Financial Times* Simpson announced that "Gordon Brown should take the reins before the turn of the year". His support for Brown contrasts with the support given to John McDonnell's campaign by Amicus Unity Gazette (the Broad Left organisation that backed Simpson for General Secretary), and shows that Simpson is divorcing himself from the left in the union.

His further move to the right follows the attack on the former leadership of the Gazette, who last March were sacked from their jobs in Amicus. The week before the TUC Simpson shocked a family audience at the Burston school strike rally in Norfolk by referring to the three sacked Amicus workers as "w**kers". He accused members of the Campaign for Democracy in Amicus, who are supporting the sacked workers of "following me around the country". Clearly the campaign and the magnifi-

cent support from dozens of branches and shop steward committee's around the country is having an effect on Simpson! At the rally members of the Cambridge Amicus Branch carried a banner that read "Justice for Amicus three". Following Simpson's shocking attack two further East Anglia Amicus branches, in Colchester and Bury St Edmunds, have invited the campaign to speak at their meetings! The pressure will continue to mount on the Amicus leadership now that one of the sacked three has received a hearing date in November for their Employment Tribunal hearing.

In a further incredible attack on members of Amicus staff Simpson has issued 'Notice of termination of contracts' to five men in the union's Education Department who had been used as pay comparators for an equal pay claim by a woman in the same department. One of the five had a heart attack the same weekend he received his letter from Simpson! His action is in defiance of the Sex Discrimination Act and breaks the code of practise on equal pay and only goes to further show the degeneration of any political morals or principles that Simpson once held. Unfortunately a majority of the Amicus NEC backed this move against the staff at the



September Executive meeting, arguing for good governance of Amicus members money.

But at the same meeting the NEC also voted to confirm Simpson's right to stay for life in a union owned house at a peppercorn rent and for which the union also pays his tax of over £40,000 per year attracted by this benefit in kind. This is in addition to lavish expenditure, such as the £15,000 bathroom fitted in the house as well as an inflated salary of £87,000, first class travel and numerous other perks and privileges. The hypocrisy of the situation is obvious!

Any future candidate of the left must stand on a programme of accepting the average workers wage for the members they represent and only legitimate expenses to be paid. Only someone who is in touch with the conditions of ordinary members of Amicus and the problems they face will be prepared to offer a fight to the bosses and right wing Labour leaders. □

Minimum Wage Rise: Too Little For Workers, Too Much For Bosses

By Phil Sharpe

The National Minimum Wage (NMW) will be increased from 1st October 2006. The 22 years and over rate increases by 30p to £5.35 per hour. Workers aged 18 to 21 years and those under training should receive £4.45 per hour, up 20p and all workers aged between 16 and 17, no longer of compulsory school age, should get £3.30 per hour.

Since being introduced on 1st April 1999 at £3.60 per hour the NMW has increased by 49%, average earnings by 38% and inflation by 18%. But the minimum wage remains scandalously low.

Being paid the NMW level still makes people pay Tax and National Insurance! This reduces take home pay for 17 and 18 year olds to about £125 a week. This would be further reduced by the cost of transport to work. Older workers on the NMW suffer similar reductions.

The government estimates that there about 327,000 people in jobs being paid less than the Minimum. 250,000 of those were aged 22 or over. The Revenue & Customs recently published some excuses given by employers for not paying the minimum. These included "but she only wanted £3 an

hour" and "The workers can't speak English".

The amount of the NMW is so low that people with children would have to claim Tax Credits to make up their income to a more reasonable level. These are paid for out of the Taxes of other workers. However if the NMW was paid by employers at a decent level - we demand £8 per hour as step towards two thirds of the average wage - then workers would not have to suffer the indignities of a means test.

However, even at these levels the employers are stepping up their campaign against the NMW. A recent Press Release by the British Retail Consortium blamed the loss of 76,000 retail jobs on the NMW. When pressed to justify this figure on *BBC Radio 4* the spokesperson had to admit that they did not have exact figures and that other factors were to blame including competition from the large Supermarkets who, after all, pay over the minimum.

Many of them are in the retail, hospitality and food production sectors, usually staffed by women who work part time. If the businesses can't afford the Minimum Wage then they should be taken over. □

NHS Workers Forced to Strike Against Privatisation

By Ron Graves, Convenor, UNISON North West Anglia Health Branch, (personal capacity)

NHS workers have been on official strike for the first time in almost twenty years as part of the campaign against privatisation.

UNISON called the strike after workers at NHS Logistics were balloted and 74% voted for strike action. A second one-day strike is planned for 26 September, to coincide with the health debate at Labour Party Conference.

NHS Logistics is the not-for-profit organisation (employing over a thousand staff at five distribution centres) that delivers all the essential supplies in the NHS ensuring that hospitals, clinics and so on have what they need to provide clinical and other services to patients. This includes everything from syringes and bandages to cleaning materials and deliveries are made directly to hospital wards and departments. Under the proposed privatisation a hospital, for example, would have to organise its own internal distribution after goods had reached the site: hardly a cost-effective option. Deliveries to hospitals would be made by German parcels firm DHL (who are incidentally already involved in a dispute with their workforce who are members of the GMB, over pay and job cuts).

NHS Logistics, on the other hand, is acknowledged to be both cost-effective and efficient.

Last year, £3m was returned to the NHS in the form of a "value rebate" and NHS Logistics has received awards in recognition of its successes. Even so, New Labour's relentless drive towards privatisation ignores such evidence in

favour of the mindless ideology of "private = good/public = bad" and is hell bent on transferring all but direct clinical services and staff to private companies. Once that happened, of course, clinical services would follow.

Workers in the NHS are not stupid. They have seen what began as creeping privatisation turn into an open campaign to give away what was once the envy of the world. Even in the last few days, Patricia Hewitt confirmed that there were no limits to the process of privatisation, which she then went on to describe in Orwellian Newspeak as "not privatisation". Few of us in the NHS will be fooled by such cant.

Unfortunately, UNISON, having been driven to approve strike action by the fury of its members, has adopted its usual tactic for diffusing the situation: a couple of days of national protest (in this case strike action) followed by a series of days of action by individual branches. This is nonsense. Calling on branches to organise staff demonstrations and photo shoots for the local press does nothing to build momentum in the campaign, and usually undermines the confidence and will of the members involved, unless it is directed towards a purposeful goal such as further national action.

UNISON should be preparing for such action to be taken by all NHS staff, in conjunction with the other trade unions represented in the health service, to drive home the message that what is happening to NHS Logistics is only one symptom of a national health crisis. □

PCS: Fighting For Jobs, Rights and Services

By Rachel Heemskerk, DWP Essex Branch Secretary (personal capacity)

For over a year members of PCS working in the Department for Work and Pensions have been taking industrial action in a campaign on Jobs, Rights and Services. The strike action and overtime ban have been well supported and caused major disruption to the government. The campaign to save jobs and ensure a good service to those who receive benefits has been a success, both industrially and politically. A Parliamentary Select committee was forced to agree that management had mismanaged the speed that they were implementing changes to the DWP computer systems and ways of working as well as the efficiency changes (job cuts). This and the industrial action taken by PCS members forced management into talks. At the end of July an offer was made to the union. This states there will be commitments from DWP management to work more closely with PCS on avoidance of compulsory redundancies and to hold a joint review

to identify where redundancies may pose a potential future threat. This does not give a commitment to no compulsory redundancies that members were on strike for. It does not stop the job cuts. Later this year there is to be a national campaign that will demand a no compulsory redundancy agreement from the Cabinet Office, which would cross all civil service departments. The national PCS will be holding a ballot of all members on this and there will be a campaign of industrial action. PCS should continue the action in DWP and build it into a national campaign, not stop and hope to remotivate our members again later in the year for a campaign they may feel they have already fought and lost.

There are other parts of the management offer, some of which are an improvement. On managing attendance (sickness) they have offered a wording which commits managers to be a more supportive employer when staff are sick

and allows a 12 months recording period instead of 24 months. However on the recent changes to the human resource policies, many of which attack members working conditions, the union is asked to note but not campaign against them.

The Group Executive Committee believes this offer is the best it can achieve and when it goes to ballot is recommending members accept it. They have said it does not mean an end to the Jobs, Rights and Services campaign, that DWP can join the national union in a full civil service campaign. But members and industrial action cannot be turned on and off like a tap. We need to keep the pressure on management in the DWP for no compulsory redundancies and a commitment to improve the human resource policies. This campaign should be a lead to the united national PCS campaign on no compulsory redundancies. □

How British Capitalism Profits from Migrant Labour

By John Kelly

Under capitalism rent, interest and profit are all different forms of revenue. Yet they all share the same identity: they all result from surplus value extracted from the working class, where surplus value is understood as the monetary form of the social surplus product assumed under generalised commodity production. This social surplus product arises out of the difference between the value of what a worker produces (output) and what he receives as the value of his wages over any given length of time. Even under conditions of capitalist normality, the worker produces the value equivalent of his wages in only a fraction of the time he spends actually working, say over the length of any given working day. Various factors contribute to ensure that this exploitative process is kept hidden or disguised. This brief outline of capitalist relations of production is useful to bear in mind for what follows.

Earlier this year, the construction union UCATT commissioned Northumbria University to examine the growing phenomenon of the use of migrant labour in this sector. The largest group of migrant workers came from Poland, citing high unemployment rates in the home country as a 'push factor' in leading large numbers of Poles to migrate to the UK.

The experience of Polish workers employed in construction in the North East is a tale of woe. The construction industry has always been difficult to regulate, and here the construction bosses are taking advantage of a lack of legal employment rights and using these workers to undermine the existing Working Rule Agreement (WRA) over pay. Around 74% of the Polish workers did not have written contracts of employment, and for those who did, it was found that, though promised good rates of pay and conditions, they discovered the exact opposite on arrival on site. On some wage slips, it was seen that employers had deducted money for accommodation and travel. One migrant worker reported, 'the employer does not pay us our money, when we get payslips they are not the right dates and wages are wrong'.

Around 30% of the workers did not even get a payslip. If this wasn't bad enough, many of the workers were being paid well below the minimum wage and much lower than UCATT WRA rate (which stipulates a minimum £6.77hr for a labourer and £9.00hr for a bricklayer). On one occasion violence was used when some Polish workers showed dissatisfaction over their wages and conditions. They were housed in their employer's accommodation and so when the dispute came to a head, the employer told them to vacate. When they refused men armed with baseball bats were sent to evict them. As the report states: 'this was an indication that certain employers were willing to use violence to get their way and was a clear marker to other workers not to complain'.

There has been much said by our politicians - and media moguls - about the value of migrant labour in bridging the 'skills gap' that we are told confronts British industry. If the experience of Polish workers in the construction industry is a measure, then the real motive appears very different. One way the capitalist class can halt the fall in the rate of profit is by raising the rate of surplus value, either through an increase in the degree of exploitation or by depressing wages. In the absence of the former, the latter is the best option. This is what is happening and poor migrant workers are being used to at least begin the process of depressing wages in general so has to increase the rate of surplus value in general. The immediate solution as UCATT knows is to get migrant workers recruited into the union, unite with British workers and organise resistance. We would add that the union demands workers control of the industry and the expropriation of the bosses in a fight for a socialist plan for reconstruction. □

● [Reference, Ian Fitzgerald: Organising Migrant Workers in Construction - Experience from the North East of England, a TUC publication, 2006. The full report can be obtained from the Northern TUC on 0191 232 3175]

Support Remploy Workers

By Seán McGovern

If Remploy and their paymasters, 'our' Labour government, get their way 64 Remploy factories will be shut down within a year; leaving a rump of 19 factories at the mercy of rapacious asset strippers. This is the greatest threat to Remploy factories since its creation under a real Labour government - namely the post-war administration; and sadly, its dismantling will be at the hands of a regime masquerading under the guise of a Labour government.

Over the past months, and especially since the disgraceful Report from Price Waterhouse Coopers (so dire that the DWP shelved it), we, the trade unions involved in Remploy have mounted a 'Fighting Back' campaign. Our Campaign has witnessed protests outside the DWP in Whitehall; has seen hundreds of Comrades marching in Liverpool; factories up and down the country getting their story into local papers; Paul Routledge of The Mirror has written a very supportive article; hundreds of our Comrades are leafleting and petitioning in their communities. We've written hundreds of letters to MPs, Ministers, MEPs etc; meetings have taken place in Parliament with MPs. We invaded Trafalgar Square earlier this month during the Londoners' Disability Festival. We promoted our Campaign well at the TUC - our GEC Chair, Jimmy Kelly told me it was the most exciting issue at the Congress. At TUC we protested; we held one of the best fringe meetings; and, the Remploy Motion, moved by Phil Davis of the GMB, and seconded by me, Seán McGovern, was received tumultuously.

Our fight is your fight. Our fight is the same fight the RMT have over privatisation of the East London Line; our fight is being fought in NHS Logistics; our fight is the fight workers the world over engage in every day. The fight is against unprincipled governments; governments that are capitulating to the capitalists over the rights of workers. Our fight is against the juggernaut of neo-liberalism, that would see thousands of disabled workers stripped of their jobs, and thrown into an unforgiving maelstrom of 'mainstream' employment; or, more probably onto an endless cycle of government sponsored courses, thereby embracing poverty. □

Ted Grant Meeting

Revolutionary Spirit at Ted Grant Memorial Meeting

By www.marxist.com

On Saturday September 9th a Memorial Meeting was held for Ted Grant in the Friends Meeting House in London. Around 200 people turned up for a lively meeting that included international guests, some video footage and contributions from the floor.

Rob Sewell opened the meeting and talked about Ted Grant's early years in South Africa, where the Trotskyists eagerly awaited copies of the American Militant paper and started their work from a very young age. However, since there were more opportunities for revolutionary work in Europe, Isaac Blank went to Britain in 1934 and changed his name to Ted Grant.

Rob emphasised the enormous personal sacrifice Ted made. "Ted never retired; in fact, he never understood the word". Ted studied Marxism in a very serious way by reading the great teachers of Marxism, but he did more than that and actually developed these ideas, thus adding to the vast arsenal of Marxism. In the darkest days of the 1950s, he provided a beacon by tirelessly defending the basic ideas of Marxism. In that sense, Rob said, Ted was indeed an "unbroken thread" and continued the work of the Left Opposition. Just like the Trotskyists who had to fight against the stream for so long, he also gave everything to the revolution. The fact that Ted was never concerned with material things and dedicated his whole life to the cause is in itself a great inspiration for all comrades.

Next came the first of the international guests, Juan Ignacio Ramos, the General Secretary of *El Militante* in Spain. Juan Ignacio delivered a fraternal salute from all workers and youth in Spain defending the ideas of Marxism.

He said it was impossible to describe the importance of the ideas of Ted on the vanguard in Spain that established the Marxist tendency *El Militante* in the 1970s. Ted's writings on the Spanish revolution in particular had a great impact on the Spanish Marxists because they brilliantly analysed the counterrevolutionary role of the Stalinists, the gravediggers of the revolution. His determination gave important results even during the Franco dic-

tatorship, when the Marxists in Spain had to work underground. Thanks to his ideas and the work of comrades like Alan Woods, the Spanish tendency was established in the beginning of the 1970s and has now become a serious force in Spain.

"If there is one thing that we have learned from Ted, then it is that outside the mass organisations there is nothing". Juan Ignacio illustrated the point and described how the Communist Party, even after having played a dreadful role in the revolutionary events in the 1930s, during the struggle against the Franco dictatorship became a point of reference for the decisive section of the labour movement. After the fall of Stalinism, many opportunities opened to intervene amongst the ranks of the Communist Party and to win over honest activists and cadres. This, he said, stressed the need for flexible tactics and to avoid ultra-left adventures.

The correctness of these ideas is being proven not only in Spain but also in countries where an actual revolution is taking place, for example Venezuela. With the help of *El Militante*, the *Corriente Marxista Revolucionaria* in Venezuela was established, just as in Mexico an organisation was built that is now actively intervening in the class struggle.

Ted's Legacy

He finished his contribution with the pledge to ensure that Ted's legacy is preserved for future generations. The plan is to translate all of Ted's works and to publish them in Spanish.

Rob Sewell then read out the first message to the meeting. It was a message from Esteban Volkov, Trotsky's grandson, who acknowledged Ted's dedication to the ideas of revolutionary Marxism. Other messages were read out during the meeting from the Sri Lankan and Pakistani comrades amongst others.

The second speaker was Claudio Bellotti representing *FalceMartello*, the Italian section of the International Marxist Tendency, and a member of the Executive Committee of the PRC. He

opened his speech with a short poem by Bertolt Brecht about dedication. Ted Grant was an outstanding example of a fighter for life.

Claudio recalled how Ted said in a meeting in Milan in 1992 how "once you are in this struggle, you are in this until your last breath". He said that Marxist theory does not drop from the skies but is capital built up generation upon generation. However, it is not just about theory, but also experience. The most important contribution of Ted was actually in the field of method. In meetings Ted always conveyed the idea that you always need to concentrate on the most important questions: attention to the mass movement, the economy, the actual class struggle.

The Italian comrades will publish a selection of Ted's writings in Italian and they will organise some day schools on Ted's works for younger comrades to acquaint themselves with his ideas.

The next speaker was Fred Weston, one of the editors of the In Defence of Marxism website. He said that sometimes there are black periods in history when it is extremely difficult to keep the forces together. Ted Grant lived through several of these but he never gave up. One of the most difficult periods was undoubtedly the 1950s, when the Fourth International after the death of Trotsky degenerated and made every possible mistake, "How could the official leaders get it so wrong, when Ted put it so clearly? Without Ted we would not be here." Fred finished his intervention saying that the world we live in does not allow you to sit quiet at home and that it is not enough to say how great a man Ted was. What is needed is for all of us to dedicate ourselves in the same way that Ted did.

The last speaker from the platform was Alan Woods, a close collaborator of Ted Grant for more than forty years. He opened his speech with a joke: "Do you know what the biggest political party in Britain is? It is the party of ex-Militant members", referring to the sizeable amount of old comrades from the Militant days present at the meeting.

Alan went back more than 150 years, to the period when the Communist Manifesto was written.

Ted Grant Meeting

"This marvellous document", he said, "is more relevant than it ever has been. It really shows you how modern Marxist ideas are. It proves the colossal superiority of the Marxist method." These ideas are what motivated Ted Grant.

However, he said that Ted Grant cannot just be remembered in an anecdotal way and quoted Hegel who said that "no man is a hero to his valet". "We are not afraid to open the books. Of course we made this or that mistake, but show me one person who did not make any mistake in his life and I will tell you that that person never did anything."

Alan then went into the history of the tendency and said that we are in fact an old tendency that goes back a long way. He recalled the nightmare of the 1930s and 40s, making the point that "we complain too much". There was the rise of fascism, the crimes of Stalinism, Trotsky's son Leon Sedov was assassinated, but despite these big blows Trotsky never lost his faith. After the assassination of his son, Trotsky uttered the very tragic human words "I feel alone. I have nobody to talk to", which was in fact an implicit criticism of the then leadership of the Fourth International.

After Trotsky's assassination the leaders of the Fourth International proved not to be up to the tasks posed by history. In fact only one section really continued to apply Trotsky's method, the British section, the Revolutionary Communist Party. That is the actual unbroken thread to Trotsky.

Alan quoted a letter from Felix Morrow, one of the few leaders who were in opposition, who wrote: "Only the RCP can show a way out." and then mentioned Ted's main contribution to Marxism, The Marxist Theory of the State, which was a reply to Tony Cliff's flawed theory of state capitalism.

"You know, Ted sometimes said to me that he didn't know why Lenin and Trotsky wrote so many books. Nobody reads them and if they do they don't understand the ideas!" He illustrated this by pinpointing the main mistake of the Fourth International leadership after Trotsky's death, i.e. that they repeated like parrots the words of Trotsky without actually understanding his method and his dialectical analysis.

For example, before Mao Zedong came to power the official position of the then Fourth International was that

Mao was going to capitulate to Chiang Kai-shek. Ted Grant, however, predicted well in advance that the Stalinists would come to power and would be compelled to nationalise the bulk of the industries and would thus create a state in the image of Moscow.

As for the general perspective after the war, it was clear that Trotsky's perspective of 1938 (that "not a stone" of the old organisations would be left and that the Fourth International would become the main focal point for workers) was being falsified by concrete events. This only goes to illustrate Napoleon's point that war is the most complex equation and thus the outcome is hard to predict. It was in fact necessary to revise Trotsky's position, which only the British RCP was prepared to do. Almost everybody denied the possibility of an economic recovery, which showed their real political level. Ted Grant wrote a much more sober approach to actual developments in his document *Economic Perspectives 1946* and later on he developed this further in the document *Will There be a Slump?*, which is in fact the best explanation of the post-war boom.

Party Building and the Mass Organisations

In the second half of his speech, Alan explained that theory is very important, but it is only a tool. In fact the main contribution from Ted Grant was in the field of party building because of his emphasis of always orienting towards the masses and not to stand on the sidelines. "It is easy to build a new party by just bringing three men and a dog together and proclaiming yourself to be the new party. Sects like these always like to expose the labour leaders with shrill denunciations. The problem is that they know the real role of the labour leaders, and we know their role, but millions of workers don't understand this yet. It is foolish to approach politics from what 'ought to be', which is a Kantian concept. Instead Marxists start from 'what is' and start



from the existing consciousness of the masses." Ted Grant, he said, developed this into an absolute law: "when the working class begins to move, they will inevitably express themselves through the existing organisations of the class". In British politics this means the dominance of the Labour Party has always been a significant question you cannot ignore. "Lenin and Trotsky always understood these elementary questions. The working class cannot express itself through these small organisations."

Then Alan talked about the period of the Militant Tendency and the context in which it grew to become the most successful Trotskyist organisation after the Left Opposition. He made the point that all the talk about the right-wing leadership of today is not new at all. For example in 1969, when both the Labour Party and the unions were dominated by right-wing leaders like Lord Cooper, the sects laughed at the Militant, but "we had our last laugh when the class struggle swept through Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, when a shift to the left took place in the unions which allowed Militant to gain a real influence in the class." Unlike the other groups, the Militant Tendency shook the establishment to the core, with its 8,000 members and some 200 full-timers. All of this was achieved by applying the method of Ted Grant, who always stressed the need to follow Lenin's advice to "patiently explain".

However, because of the bureaucratic methods that emerged in the Militant leadership, all of this was thrown away with the "open turn", which at that time was only explained as a "small turn", to which Ted Grant correctly replied: "a turn over a cliff".

Finally, Alan moved to the present situation and said that the working class in Britain has not started to move yet. The price for that has been creatures like Tony Blair and his New

School Students

Labour. However, the tide is beginning to change. The beginning of the change can be seen in the unions, where there has been a lot of ferment and a shift to the left. Blair has not succeeded in breaking the unions away from Labour. New Labour are openly fighting each other now, which only illustrates the profound crisis they are in. "Now all that is needed is a movement of the class. When they move, they will move as they have always done and this inevitably will find an expression inside the Labour Party."

At the end of his speech, Alan appealed to the youth to study Ted's writings, saying that theory is not arid, it is a life plan. The purpose of this meeting, Alan said, is not to talk about the old days and to be sad that Ted has passed away. "This meeting is meant to prepare for the future, and you cannot escape from politics." He finished his speech with a passionate appeal to everybody in the room, both the younger and the older comrades, to join Socialist Appeal and the International Marxist Tendency because "without organisation there is no future. The purpose of this is to rededicate ourselves to the only struggle that is worth fighting, the struggle for socialism".

Build the Marxist Tendency

Jim Brookshaw, a veteran comrade, organised the collection for the publication of Ted Grant's works, and a fantastic £4,500 was raised. After the screening of a short video clip of Ted Grant's last speech to a gathering of the International Marxist Tendency in 2003 there was room for contributions from the floor. Comrades from Germany, Spain and Britain addressed the meeting and made both strong political and more anecdotal points about Ted Grant. Many of the comrades attending expressed an interest in staying in contact with the *Socialist Appeal* and entering into discussions. We sincerely hope these comrades will take on board the main message: if you want to really build a memorial to Ted then rejoin the movement. Come back and help us build a Marxist tendency within the British labour movement. Individually we are nothing. Together we can make a real impact on the future developments in Britain and the world. □

School Students Against the War

By Patrick Orr, Scotland School Students Against the War

"Why are our troops even still in Iraq" - that is the question that a girl in my Maths class asked me when I brought up the subject of the Iraq war. This was the sort of young person that - so we are told by the media - doesn't care about politics. And yet over three years on from the Iraq invasion, when thousands of school students walked out of school and took to the streets in protest, young people still care about the war and they are still active in a growing anti-war movement. Contrary to what the media and the government tell us, young people aren't apathetic, they do care about Afghanistan, about Iraq and about the lies we were told to take us into these imperialist wars. Three years on young people still remember and are still campaigning.

In November 2005 seven fourteen year olds, crammed round a table in an Edinburgh café, started the Scotland group of School Students Against War. School Students Against War started in London in the wake of school walk outs of 2003. SSAW has now expanded to a national organisation with groups in Edinburgh, London, Liverpool, Bristol and Canterbury and with plans for groups in Fife and Cardiff. This huge national network has been built by school students; SSAW is completely organised by young people from local meetings and events, to mobilising for large national protests.

When we started SSAW Scotland in 2005 we had no idea how the group would work out and whether we could really get young people involved in the peace movement so long after the invasion of Iraq. Since November SSAW Scotland has grown to a large Edinburgh based organisation that runs its own fundraisers and events and gets young people along to protests and actions. Currently we are mobilising for the Labour Party conference demo in Manchester and for the Faslane 365 blockade as well as organising our next fundraising Ceilidh and publicity activities.

The media tried to discredit the school walk-outs in 2003 by claiming that they were orchestrated by the SSP, but it was ordinary school students who set up their own organisation, who went to the meetings, who organised

the walk-outs and who spoke on the platforms. The media continues to discredit youth activism by saying that its just an excuse to skive off school and that they are being manipulated by adults for their own political ends. This is untrue as young people have a huge part in organising actions and demonstrations. At this year's Stop the War Coalition Conference in June a large number of the delegates were under eighteen. These were not just representing SSAW groups but they were often representing local Stop the War organisations; these are young people who are not just getting involved in local events but are taking the lead in organising on a national level. SSAW Scotland like all SSAW groups, is run by under eighteens. It is under eighteens that get up early on Saturday mornings to man stalls and go to protests. These school students give up their weekends to come to organising meetings and anti-war events and most importantly it is young people that take the time to co-ordinate their own vibrant section of the anti-war movement.

Young People Are Not Apathetic

Despite all this - the walk-outs and the huge numbers of school students you see on demonstrations - the government and the media still tell us that young people are apathetic, and don't care about politics. This simply isn't true. However, young people are disillusioned with mainstream politics because they see through the lies of Labour and the Tories. Instead young people are getting involved in grass roots campaigns and are creating their own alternatives to the adult dominated world of capitalist politics. Young people are so involved in the anti-war movement because it is their generation who are being set to die in Iraq and Afghanistan and it is their education that is being robbed of adequate funding to pay for Bush and Blair's wars. Young people were lied to and ignored in the run up to the Iraq war but youth activism hasn't died. The youth anti-war movement is stronger and more vibrant than ever and is becoming increasingly key in the ever growing campaign to stop the war and get the troops home. □

The Launch of 'Solidarity' and the Split in the SSP

By Linda Clarke, Glasgow

"Several hundred people will travel from across Scotland to attend the launch of Solidarity... because they recognise the need for a new bigger, better and broader movement for socialism... An independent socialist republic will be a cornerstone demand of Solidarity... It is both a democratic and economic necessity". These were the words of Tommy Sheridan in Scotland's broadsheet *The Herald* on Saturday, 2nd September. Tommy's prediction turned out to be accurate on two counts - around 400 people attended the launch rally of his new Party and yes, the Party will be firmly founded on a nationalist programme.

However, not all the 400 at the meeting will necessarily join Solidarity. Many who attended this rally (though it was hard to tell exactly how many) had also attended the SSP rally the previous day - ie there were many SSP members who hadn't yet made up their mind which of the two parties to support. This was reflected by speakers at the meeting who made a point of appealing to undecided comrades in the room.

Tommy's other declared prediction of winning 1500 members to his Party in a few months may be harder to realise. Even before the split, the level of activity in the SSP does not appear to have been very high. One former SSP full-timer told the rally that there were 150 more people at this meeting than were at the last SSP National Conference in the autumn of 2005!

Similar to the SSP rally the day before, the Solidarity rally put on a succession of speakers who collectively spoke for more than 3 hours. While there were a couple of speakers from trade unions the majority were representatives from various one issue campaigns eg. Stop the War Coalition; Muslim Association of Britain; Military Families against the War; Justice, Truth and Freedom; G8 Campaign; Friends of Lebanon; Lesbian and Gay Centre etc.

John McAllion, ex Labour MP and SSP candidate for the North East Scotland MSP seat spoke next. He talked about how we must learn from history. He described the history of splits in the Scottish Labour Movement. He talked about the differences between Willie Gallagher and John

MacLean in the early years of the 20th century. He talked about Maxton and the ILP in the 1930's and how the ILP collapsed but the Labour Party did not. He described the setting up of the Scottish Labour Party by Jim Sillars in the 1970's and how it collapsed. What's the lesson he's learned? The SSP is the only way forward and there is absolutely no way you should be a member of the Labour Party. This is a very interesting approach to learning lessons!

It was clear that many who had come to this meeting were working class people looking for an alternative to Blair and the Labour Party. They are understandably repulsed by the Blair government's reactionary policies at home and internationally. However, they are being duped by the leaderships of Solidarity and the SSP who are attempting to defy (or deny) all historical experience.

Wrong in Principle and in Practice

Firstly, to promote an "independent socialist republic" for Scotland is at best naïve and at worst dangerous. It is both wrong in principle and wrong in practice. The Scottish working class has rejected nationalism time and again and instinctively understands the old idioms 'unity is strength' and its opposite 'divide and rule'. It is one thing for socialists and Marxists to accept that nations have a right to self determination if they genuinely want it - it is quite another to actively campaign for it, which can only divide workers in the UK along nationalist lines - even if it is dressed up with socialist rhetoric.

On a practical level a socialist Scotland based on the nationalisation of the major banks and big business would not last very long without the active support of our English, Welsh and Irish fellow workers who would have to nationalise the main hub of their economies. The British ruling class would not sit idly by and allow a Scottish Socialist government to take away its wealth and privileges. Nationalism would be a very convenient tool (and even a gift) for them to divide the working class of Britain to maintain capitalist rule. Bloody experience throughout the world proves that

nationalism is not some kind of benign force that can serve the interests of the working class but is a dangerous divisive tactic which can only serve the enemies of the working class.

Secondly, it is a historical fact that when the working class in large numbers turn to political action they first do so through their traditional mass parties rather than join or vote for small socialist parties. In Britain these are the established trade unions and the Labour Party. No matter how much socialists would wish that fact to be different - it is still a fact. John McAllion eloquently proves this by naming all the corpses of independent socialist parties in Scotland in the last century. Unfortunately, despite this knowledge John comes to the wrong conclusion. As the saying goes "those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it" which is exactly what John, the SSP and Solidarity leadership are doing.

The speakers at the Solidarity rally were adamant that there is room in Scotland for not just one but two independent socialist parties - despite these parties having identical policies. As we went into the Solidarity rally the SSP were giving out leaflets saying "Look at our policies - why set up a new party that just shamelessly steals them, but splits the left vote?"

It will be interesting to observe how they will try and differentiate themselves from one another. The logic of their situation is likely to drive both Parties further down an opportunistic and nationalist road as they try to out-flank each other's positions in an attempt to win the left vote.

At a certain stage the Labour Party will again be rejuvenated as the working class are forced to take political action through their trade unions and the Labour Party. An independent nationalist 'socialist' party is doomed to sit on the sidelines of events unable to influence the workers in their organisations.

We call on the honest workers and youth who are members of Solidarity or the SSP to join Socialist Appeal in building a Marxist tendency within the traditional mass organisations. □

Edinburgh University HOV: Off To A Good Start

By Adam Ley-Lange

Freshers Week in Edinburgh was a very busy time for the Hands Off Venezuela University Society, beginning with two days of the stall at the Societies Fair. Aside from drawing angry glances from the UN Society, among the achievements of the comrades was to collect the names and emails of around 30 new members, which represents a big step forward the struggling position the society began from last year. This respectable membership shows that people are becoming interested in Latin American politics, many as a result of spending time there during the summer.

On the Tuesday of Freshers Week, Hands Off Venezuela was invited to speak at a meeting entitled "Anti-Imperialism", organised by the Palestine Solidarity Society. Even though both other speakers were unable to attend, the discussion mainly centred around the question of Hezbollah and Hamas. That said, a decent number of Hands Off Venezuela magazines were sold after the talk, and a few contacts made.

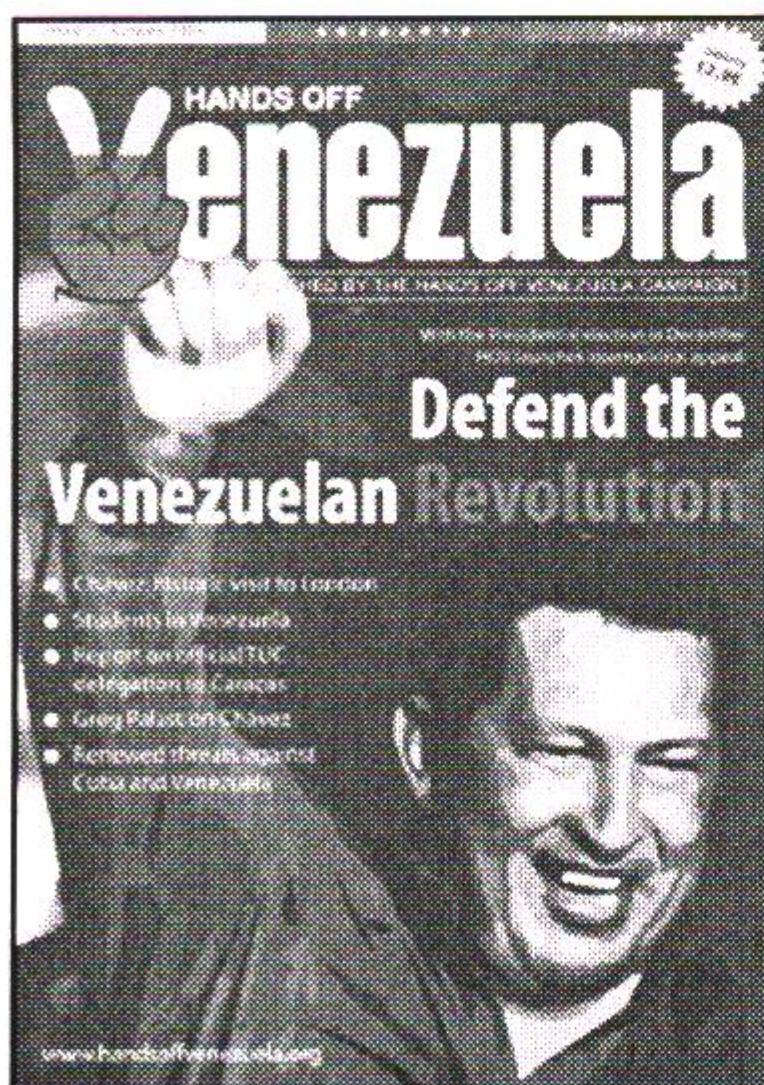
Thursday was the main meeting organised by HoV, and consisted of a brief history of the movement from 1989, plus reports from two students who had visited the country over the summer. Owing to bad weather, attendance was fairly low (few things fall from the sky, but rain is certainly one of them).

Friday night was a chance to let our hair down, with a solidarity gig being organised in the student union. From the event we managed to raise almost £100.

Whilst the numbers at meetings were not particularly impressive, what really characterised the interventions that the Society made was the level of discussion after the lead-offs. Both meetings were followed by a discussion lasting an hour or more, with some interesting questions being raised. This seems to suggest that politics are again becoming an issue for a section of students, especially in terms of the international situation. What is also apparent is that there are few forums in which to discuss these issues further.

Looking through the list of organisations at the Societies Fair, it was surprising to find that we were one of the few political societies in the university. Because of this deficit, it makes sense that many of the people joining the Hands Off Venezuela Society will be looking to discuss a variety of political issues, and this gives us a great chance have meetings on a number of different topics, both practical and theoretical..

With regards to the other political societies, the campaign hopes to host more joint events in order to build links and solidarity. Having other people on board will allow us to intervene in bigger and more effective ways. With all this in mind, the Society is optimistic about its work for the coming year. □



The 2ND Edition of the HANDS OFF VENEZUELA MAGAZINE is out!

Containing vital information on the current situation in Venezuelan and what is happening in Britain to defend the Revolution and raise awareness about it, the second edition of the HOV magazine is now out!

Read about the upcoming Presidential December election and the negative media blitz by the opposition that will surely follow. Find out about Chavez's message to British trade union leaders and activists in a full report of his historic visit to London. Get a first hand account of the latest developments within the social and trade union movements in Venezuela from the report of the TUC delegation to Venezuela. Discover more about Venezuela's relationship with Cuba and why the US administration sees it as a threat in an article by award winning journalist, Greg Palast.

In an investigative article, find out what British corporations, like BP and SHELL UK, are really up to in Venezuela. And discover more about the movement for worker's control in the review of the amazing film 5 Factories.

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Three Days of Intense Activity highlights Venezuelan Revolution at LP Conference

By Hands Off Venezuela

The Hands Off Venezuela Campaign was engaged in a lively three days of intense activity over the last weekend of September - bringing the message of the Venezuelan Revolution to a wide audience of anti-war activists, students, trade unionists and Labour Party members.

Beginning on Saturday, HOV intervened in the 50,000 strong Stop the War demonstration in Manchester with a huge stall and a massive HOV banner attached to two high pillars for all to see. During the next day, HOV activists attended the Stop the War conference, intervened in the workshop on Latin America, and signed up dozens of people for HOV. Many activists visited our stall to buy literature, magazines and DVDs, as well as to discuss developments in Venezuela. Many of these were students who were keen to help with HOV screenings at universities and colleges.

In the evening, HOV attend the 150-strong rally of Labour Against the War. Again, we set up a stall outside the event which drew a great deal of interest and gave everyone material about the campaign. In the hall, we prominently displayed the national HOV banner, while many of the platform speakers, including Tony Benn, John McDonnell MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, referred to Venezuela in their speeches.

The following day, groups of HOV supporters leafleted the Labour Party conference, loudly calling for the support of the revolutionary developments in Latin America. We received a warm response



from the rank and file delegates and trade unionists as we drew attention to our lunchtime fringe meeting.

The fringe meeting itself was held in the Friends Meeting Place just opposite the Labour Party conference centre. Although HOV had speakers at Labour's fringe meetings in previous years, it was the first time that HOV had held its own meeting. Despite another meeting on Venezuela called at the same time by VIC, the Hands Off Venezuela meeting was packed by 1 o'clock. People were standing at the back and sitting in the aisles, while another 40 people were turned away from the meeting due to lack of

space. A film crew from French national TV was also present to film John McDonnell's contribution.

The enthusiastic meeting was chaired by Espe Espigares from HOV's national steering committee who highlighted the importance of the Venezuelan Revolution in the run up to the Presidential elections in December. The first platform speaker was Rob Sewell, the convener of the national steering committee, who explained that the revolutionary movements unfolding throughout the countries of Latin America were not separated events but were part of the unfolding Latin American Revolution. Rob

gave an outline of the rise of Hugo Chavez, the April 2002 coup, the bosses' lockout, and the magnificent movement of the working class and the oppressed which defeated the counter-revolution. "Now Chavez has opened up a debate on socialism", stated Rob, "which has raised the tasks of the Revolution to a new level. The question of a 'revolution within the revolution' has come to the fore. Chavez has also stated that after the December election measures will be taken to make the Revolution irreversible." Rob also called for the lessons of Venezuela to be learned here and called for the trade unions to take back the Labour Party for socialism.

The next speaker was Jeremy Corbyn MP, who had just returned from Mexico. Jeremy described the "unbelievable occasion last Saturday in Mexico City where one million delegates assembled to debate the questions of which way forward." They voted to recognise Lopez Obrador as president of Mexico and will return to install him on 20th November. "The debate at this Democratic Convention was not about procedures but how to combat the whole neo-con strategy", stated Jeremy. "Calderon stands for the privatisation of gas, electricity and other essential services. We must express our solidarity with those fighting against this programme which threatens the very gains of the 1910 Revolution. Internationalism and solidarity means acting ourselves and linking up with those in struggle." □



Dr Pangloss Rules?

By Michael Roberts

It's a glorious morning. The sky is azure blue and the sun is streaming through the window in the heart of London on this late September weekend. It's an 'Indian' summer's day - to use that very imperialist definition of the weather.

All is well - at least that is how the *Financial Times* reviews the state of the UK in its editorial. Entitled "New Britain faces the world with confidence", the editorial starts with a confident assertion: "Though it has its problems, Britain is in good shape... the overall sense is one of progress and success".

And the primary reason, according to the FT, is globalisation. "It was globalisation, the vast expansion of world trade and migration during the 19th century, that brought Britain's greatest era of success... future governments must do as this government has done and let globalisation happen."

This Panglossian view of Britain and the world comes from the mouth of the leading forum of British capitalism, of course. Also, it is probably no coincidence that the editorial was written as New Labour holds its annual conference (possibly the last as 'New Labour'). Former *FT* economic leader writer and correspondent, Ed Balls, now an MP and Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Gordon Brown's right-hand man and likely future successor to Gordon as Chancellor of the Exchequer, may well have his writing hand in this piece. Britain's so-called economic success is the key selling point for Gordon in his quest to hold the Ring of power in Britain.

Dr Pangloss extends his influence across the big pond too. America's stock markets are nearly back to their all-time highs achieved in the heady hi-tech boom days of 2000. An investor in American shares back in March 2000, however, would still have made no money at all. Okay, say 'the markets' things have been bad, but they are looking up. Corporate profits in the US,

Europe and Japan have also hit peaks. Indeed, corporate profitability, that is profits relative to investment, is now nearly back to the level of 1997, the profit peak of the great stock market and economic boom of 1982-00.

It's nearly back, but not quite. And here we can detect just a sign that all is not perfect in the most perfect of capitalist worlds. We could survey the world capitalist scene after 20 years of 'globalisation' in a more realistic way.

First, globalisation has brought us terrorism and the War against Terror. That does not seem to be going too well. The US and its imperialist allies are locked into a never-ending occupation in Iraq with daily heaps of bodies (of course, it's mainly ordinary Iraqi people). The 'freedom forces' are penned up in their bunkers in the Green Zone of Baghdad, hardly venturing out. Thus, the militias of the various religious sectarian groups continue their murder and mayhem. Above all, Iraq slowly slips out of the control of US imperialism.

Globalisation and Free Trade

Across the border, Iran mullahs preach defiance, while Hezbollah in Lebanon claims victory over the strongest army of the Middle East and the key henchman of imperialist rule in the region, Israel. And in Afghanistan, the religious

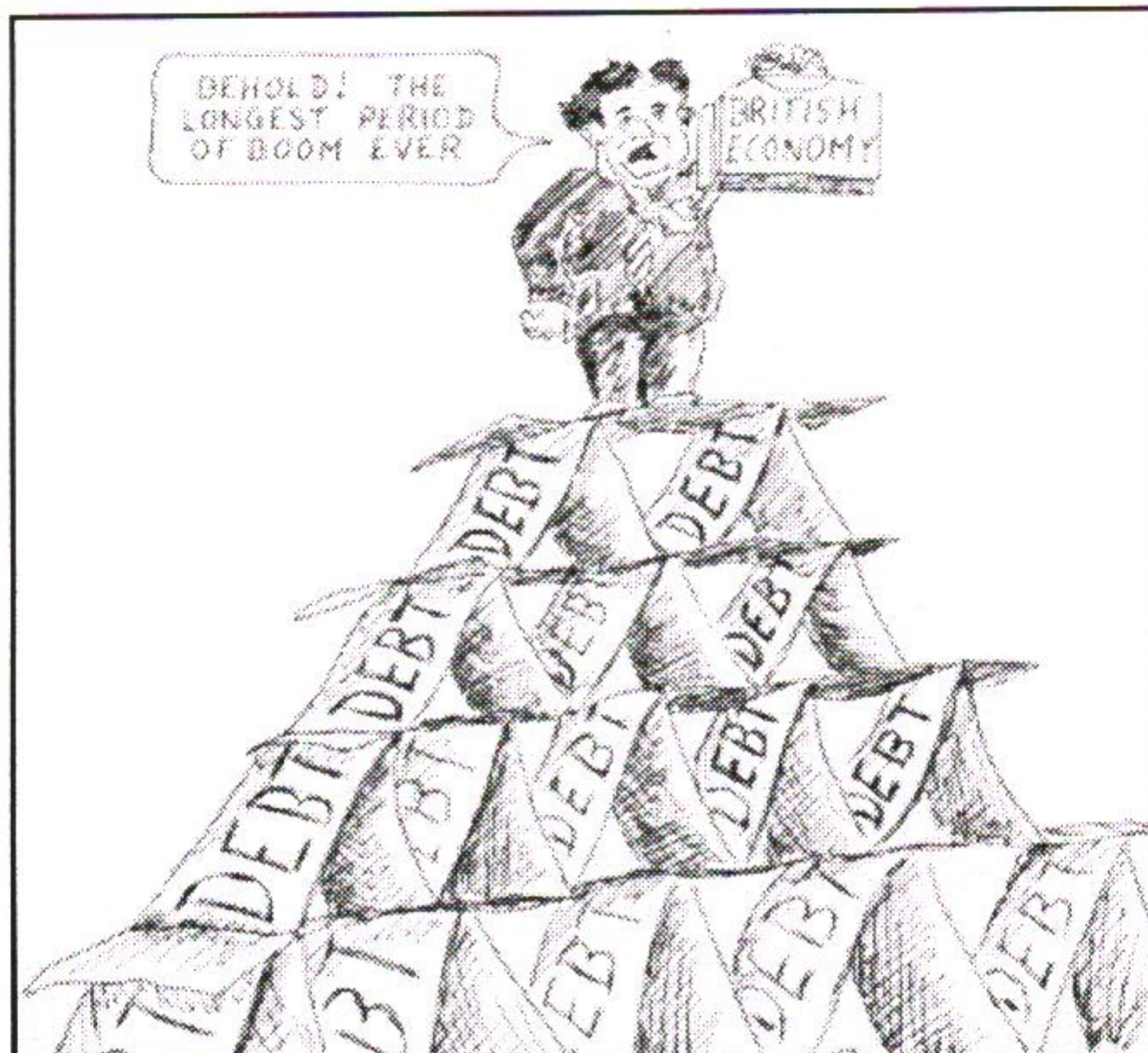
fundamentalists of the Taliban successfully sting and cuff British armed forces in the harsh hinterland - when will British imperialism realise that they cannot tame Afghanistan, a cemetery for British soldiers for nearly two hundred years.

The *FT* tells us that all is well because this period is like the 'globalisation' free trade era of the 19th century that brought British capitalism its greatest success. Here the *FT* stretches history. British capitalism led the world economically from the time of the Industrial Revolution at the end of 18th century to say about 1870. From then on, in the period of 'globalisation', other capitalist powers, like the US, Germany, France, began to compete for spheres of influence and gain around the world. Free trade was no longer a boon to the UK alone. Indeed, this period is much closer to the struggle for markets that we saw at the end of 19th century that Britain lost and eventually led to a world war in 1914 and again in 1945, before the US became the hegemonic power.

Now in 2006, it is the US that is struggling to maintain its dominance: it loses market share in exports; it is running up huge debts with the rest of world; it is finding it difficult to get other capitalist powers to support its interests in the Middle East and Latin America and it is losing any influence at all in Africa. Its influence in Asia through Japan is now threatened by a colossus, potentially bigger than itself, China. Far from globalisation heralding peace and prosperity in the world, it suggests increased rivalry and conflict.

British capitalism continues to rest its hopes (as the *FT* argues) on the US remaining top dog and remaining prosperous. Over the next 20 years, it is a gamble that will deliver, not "progress and success", but collateral damage not seen since the 1930s.

After all, let's be clear about some key facts on globalisation



before we accept the *FT*'s praise for it. Has it brought prosperity? Well, at the level of production, it has been a relative failure. Branco Milanovic is the leading economist at the World Bank. He has recently published a book called *World's Apart: measuring international and global inequality*. Milanovic opens by saying that "the average world growth rate in output per head has declined in the last 20 years". So under globalisation, and even taking into account that the advanced capitalist countries have suffered only 'mild' economic recessions in 1990 and 2001; and even taking into account, China's staggeringly fast growth in the last ten years, the world average growth rate was lower 1979-00 compared to 1960-78. Indeed, over the last 20 years or so, every year one country out of three has seen its GDP per capita decline - such is the instability of globalised capitalism.

And of course, these figures are averages. What Milanovic shows in his book is that inequalities between rich and poor countries and between rich and poor within each country and between rich and poor globally have increased under 'globalisation'. He finds that there "has been a steady and sharp increase in inter-country inequality", after being broadly constant prior to the launch of globalisation.

Even more startling is the inequality within the world's population wherever they live. According to Milanovic, "77% of the world's population live below the rich world's poverty line. There are 79 countries that are poorer than Brazil and they constitute 70% of the world's population. By his calculations, there is only 6.7% of the world's population that can be considered middle-class. He reckons that about 17% of the world's population can be considered rich. Even in the rich countries of the world, there are 92m people who can be considered poor by world standards. In the poor countries, the poor constitute 93% or 4bn people!

Economists measure the inequality of income by what is called the Gini coefficient. I won't explain how that works here, but suffice it to say that the higher the Gini coefficient between 0 and 100, the greater the inequality. According to Milanovic, inequality has increased from the start of industrial capitalism back in the early 19th century at 12 to reach 35 by the end of the 19th century (that three times more

unequal), to 65 by the early 1950s (five times more unequal) and to remain at this high level since then, despite China and India's fast growth in recent times.

So globalisation under capitalism has been no great boon for more than 80% of the world's people.

While the world's stock markets bathe in the glorious September sunshine of huge company profits, bringing massive bonuses for the top executives and Wall Street and City of London financial traders, the rest of us feel a lot less sanguine about the world. The US is about to hold elections for its congress. Despite apparently everything being rosy, Bush continues to score lows in the opinion polls and the Republicans could be defeated in the elections despite gerrymandering and a lack of enthusiasm for the opposition Democrats. It's the same in the UK. Tony Blair polls at record lows and New Labour is behind the Tories in the polls.

But leaving aside both leaders' appalling foreign policy, is it so surprising when we realise that the so-called fruits of globalisation have not permeated down to most ordinary families in the US or Britain. In the US, the share of wages in national output is the lowest ever, while corporate profits hit the highest share since the Golden Age of the 1960s and this at a time when economic growth does not match the growth of the 1960s.

Absence of 'Progress and Success'

The 'overall sense of progress and success' that the *FT* refers to from globalisation seems absent from the data in the 'land of opportunity', America. According to the US Census Bureau, in 2004, the top 20% of US households took over 50% of all income earned while the bottom 20% got only 3%. In 1980, at the start of globalisation, the top 20% took 43% and the bottom 20% just 4.2%. The top 1% is even better off. They took 11.2% of all income in 2004 compared to 6% in 1980. They have nearly doubled their share under globalisation. It was always very unequal, but it's even worse now.

If we look at wealth owned by households in the US and not just income earned in a year, the situation is even more shocking. According to the Federal Reserve Bank's latest consumer finances survey, the wealthiest 1% of Americans own 33.4% of all net

wealth after deducting mortgages and other debt. That's up from 30.1% back in the late 1980s before globalisation took hold. The bottom 50% of Americans owns just a staggering low 2.5% of all household wealth!

And it is going to get worse not better. Real wages are falling in the US. The median average hourly wage after inflation has fallen 2% in the last two years. For young people joining the labour market, they are finding that entry-level real wages are 4% lower than in 2001. Those with young families have seen their income fall 6% in the last five years.

The *FT* notes the problem of inequality in its editorial and admits that inequality in Britain has not altered under New Labour since 1997. It also notes growing inequality between the regions and the problems of providing enough infrastructure and resources to house growing numbers of immigrants, whose labour has enabled British capitalism to keep its head above water by taking low wages and working long hours and not using social services. But it sweeps all these problems aside in a blaze of sunny confidence.

We've argued in this column on several occasions that Britain's capitalist survival has increasingly been built on becoming a rentier economy, relying on providing financial and 'professional' services to other capitalist nations who are producing surplus-value. Britain, as far as capitalism is concerned, has become a huge Switzerland, banking the world's profits, for a fee. The City of London is a huge aircraft carrier parked in the Thames, where world money flows in and out, with little touching the sides, except for those working on the carrier and living in London and the south-east. The rest of Britain is a just a dark shadow to these people.

But if 60m people must depend on the success of the world's stock and bond markets and above all on the continued success of the US economy, then they ought to view the next five years with trepidation. The housing bust is well under way across the pond and it promises to be the worst ever. Usually housing markets, when they blow out, tend to take 3-4 years before they reach a bottom. That puts the trough at around 2009-10, just at the time we could expect the next economic recession in the US, if history is any guide. □

Interview With John McDonnell MP

Left wing Labour MP John McDonnell has announced his intention to stand for the Labour leadership once Blair finally resigns. Standing on a platform opposed to privatisation, against the war, and opposed to tuition fees, for state pensions, and for the public ownership of public services, *Socialist Appeal* supports John's campaign as an opportunity to raise socialist ideas throughout the labour movement. Trade unionists, Labour Party members and activists around the country should organise meetings inviting John to speak. Here we are publishing an edited version of an interview with John McDonnell conducted by *Socialist Appeal* recently. The full version can be read online at www.socialist.net

SA: There has been quite a shift to the right over the last 20 years, the defeat of the miners strike led to a lot of demoralisation, led to a shift in the leaderships of the trade unions and the Labour Party in that period. Do you see this coming to an end?

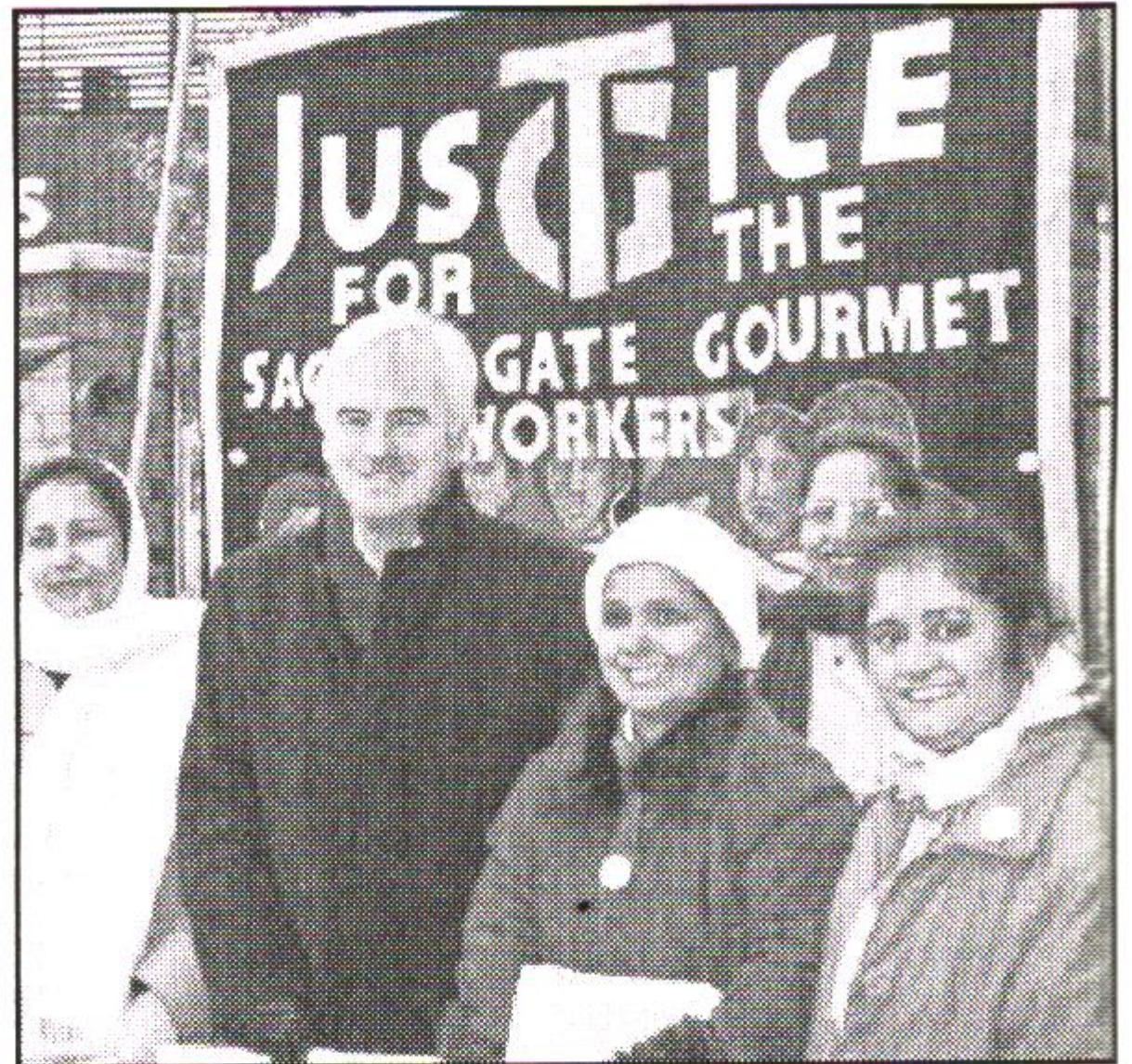
JMcD: In the '80s and the beginning of the '90s there was a coalition of circumstances; the miners strike; the local government rate campaign; the emergence of Kinnock; the use of expulsions from the party; the defeat of the Labour Party by Thatcher; and being out of government. These all meant that Labour was vulnerable to the coup carried out by the small right-wing clique that was able to take over the party through bureaucratic measures. When the '92 election was lost to the Tories and John Smith replaced Kinnock, there was a small opportunity for the 'broad church' approach of the Labour Party re-emerging. This could have given the left, right and centre the ability to have their voice and exercise some form of influence. But the death of John Smith was the trigger for a neo-conservative coup under Mandelson, Blair and Brown. This was the beginning of the closing down of all forms of democratic engagement within the party and the clique tried to distance itself from any form of accountability either to the Labour Party or the trade union movement.

I don't think it was a matter of the Labour Party rank and file shifting to the right; there was an element of disillusionment and some members of the party left. A number of very good comrades were lost due to the expulsions. But I still think there was a traditional left Labour base within the party at that time. The Neo-Conservative group

that by that time were strengthening their grip recognised this and by bureaucratic manoeuvres began to take more control of the organisation, closed down democracy so that ordinary members had no voice or positions of influence within the party.

A decision then had to be taken, if you are a socialist within the Labour Party what do you do? You could either leave the party to establish some kind of alternative, or stay in and fight and that is what a number of us did...

We have now reached a stage where New Labour as a neo-conservative force has run its course. Labour is facing potential electoral disaster. This has been the trend in the last election with the loss of 100 seats, and in local government where Labour has been eradicated from office in some areas. In addition New Labour is trailing behind the Conservatives in the opinion polls now on every issue. What is interesting about these polls is that when you ask people about the individual policies, they're not supporting the Conservative's policies, but the traditional Labour Party policies that we're campaigning on now - opposition to privatisation, opposition to the war, opposition to tuition fees, for state pensions, for public services; all of those policies are popularly supported. We are the only ones putting these policies forward. It is now up to the left within the Labour Party to prepare for and to lead what could be the resurgence of the left within the party. It could be, but its going to take a lot of organisation. It is going to have to be rank and file based because of the bureaucratic controls that New Labour exerts both



within the party and within some unions. It's going to have to appeal to a much wider layer outside the Labour Party and trade union movement as well...

SA: The Blairites wanted to change the whole basis of the party itself and turn it into another Tory party. One part of that process was to break the links with the unions. Fortunately this has failed. Do you think the unions are an important base to use to fight back?

JMcD: I think we should be clear about what the 1990's coup within the Labour Party was about... That coup was about installing a neo-conservative government, with the whole panoply of free market policies, from undermining the welfare state and public services, to introducing what they call flexible labour which is actually intensive exploitation of the workforce.

To do that they had to close down democracy in the party and eradicate and eliminate left-wing advocates within the party. In addition to that they had to try to ensure that the trade unions were demobilised, in terms of preventing them from taking industrial action by keeping Thatcher's anti-union laws in place, and by weakening their links within the Labour Party. They have made several attempts at that and now they want to go further, trying to break the links altogether. But what is interesting about the current period is that there is a strong rank and file reaction against that. Every election for a trade union general secretary over



the last five years has been won by people purporting to be left wing, and it is impossible to win an election without describing yourself as on the left and supporting left programmes. That is a demonstration that the rank and file is reacting against neo-conservative policies and wants a shift... Therefore, what we're going to see over the next few years is a pitched battle in the Labour Party and trade union movement between the neo-cons and those who are trying to reassert some form of socialist and trade union practices again. It is an incredibly exciting period...

SA: Derek Simpson, the General Secretary of Amicus, has referred to the campaign as that of a 'no-hoper'. It is an interesting parallel with his own situation four years ago where he was the 'no-hoper' candidate in the election for the AEEU General Secretary election. How do you react to that?

JMcD: The good thing about our campaign is that it is grass-roots based. It is about rank and file and individuals coming together and working in groups and making their own minds up on the basis of a shared understanding of the world and a shared programme that we are putting forward, in that way they can become excited by the campaign... Within every constituency Labour Party the question will be asked do we support these policies and if we support the policy that is being advocated by a socialist within the party do we translate that into a support for that candidature? That question will be asked of every Labour MP and by their constituency as well. In the unions the rank and file, both individual members and organisations like the broad lefts in each union are asking themselves the same question. This question is then raised in the formal structures of those organisations and therefore is asked of the General Secretary. General

Secretaries, no matter what platform they have been elected on, once they are in can become bureaucratised. They can get sucked in to the system where they believe that their role is not necessarily to be representative of their members in the sense of engaging in a debate at grassroots level, and then allowing positions to be determined as a result of that debate... We're coming at it with a different concept, they're delegates, no representatives, they are accountable to their rank and file and therefore they should engage like any other members of the union and come to a decision... Derek Simpson is a very good example, he was elected on a leftwing platform, which I supported. The Amicus Gazette broad-left has largely supported me, and most of them are campaigning for me. Derek has come out with a view along the lines 'I support the policies maybe, but the left can't win the election therefore he's a no-hoper, what is the point?' What he's failed to understand - and it's the same as the neo-cons of New Labour and the commentators - is that this election, once we get past the nomination stage, will be determined by the votes of every rank and file member of the party and every individual member of an affiliated trade union. We are demonstrating by our grass roots campaign that actually there is a majority of support for the policies and the candidature within those organisations. What we are about to do is going to be a shock to the media, and within New Labour circles, about the depth of support for the policies we are advocating. There will be something of an earthquake when that support is translated into support for the candidature. Leaders are sometimes behind the general pattern of the rank and file rather than in advance of it, or alongside of it, and I think that's happening now in union after union.

SA: Clearly as far as you are concerned the battle is in the labour movement and above all in the Labour Party. I suppose that those who advocate leaving the Labour Party are really just weakening your case and strengthening the case of Blairism?

JMcD: Every person who leaves the party loses a vote in this election and therefore hands the leadership and the future direction of the Labour Party to the Neo-Cons of New Labour. That's the straightforward mathematical calculation. For those people who have left

the party and are turning up at my meetings large numbers of them are rejoining. We are having a resurgence of membership, and we are saying to people if you do rejoin it is about getting involved in this campaign, participating in debate and discussion: that's going to strengthen us in the long-term. So we're rebuilding the left of the party from within, but on the basis of socialist policies and socialist practice.

I have worked on individual campaigns on a broad united front basis, working with different organisations to raise consciousness on individual issues and I am happy to do that, for example, campaigning against privatisation, health cuts, or for trade union rights. If people agree with these policies and they are outside the Labour Party in different organisations we work together on that particular issue. But my argument has always been that it would strengthen socialism in this country dramatically if the left outside the Labour Party would rejoin the party because that would give us the vehicle for government and it gives working class people the lead to take power over their lives. A simple message, but I do that in a completely non-sectarian way and try to encourage people to work together, in that way even if people don't rejoin the Labour Party we can build a commitment and understanding and support for our ideas... Even the Conservatives are having to nod to the left on some of these issues like public services, around the environment, and rights at work, and they do that for opportunistic reasons. We know that as representatives of capital if they ever got power they'd turn on the working class as they have done before... The people who are immune to that at the moment are the small clique of Neo-Cons within New Labour, but they are an increasingly small clique. There is a small bunker mentality breaking out amongst the Neo-Cons, they know they are on the way out, they know they're faced with mass opposition within their own party, within the movement, and within the country itself. We need to win this leadership election. If we don't, it's difficult to see a Labour Government being elected at the next election. The Neo-Cons could destroy our party, that is why we are asking people to mobilise for this campaign because it will determine the future of the party, and the future of the country. □

On The 25th Anniversary of The 1981 Irish Hunger Strike

By Gerry Ruddy, Irish Republican Socialist Party

During the early days of the civil rights movement in the North of Ireland republicans had gained "special category" status through a long hunger strike in 1971 by republican prisoners in Crumlin Road Jail.

"Special category status," allowed them to be treated as prisoners of war, providing them with the 'privileges' of POWs such as those specified in the Geneva Convention.

But in the mid-seventies the British Labour government having failed to face down a loyalist lockout in 1974 was determined to face down Irish Republicanism. Under Roy Mason, the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, special category prisoner status was abolished for all offences committed after 1st March 1976. Henceforth all prisoners were regarded as criminals by the state.

The prisoners, convicted by non-jury courts, presided over by judges appointed by the Unionist establishment, after interrogations and torture from RUC Special Branch - who were collaborating with loyalist murder gangs - were transferred to the H-blocks of the renamed Maze prison.

Women republican prisoners, who suffered the same conveyor belt justice, were held in Armagh jail. Although there were two republican groups, (the IRA (Provisional) and the INLA)ⁱ and the prisoners were divided into different H blocks, they were united, as prisoners, as blanket men and women, and as republicans, in opposition to British criminalisation.

By 1978 over 300 republican prisoners were refusing to wear prison clothing or do prison work. Prison guards tried to halt the protest by beating the Blanket Men when they went to shower or use the toilets. In March 1978, the prisoners responded by refusing to leave their cells, no longer washing and using buckets as toilets. The guards then stopped bringing buckets to the cells, the prisoners replied with the "Dirty Protest". This led to excrement smeared to the walls of the cells and prisoners wearing only a blanket lan-

guishing in freezing cells in winter.

Slowly, very slowly, street protests in support of the prisoners began to gather adherents. Relatives Action Committees were formed in nationalist areas to support the prisoners leading eventually to the establishment of National H-Block Armagh Committee, which made steady progress in gaining support for the prisoners. That committee was composed of republican activists, trade unionists, socialists and human rights activists. It had the active support of the IRSPⁱⁱ and other radical bodies. Six members of that Committee were shot - five dead at the hands of loyalist and British intelligence agents.

The demands of the prisoners were not extraordinary. They were reasonable and were fixed around five points:

1. The right to wear their own clothes.
2. The right to abstain from penal labour.
3. The right to free association.
4. The right to recreational and educational facilities in conjunction with the prison authorities.
5. The restoration of remission (lost because of the Dirty Protest).

Eventually the patience of the prisoners ended in October 1980. Seven went on hunger strike including INLA prisoner John Nixon. The strike began on October 27th and ended after 53 days when apparent concessions were made including civilian type clothes being worn by the inmates. But the so-called concessions were a sham and, feeling betrayed, the prisoners began the second hunger strike.

On Sunday 1 March 1981 Bobby Sands, then leader of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in the Maze Prison refused to take food. Over the next weeks and months other prisoners joined the hunger strike in a staged fashion. Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, decided that no concessions must be made to the prisoners. With cold, calculated cruelty, she and her clique decided to allow them to die.

Even despite Bobby Sands being elected to Westminster in the Fermanagh/South Tyrone by-election, the Thatcher administration remained obdurate. Margaret Thatcher stated:

"We are not prepared to consider special category status for certain groups of people serving sentences for crime. Crime is crime is crime, it is not political."

The only change made was to publish proposals to change the Representation of the People Act making it impossible for prisoners to stand as candidates for parliament!

A Wave of Revulsion and Fury

The hunger strike continued to grow and, on May 5, Sands became the first of the prisoners to die, after 66 days on hunger strike. He was 26 years old. On Thursday 7 May 1981 an estimated 100,000 people attended the funeral of Bobby Sands in Belfast. Far from intimidating Republicans the death provoked a wave of revulsion and fury. In many nationalist areas riots became a regular occurrence.

Nine other deaths followed, including that of three members of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), Michael Devine, Patsy O Hara and Kevin Lynch, in the hunger strikes. Michael Devine had been a former member of the Young Socialists in Derry City where both he and Patsy had been politically active on working class issues.

Events were laying the base for a mass movement of protest.

Unfortunately, the Provoⁱⁱⁱ leadership had no use for the mass movement, except as an auxiliary to the "armed struggle". Their leadership regarded themselves as the legitimate Government of Ireland and they saw little need to form alliances with lesser beings. They still had the illusion that the British army could be forced to pull out by bombing and shooting.

The mass movement around the hunger strikes showed enormous promise, but once again the opportunity was thrown away. Caught between appeal-

ing only to the nationalist population or to the wider masses of people throughout the island, including the wide working class movement, the leaderships of the H-block campaign proved incapable of involving wider sections.

Sinn Fein seeing the political opportunities, seized control of the H-block struggle outside, and while posing as radical leftists, marginalised the genuine republican left and working class radicals.^{iv} Thus began their long march from republicanism to nationalism. The left itself was confused about the hunger strike and little effort was made to influence the rapidly growing ranks of nationalist youth towards socialist thought. Action was the way forward or so the nationalist youth thought. Of course that action was perceived only in terms of armed struggle.

Little or no thought was given to reaching out to working class radicals from the protestant working classes, nor how to win allies within the broad trade union movement. Indeed some republicans became anti-trade union because the paid leadership of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in the North was closely allied with the British establishment. Instead of working to win over natural allies in the working class movement many republicans retreated into working within "our communities" which was a euphemism for solely working within catholic communities. Given the serious divisions that had already existed between the PUL^v and the NRC^{vi}, the community approach itself became a self-fulfilling prophecy, which became institutionalised in the Good Friday Agreement.

The Republican Socialist Movement itself could not resist the emotions of the time and the INLA upped its armed struggle whilst the then leadership of the IRSP veered between left nationalism and republicanism. While recruits flooded into both Party and Army little was done to politically educate the new wave of cadres. This was to have almost fatal consequences for the whole movement in later years.

But as recruits flooded into republican organisations the hunger strike itself was slowly grinding to a halt. Sickened by the growing number of deaths and with no sign of concessions the families of those remaining on hunger strike began to intervene to take their sons off the hunger strike once they neared the point of death.

The INLA, following the death of Mickey Devine, announced on September 4th that it was no longer putting volunteers forward for the Hunger strike. Eventually on Saturday October 3rd at 3.15 in the afternoon those remaining on hunger strike ended their fast.

10 republican hunger strikers had died and 62 others were killed during that turbulent period. A hunger strike is a desperate measure, which should only be undertaken when there is no other alternative. The death of cadres in the prisons is a very high price to pay. Was too high a price paid? There is no doubt that the prisoners having endured the blanket and dirty protest for so long felt that they had no alternative. Even today 25 years afterwards the consequences of that hunger strike are still being felt and that question still has not been satisfactorily answered.

Following the ending of the strike the British introduced a new regime in the prison that effectively gave into the prisoners' demands. On 6 October 1981 James Prior, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, announced a series of measures, which went a long way to meeting many aspects of the prisoners' five demands.

Rewriting History

This year has seen a multitude of commemorations, celebrations and fundraising banquets all around Ireland to "honour" the hunger strikers. To sell commemorative plates, blankets and arrange dinners all around the theme of the hunger strikes show just how cynical the current leadership of Provisional Sinn Fein is. In a massive attempt to rewrite history most of the events staged managed by Provisional Sinn Fein tried to justify their present political stance. They claimed that the hunger strikers would have endorsed the peace process strategy of Sinn Fein.^{vii} They tried to airbrush out the INLA participation in the hunger strike. They used commemorations to highlight their election candidates.

But some truths are hard to hide. During the hunger strike the Provos were in direct contact with a Foreign Office contact known as the "mountain climber"^{viii}. He outlined to them in July, before the 5th hunger striker died, essentially the same concessions that Jim Prior outlined in October. Why did

the Provo leadership not accept these terms then? The leadership of the INLA were never informed there was such an offer and neither were the INLA prisoners or hunger strikers. The strong suspicion remains that for electoral reasons the Provo leadership outside the jail wanted the hunger strike to continue.

With the ending of the hunger strike Sinn Fein's electoral rise continued until today they have replaced the SDLP as the largest nationalist party in the North. Their leaders now strut the world stage as 'peacemakers'. But the actual reality on the ground points out the total failure of their strategy.

It is well to remind ourselves of exactly what the Sinn Fein peace process strategy has produced. Northern Ireland is now more deeply divided than it was during the conflict. Since the acceptance of the Good Friday Agreement walls dividing working class communities have gone up, not down. Sectarian attacks occur on a daily basis mostly directed against Catholics. Sectarian hatred has risen among both catholic and protestant youth. Politics is now polarised around the so-called "two communities".

Gerry Adams wants Ian Paisley as First Minister. MI5 are taking control of political policing. Sinn Fein have accepted a partitioned settlement and accepted the sectarian nature of the northern state. Sinn Fein, in a power sharing executive, introduced privatisation into both the health and education state sectors. Crime rates have soared in working class areas as has the suicide rate, drug taking, alcohol abuse and poverty. Most ironic of all, the gains won by the dead hunger strikers were negotiated away during the Good Friday Agreement talks.

Contrast all that with what the prisoners, particularly the ten dead hunger strikers, were in opposition to 25 years ago:

1. Criminalisation;
2. a reformed local assembly at Stormont;
3. the unionist veto (so called consent principle);
4. a British police force enforcing the law of the British state in any part of Ireland;
5. British claims to sovereignty in Ireland.

They were also strongly in favour of a Socialist Republic on the island of

Ireland/Pakistan

Ireland. The contrast could hardly be greater.

What lessons can Republicans and socialists take from the experiences of the hunger strike? Clearly the hunger strike is a weapon that should rarely, if ever, be used for, when carried to its ultimate conclusion, valued and valuable comrades are lost to the struggle. Ireland has too many maytrys.

It is now clear in retrospect that many who threw themselves into the struggle had no real grounding in revolutionary politics or brought a Marxist understanding of how society works into politics. They then became influenced by whatever became the latest fad. One day it's the gun, then it's the ballot box, then it's the media and now it's spin. Those who once claimed they would lead us to the "Republic" now are preparing to administer British rule in Ireland. Former anti-imperialists now pay homage to Bush and his administration. Republicans who once claimed to be non-sectarian now play the sectarian card. Over the past generations many republicans simply ignored the existence of the protestant working class writing them off simply as a reactionary bloc. Yet today in a few parts of the North young people in "kick the pope"^{ix} bands are being exposed to the

ideas of James Connolly and other Irish republicans. Comrades from the IRSP have spoken to groups of young protestant workers as well.^x

In times of high emotion, such as during the hunger strike, nationalism can exert a powerful attraction. Republicanism in all its forms failed to resist that attraction and so lost its way during and after the hunger strikes.

Republicanism, Internationalism and Marxism

Irish republicanism has always had an internationalist tendency and today that internationalism is best expressed through a firm commitment and grounding in Marxist ideas. There is no easy road to Socialism in Ireland. But with the growing interest in Marxist ideas worldwide more and more young people in Ireland are being attracted to the revolutionary ideas of James Connolly and other internationalist Marxists. The turning of those young people into a hardened revolutionary cadre is the task of today's comrades. That is the only path that radical republicanism can take. It is a case of back to James Connolly and forward to socialism. □

notes

ⁱ IRA is the Irish Republican Army (provisional) or PIRA- INLA refers to the Irish National Liberation Army

ⁱⁱ IRSP Irish Republican Socialist Party-political wing of INLA in 1981

ⁱⁱⁱ Provo - Popular nickname for PIRA

^{iv} After the hunger strikes were over PIRA prisoners in the Maze began a campaign of undermine and absorb against INLA prisoners and refused to recognise them as political prisoners

^v PUL- Unionist Loyalist Protestant

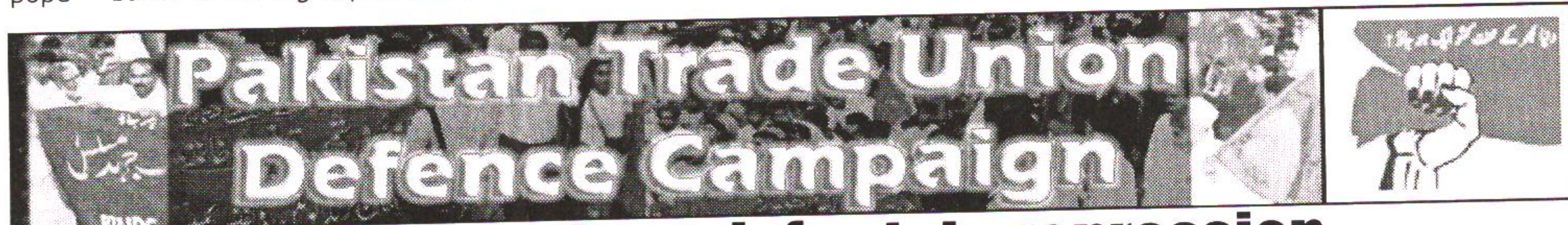
^{vi} NRC - Nationalist Republican Catholic.

^{vii} Speech by Martin McGuinness in Derry 2006

^{viii} *Blanketmen* by Richard O'Rawe-Pub.New Island 2005

^{ix} 'Kick the pope' bands are anti catholic bands composed of young working class protestants.

^x Too much should not be read into these meetings but the fact that they have taken place shows the possibilities that could exist.



Sindh teachers defy state repression

By Janat Hussain

The struggle of the Sindh teachers against the ban on their union continues amid state repression. The sit-in that had been called for September 5 was postponed due to the critical situation in Balochistan, which has triggered violence across the whole of the country.

The teachers who were jailed were granted bail due to pressure from the movement. However, not long afterwards the bail was cancelled.

These teachers, including the chairman of the Alliance of All Teachers' Unions, Rafiq Jarwar, as well as Liaqat Aziz, Professor Taj Joyo, Noor Muhammad, M. Sharif, M. Ayub and Faheem Raza Soomro, appealed to the High Court in Hyderabad. The High Court granted them bail at 100,000 rupees for one week.

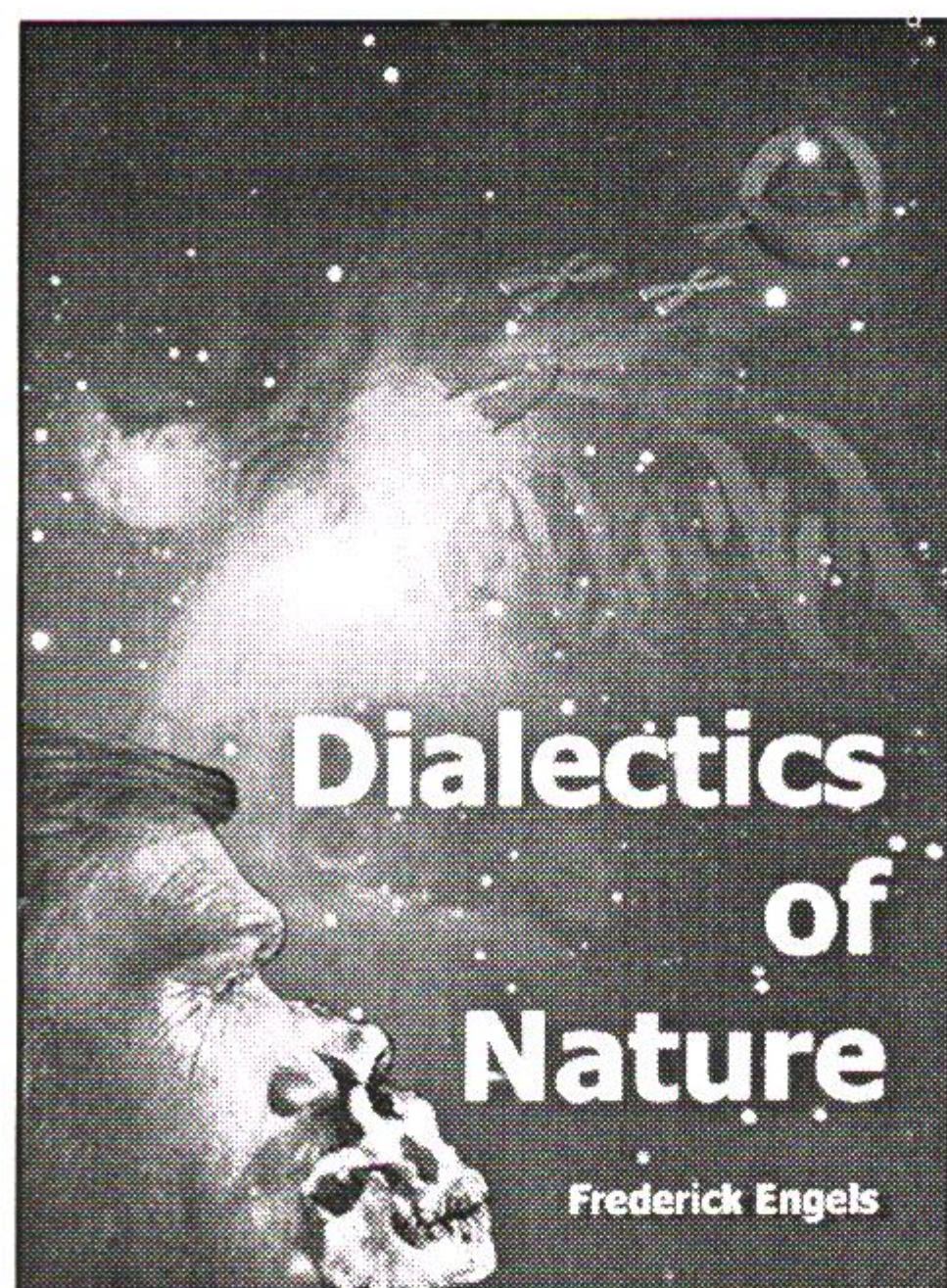
The teachers have decided to observe September 15 as a "black day", when the teachers all across Sindh will hold rallies and protests at their respective schools and colleges. The Teachers' Alliance has announced that their demands must be met by September 30. If these demands are not

met, they will launch a movement of strikes and protests.

The state continues to harass the teachers and many teachers are being dismissed from their jobs or are being forced to leave. Many others are being threatened and face false accusations. Despite the threats and the repression the teachers are determined to continue the fight.

The Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign is actively participating in this struggle in defence of the rights of teachers. The PTUDC not only stands with the teachers in the face of repression but is also campaigning for international solidarity with the struggle.

The Sindh teachers also acknowledge the PTUDC's contribution. A delegation of teachers led by Husain Bux Khamesani visited the Karachi office of the PTUDC and thanked them for raising the question of their struggle internationally. They also thanked all the international organisations that have sent messages of solidarity to them and letters of protest to governments of Pakistan and Sindh. □



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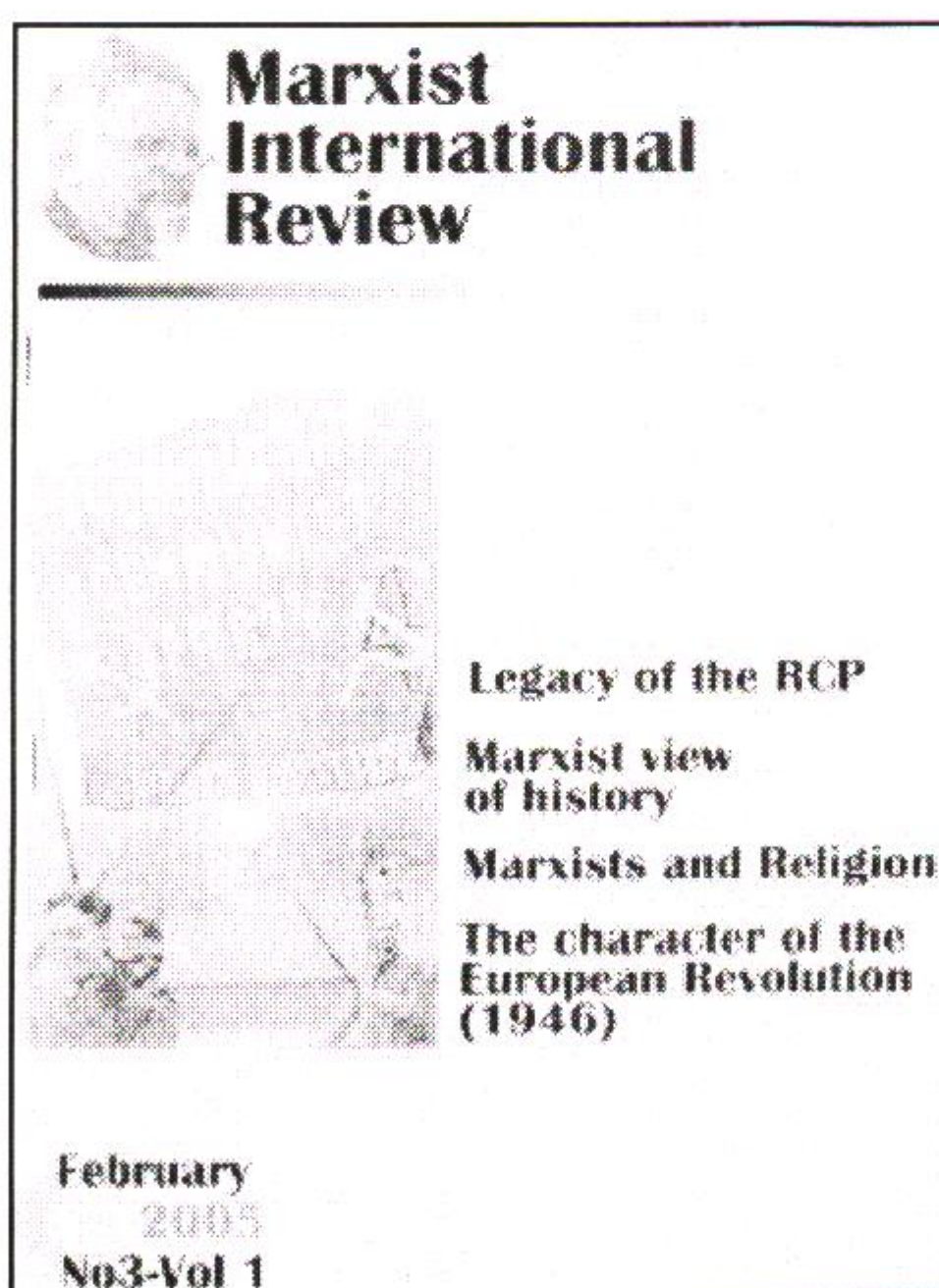
Throughout their life-long collaboration, Marx and Engels developed a fascination with the revolutions in modern science, from biology, anatomy and physiology to astronomy, physics and chemistry. While Marx made a special

study of mathematics, especially differential and integral calculus, Engels devoted his energies in following the natural sciences.

Ever since his arrival in London in September 1870, Engels was anxious to write a comprehensive work on science and dialectical materialism. "To me there could be no question of building up the laws of dialectics into nature", he said, "but of discovering them in it and evolving them from it." In other words, by discovery he would reveal the objective

dialectics of nature and so demonstrate the universal character of the basic laws of materialist dialectics.

The notes and studies for such a work make up the present book, Dialectics of Nature - edited and published in 1925, some thirty years after Engels' death. It is an essential read for all those who want to develop a deeper understanding of Marxist philosophy.



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This issue contains a major article by Mick Brooks in response to Meghnad Desai's book on the Labour Theory of Value, together with supplementary material on this question, and an article by Ted Grant written in 1974 on workers control.

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1 million strong Convention elects "legitimate government"

By Jorge Martin

A massive National Democratic Convention (CND) met in the centre of Mexico City on Saturday, September 16 and decided to elect "a legitimate government" with Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (the candidate of the left-wing PRD in the July 2nd elections) as its president. This was the culmination of a struggle of more than 2 months against electoral fraud which has put into question all the institutions of Mexico's bourgeois democracy. For 48 days, in the run up to the CND, tens of thousands of AMLO supporters had organised a tent city in the centre of Mexico City, paralysing its main thoroughfares, and millions had participated in massive rallies and daily assemblies (the largest on July 31 with 3 million).

The CND was attended by 1,025,724 delegates from all over the country and by tens of thousands of others who had not been officially registered. It is difficult to estimate the size of this massive rally, but it contained anything between 1.5 and 2 million people. In the week prior to the assembly, the Mexican government had tried to prevent it from taking place. September 15 is the traditional day of the "Grito de Dolores" (the shout from Dolores), when the first call for the struggle for independence of Mexico was made by Hidalgo in 1810.

Traditionally this is celebrated by the president giving an address from the National Palace in Zocalo Square at midnight on September 15. This is then followed by a military parade on Mexico's Independence day on the 16th. The government was threatening to use the army to remove the protesters. Finally, the movement decided to withdraw from the square to allow the military parade to go through, but only after they had taken over the Grito de Dolores. The movement decided to reassemble on the afternoon of the 16th for the CND. Showing the weakness of the government, president Fox had to

abandon (for the first time in nearly 100 years) any idea of delivering the Grito de Dolores from the Zocalo and fled to Guanajuato. The official excuse that was given was that intelligence services had information that "groups of PRD radicals were going to kill people". Now even high-ranking officials in the intelligence service are refuting the official government version.

The truth is that in Mexico we have quite an unprecedented situation in which the legitimate government of Fox cannot impose its will on the mass movement. Hundreds of thousands rightly saw it as a victory when left-wing Senator Dolores Ibarra and other representatives of the movement celebrated the Grito de Dolores from the Zocalo.

The CND started about an hour late, delayed by torrential rain. But more than 1 million delegates who filled the Zocalo and the nearby streets of Pino Suárez, 20 de Noviembre, 16 de Septiembre, Madero and 5 de Mayo, did not move and stood there waiting. They had come to the Zocalo for a reason and they would not be moved by the rain. When the meeting started the first speaker was left-wing writer Elena Poniatowska.

She started by mentioning a letter she had received from Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, a former leader of the PRD, in which he advises the movement "not to break the framework of the institutions" by electing Obrador as a "legitimate president". This was received by

a roar of disapproval, with the multitude shouting "Traitor! Traitor!". Cárdenas, and many others in the PRD leadership, have openly disassociated themselves from the resistance movement against electoral fraud. As a result, they have gone from being respected leaders (Cárdenas furthermore is related to president Cárdenas who in 1938 nationalised oil), to being widely despised and rightly considered as traitors.

Another organisation which has been put to the test by this massive movement is the "Otra Campaña" (the Other Campaign) set up by Subcomandante Marcos and the leaders of the EZLN. By openly advocating abstention from the election campaign which the masses saw as an opportunity to change their lives, they have squandered the support and respect they had amongst the workers and peasants throughout Mexico. The leader of the EZLN is now commonly referred to as Subcomandante Marcos ("subcomedian" instead of "subcommander"). Revolutionary events put all organisations and tendencies to the test, and mistakes are paid dearly by those who fail it.

The CND passed a number of resolutions, declaring PAN presidential candidate (who has been declared elected president by the electoral tribunal) as a "usurper" and refusing "to recognise him as a legitimate president of the Republic. A "plan of resistance" was also passed with massive support. This

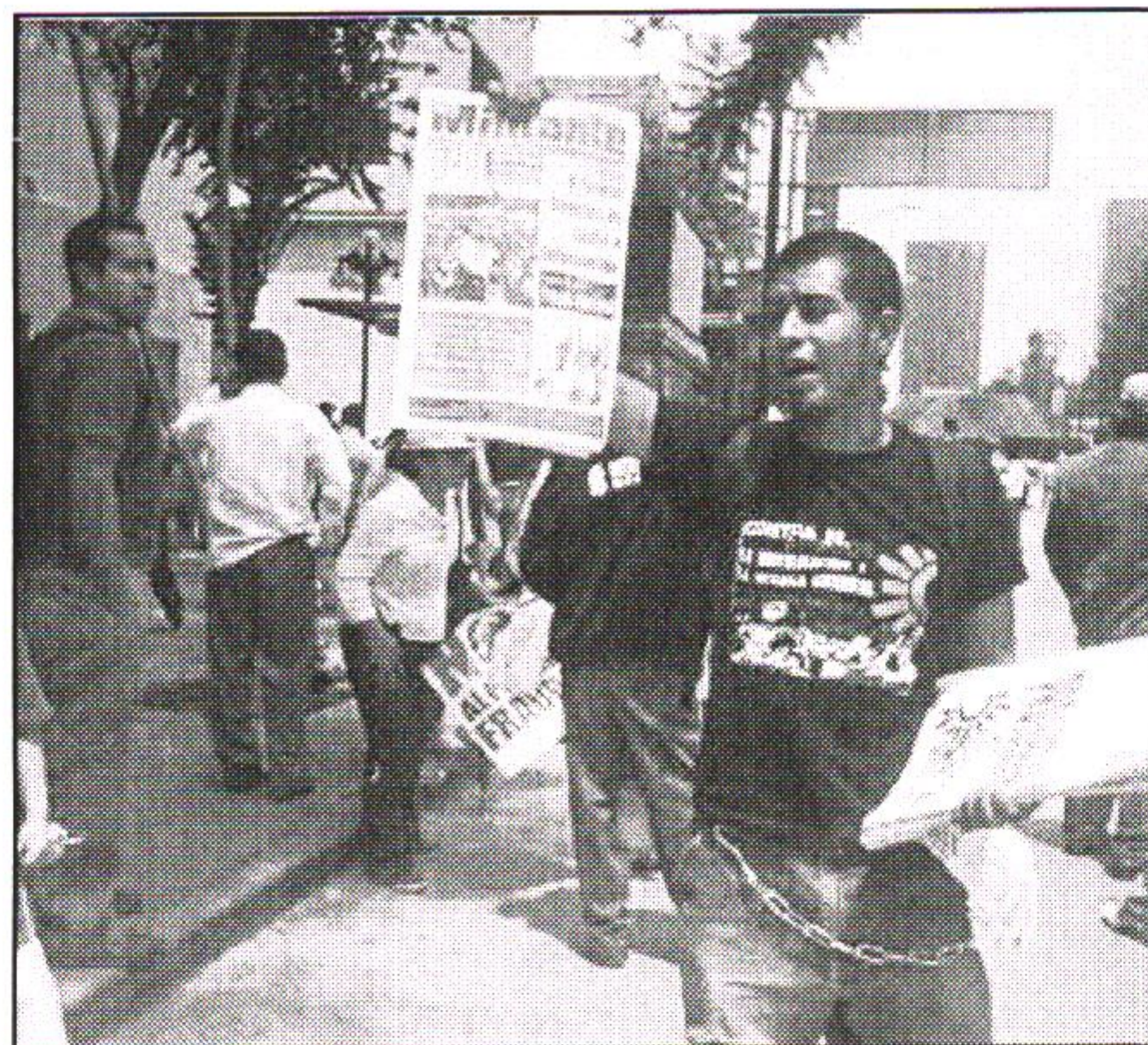
includes a national day of action against the privatisation of energy sources (electricity and oil), a national week of action in defence of free state education in October, and so on. This shows clearly that the character of the movement has gone beyond the question of electoral fraud and the defence of democracy. In fact, this is clearly linked to a rejection of the policies of the right-wing PAN which include the privatisation of Mexico's oil company PEMEX,



of the electricity company, the creation of a two-tier higher education system, the destruction of the social security system and the elimination of basic workers' rights enshrined in the Constitution of 1917 during the Mexican Revolution. But the culmination of the CNP was when the issue of recognising AMLO as legitimate president was put to the massive meeting. There was a proposal to declare him as "head of the resistance" instead, thus making a concession to the established institutions, but this was rejected out of hand, with a massive majority declaring him "president of the Republic".

Crushed against the barriers that created a space for the media in the Zocalo, 84 year old Rafael Pérez Vázquez shouted as loud as he could: "President, he is the president! We have been fighting since the fraud! He was elected and should be president!" It was then decided that AMLO would form a legitimate government and that this would be installed in Mexico City on November 20, Mexico's Revolution Day. After, it was agreed that the highest point of the movement will be a massive mobilisation on December the 1, to "prevent the installation of Calderón as president". Lopez Obrador, in his speech accepting the presidential position, made clear the challenge to the institutions of the ruling class which he described as an "elite block openly composed of the leaders of the PAN and the PRI, the political arm of a small rapacious minority which has caused so much damage to our country". He added that he was proud to be at the head of a "government of the people."

Another issue which has fuelled the anger of the masses is the media blockade imposed by the mass media in Mexico (and we should add, also internationally) on the resistance movement. A commission of "journalists in resistance" was set up which immediately demanded the "expropriation of the TV channels", in order to restore "truthful information, free from the interests of the oligarchy". Leaving the meeting of the CNP, the masses were jubilant and the mood was one of victory. Thousands left in columns with raised clenched fists shouting "se sienta, se sienta, tenemos presidente" (you can hear, you can hear, we have a



president").

Undoubtedly this movement has strengthened the confidence of the masses in their own strength, particularly after a period in which a series of mass movements against the Fox government had ended up in either victories or at least in a draw. The idea has conquered the imagination of the masses that with direct action in the streets they can fundamentally alter the course of events. Even more than that, the way AMLO has conducted the "information assemblies", has given the mass movement the idea that they are the ones who decide and democratically vote on the proposals for action.

Power to decide

However imperfect the democracy of a meeting of 1 million delegates might be (and in effect it became a mass rally rather than a proper convention with delegates and resolutions), the movement feels that they have the power to decide. They will be closely watching what their leaders do, and if they do not do what they expect from them, they will be branded traitors, and the masses will try to replace them with others that reflect more closely their aspirations. A clear challenge to the ruling class and its institutions has been made, and they are clearly afraid of it. Even if they were able to diffuse the movement (and this is not ruled out), the ruling class in Mexico (and its mentors in Washington) are in a very difficult situation.

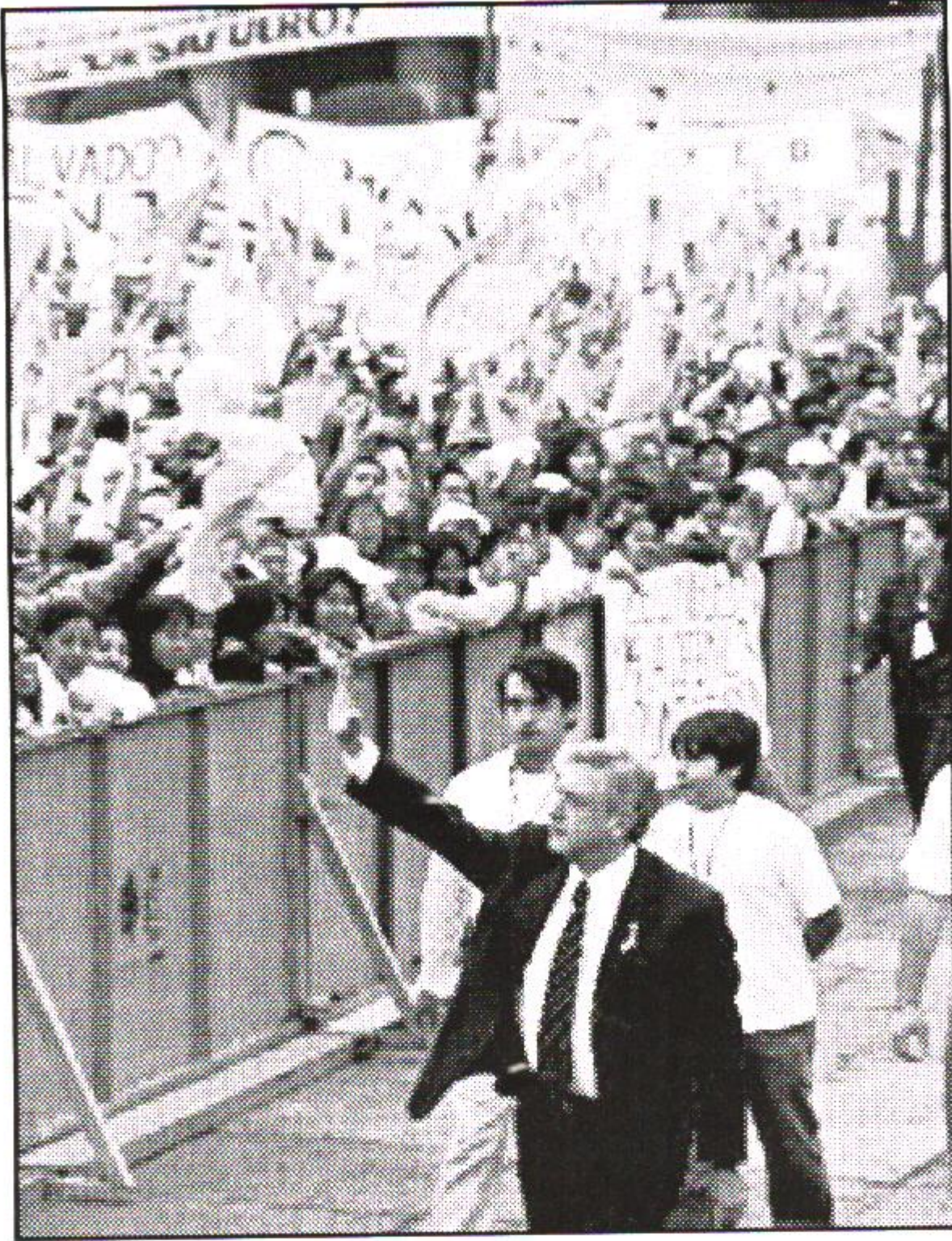
The right-wing government of Fox, which was elected with a sizeable majority, was unable to carry out any

of the counter-reforms that the ruling class and US imperialism were asking for. Every single time it was stopped in its tracks by a mass movement of the workers and peasants. The last one was when it attempted to prevent AMLO from standing in the elections. Two million came out onto the streets and Fox had to publicly withdraw the measure. If the Fox government was weak in the face of the mass movement, just imagine how much weaker would be an eventual Calderón government, assuming it can be installed. The ruling class has already started a carefully organised campaign to re-

establish the legitimacy of its institutions and to brand AMLO and the movement as dangerous outlaws and radicals. The first ones to come out, and it could not be otherwise, were the Cardinals Sandoval and Rivera, who at Sunday mass appealed for Lopez Obrador to recognise Calderón and appealed to him to "accept the rules of the democratic game". They know very well that the movement that has been unleashed as a result of the electoral fraud against AMLO, regardless of his intentions, is challenging not only Calderon but the institutions of "democracy" (capitalist democracy that is) as a whole. Former left-wing intellectuals, international governments, the business organisations, the media (in Mexico and abroad), have all joined the chorus, in defence of democracy and the institutions of government.

While Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez has expressed himself in the strongest possible terms and said he "will not recognise the elected government", Evo Morales in Bolivia took the opposite approach saying that "even if there have been tricks, within the framework of the norms, the winner must be recognised". On Thursday September 14, Bolivia's Foreign Affairs Minister Choquehuanca sent an official letter of recognition to Calderón, in direct contradiction to Bolivia's ambassador to Mexico who had declared that Bolivia would wait until December 1 to take a decision. Meanwhile in Oaxaca, where the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca has declared itself to be the legitimate government of the state and started to take over government functions (public order, transport,

Mexico



etc), the movement continues to challenge the governor. Last week there was an attempt by some leaders of the APPO, from the teachers' union (section 22 of the SNTE), to put an end to the teachers' strike which has been the backbone of the movement so far.

The deal that was proposed included a sizeable wage increase for the teachers (the demand that sparked the movement), but when leading members of the APPO and of SNTE 22 tried to explain the agreement to the rank and file and advocated the end of the strike, this was rejected and the leaders expelled from the assemblies, showing the mood that exists in Oaxaca as well as that the struggle goes beyond the mere struggle for economic demands. Peoples' Assemblies, or similar bodies of dual power under other names have been spreading throughout Oaxaca. The Popular Mixtec Assembly and the APPO announced that these bodies had now spread to Santa Catarina Ticua, Yuxia, San Andrés Chicahuaxtla, Yolomécatl, La Laguna Guadalupe, Río Las Peñas, Siniyuvi, and were in the process to be established in San Juan Mixtepec, Santo Domingo del Estado, Teposcolula and San Agustín Tlacotepec. The APPO also reported that Peoples' Assemblies

were also being set up in other states outside of Oaxaca, like in Guerrero, Michoacán and even in the northern state of Baja California.

It is clear that the strategy of the state is to combine repression with concessions that might force the teachers to abandon the movement, thus weakening it significantly. The nationwide Secretaria de Gobernacion (Ministry of the Interior) has revealed that they are considering sending federal police and even the army to Oaxaca, to re-establish legality. It is not ruled out that they could even find an "institutional" way to remove the hated governor of Oaxaca in order to put an end to the insurrectionary movement. There is the danger that the declaration of AMLO as a president will remain just words. For this new "government" to become a real government it must, at a certain point, clash head on and replace the Calderon government. A situation of dual power (the elements of which exist today in Mexico) cannot last for a long period of time without one replacing the other.

Revolutionary tasks

The main task now for the revolutionary movement in Mexico is for this government elected at the CND to become a real government. This should be done by creating local committees of struggle, in every neighbourhood, factory, school and military barrack, and for these to be linked up by elected representatives at the local, regional, state and national level. These committees should start by struggling for the immediate demands of the masses (for clean water, food, housing, trade union democracy, decent wages, against privatisation, etc), so that the struggle for genuine democracy (workers' democracy) becomes inseparable from the struggle for the improvement of the living conditions of the masses. Then these committees, like in Oaxaca, could start taking over power at the local level, running their own police force accountable to the assemblies, transportation, provision of food,

etc. The calling of a general strike, which has been advocated by the Marxist Tendency Militante since the beginning of the movement, would galvanise the movement and put forward clearly the question of who rules. A general strike demonstrates clearly that it is actually the workers who make the country work and it brings to the fore not only the power they have to paralyse society, but also that they have the power to run it.

What will happen in the next weeks and months in Oaxaca and in Mexico as a whole is difficult to predict. This is a struggle of living forces and there are many factors involved: the quality and the actions of the leadership of the movement, the tiredness of the masses, the manoeuvres of the ruling class and its more or less skilful management of the situation etc., and to this we have to add accidental elements which might propel the movement even further. But one thing is clear: this is not just a "normal" movement against electoral fraud. It has much deeper roots going back over the last 15 years of attacks on the living conditions of the masses, on their acquired rights, the implementation of the NAFTA agreement which destroyed Mexican agriculture and forced millions of Mexicans to emigrate to the US, the widespread feeling that the institutions of bourgeois democracy (the government, the judges, the governors, the media) do not serve the people but only a small minority of the rich and powerful, etc. Because of this, the movement will not go away. It will develop in ebbs and flows, and through these the masses will learn valuable lessons. The best and most advanced activists amongst the workers, the peasants, the indigenous peoples, the youth, must gather around a genuine revolutionary tendency which can put forward a programme that can take the movement forward.

The revolutionary events in Mexico, part of a continent wide movement, are an inspiration for all of us. □

For further analysis read the article by Alan Woods at www.marxist.com

Mexico: Marxist Tendency *Militante* Under Attack - Urgent Appeal For Action

By www.marxist.com

The struggle in Mexico against electoral fraud is developing into a revolutionary situation and its most advanced point is in the state of Oaxaca, where the mass of the population has taken concrete steps to set up the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO), a Soviet-type organisation openly fighting for power.

On August 25th, in his regular column in *El Universal* (one of the main Mexican newspapers), Raymundo Riva Palacio signed an article called "Guerrillas", in which he backed the slanderous allegations about the "guerrilla" character of the APPO, accusing it of being infiltrated by the Revolutionary Army of the People (EPR). He then added the Marxist Tendency *Militante* in his amalgam:

"Reality, however, backs up the accusation of the Oaxaca government that the problem they are facing is one of urban guerrillaism. The EPR has been joined by a number of tactical allies, like the revolutionary Trotskyist current which, through its mouthpiece *El Militante*, published on August 17th a text about 'The struggle against fraud and the road of Oaxaca' where it denounces the 'electoral fraud' allegedly committed by president Vicente Fox, and while supporting the resistance started by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, raises the need to increase the contradictions and the creation of 'one, two, three Oaxacas'. This support for Lopez Obrador cannot be seen as passengers on the same boat, but rather as a tactical device by the guerrillas, taking advantage of the political conditions created by the candidate of the coalition For the Wellbeing of All [Lopez Obrador]"

(<http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/columnas/60018.html>)

The comrades from the Marxist Tendency *Militante* have replied to these attacks by reiterating that they have always disassociated themselves from the methods of individual terrorism and have always defended the methods of struggle of the working class: the mass mobilisation, the general strike and the organisation of the

class into committees of struggle, strike pickets, etc. These are precisely the methods that have been used in Oaxaca and for which the APPO is being accused of "urban guerrillaism".

On September 13 and 14 the students of the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN) in Mexico City organised a successful movement against the attempt by education authorities to change the academic rules to make it harder for students to finish their studies. Mass meeting at most schools and a demonstration managed to force the IPN director, Enrique Villa, to withdraw these new rules. The movement was led by the Polytechnic Committee of Struggle (CLEP), the traditional students organisation at the IPN, going back to the 1968 student movement. The CLEP is now part of the Students Committee for the Defence of State Education (CEDEP). Student organisers from the Marxist Tendency *Militante* have a majority in the leadership of both organisations. IPN Director Enrique Villa slandered the CLEP-CEDEP in the media, and named three of the main activists of the organisation (see for instance <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/142911.html>, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/09/15/055n1soc.php>)

Now, unsigned leaflets have appeared at the IPN in which slanderous accusations of "fraud" are made against CLEP - CEDEP for its leading role in the victorious struggle in August of students for access to higher education, and repeating slanderous accusations of links between *Militante* and the EPR "urban guerrillas"

The comrades from *Militante* have argued within the movement against electoral fraud, for the need to call a 24-hour general strike and to make the National Democratic Convention called for September 16th into a genuine body of workers' power, and for the need to spread the insurrection in Oaxaca nationwide. All this work has been conducted openly, in mass meetings, at the tent camps, in the Zocalo square, in the neighbourhoods, in the schools and universities, in workplaces



and trade union branches. These slogans are getting a wide echo amongst the hundreds of thousands and millions who are participating in the mass mobilisations of the last couple of months. A small indication of this is the massive increase in the circulation and regularity of *Militante*, their paper, of which tens of thousands of copies have been distributed.

This is the real reason why they have been singled out for attack. And the attack does not come from one or two right wing journalists. *El Universal* is a serious organ of the ruling class in Mexico, which is at present extremely worried about the explosive revolutionary situation they are facing. If they attack *Militante* in its pages, then they are either doing so under instructions from the state or are giving the state instructions on whom to target.

Either way, the comrades have replied by redoubling their work in organising a revolutionary Marxist tendency in Mexico that can bring this mighty movement to victory. □

We appeal to all activists in the labour and trade union movement internationally to add their names to the letter of protest that can be found on the website www.marxist.com (also send your name, position and organisation to editor@marxist.com)

Chavez speech at the UN:

Class polarisation reaches an even greater level

By Patrick Larsen

The controversial speech of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez at a conference of the United Nations in New York on Wednesday September 20, in which he called Bush "the devil" and condemned the actions of US imperialism, was covered massively by the media world-wide.

While many of the speeches at the UN gathering were the same boring and largely uninteresting speeches about the need for "dialogue" and "humanitarian aid", Chavez's speech was a ferocious attack on imperialism that caught the attention, not only of international observers, but also of millions of ordinary working men and women around the world.

In Caracas hundreds of activists of the Bolivarian movement gathered in Bolivar Square and watched the speech on big screens set up for the occasion. When Chavez called Bush "the Devil" big waves of enthusiasm swept through the audience.

On the other hand, the bourgeois press in Venezuela, the officials of the counter-revolutionary opposition, and of course the spokesmen of the US administration, have condemned the speech in violent terms.

The mouthpiece of the Venezuelan oligarchy, *El Nacional* carried an editorial the day after entitled "Insults at the UN", saying that Chavez had shown "the worst of himself" with this speech and stating that it damaged the international interests of Venezuela and its people. In this editorial the speech was portrayed as personal insults, and mere rhetoric. The same line was carried in other bourgeois papers. This newspaper even went so far as to put a caricature of Chavez on the front page denouncing himself as the true devil, because the national assembly has just decided to invest some 43.5 billion bolivars in more military equipment.

What is a completely justified attempt on the part of the Bolivarian government to arm itself in defence against a possible foreign intervention is portrayed by the bourgeoisie as an act of militarism, and is compared to the arming of the imperialist powers.

The speech has also served to

deepen the antagonisms between the Bolivarian government and that of the US even further. Officials in the US administration said that the speech was not worth commenting on and ex-president Bill Clinton said that Chavez was "damaging his own country and people" with such radical declarations. But even more serious than such comments was the sudden arrest of the Venezuelan minister of foreign affairs, Nicholas Maduro, on Saturday, September 22. He was detained for one and a half hours in the New York airport on his way back from the UN summit. US officials said that the incident was a mistake and that the police in the airport did not know that he was a Venezuelan official.

Class Divisions

In spite of these claims, the arrest was obviously not a coincidence, but a clear provocation on the part of the Bush government. They want to send a signal to the Venezuelan government and its allies throughout the world. Chavez said the move was a direct attack of the Empire and said that Maduro had been accused of participating in "acts of terrorism" related to the patriotic rebellion of February 4, 1992.

In general what one sees so clearly in the different reactions to the speech is the class line that divides Venezuelan society and also the enormous contradiction between the interests of imperialism and the Bolivarian revolution. The masses are proud of President Chavez because he dares to stand up - even in the Lion's cage - and denounce the crimes of the ruling class. The masses feel that they have a representative that has not been corrupted and renounced the struggle.

This is not the place to go in to the details of Chavez's speech, which does have some contradictory elements and aspects that Marxists do not agree with (especially the parts relating to the reforming of the UN). But when Chavez uses hard words to denounce imperialism it is because what he says corresponds to all the criminal acts of repression, intervention, murder and

torture that the US empire conducts in Iraq, Afghanistan and ultimately with their support for the bloody Israeli attack on Lebanon. Within Venezuela events seem to be speeding up. On Saturday Chavez once again explained, "some say that the Devil has given the order to murder me", referring to a possible assassination attempt to wipe him out. In another interview on Panorama Digital, Chavez said that the biggest danger to the revolution "comes from within" and that:

"The main threat is within. There is a constant bureaucratic counter-revolution. I am an enemy on a daily basis. I have to walk around with a whip, because I am being attacked from all sides by this enemy, the old bureaucracy and a new one which resists changes. So much so that I have to be constantly on guard when I give an instruction, and follow it up so that it is not stopped, or diverted, or minimised by this bureaucratic counter-revolution which exists within the state. This would be one of the elements of the new phase that we are entering into the transformation of the State.

The State was transformed at the macro level, but the micro levels remain intact. We need to think from now about a new package of laws, to transform the macro political and juridical level down to the lowest levels of the state in order to defeat this resistance.

A sister threat to that of bureaucratic counter-revolution is the counter-revolution of bureaucracy. This is another terrible threat, because it strikes where you least expect it"

This is a very accurate description of the struggle that is taking place within the state apparatus between the revolutionaries and the reformists. It is very likely that these contradictions, which were exposed publicly in the debate over the expropriation of the golf-courses, will lead to even more profound clashes in the coming months leading up to as well as after the elections on December 3. This can be decisive for the future of the revolution. □

The illusions of peace under imperialist order

By Yossi Schwartz in Haifa

If one were to believe the government of Israel, one would also have to believe that the Israeli army won the war in Lebanon. To prove his point the Prime Minister Olmert quotes the fact that the weak Lebanese army is now in the South of Lebanon, the Hezbollah fighters do not carry weapons openly, the so-called International Forces whose role is to defend Israel - have been deployed in Lebanon, and finally that Nasrallah does not dare show himself in public because Israel has threatened to kill him.

But to believe what the Israeli government says is like believing in Grimm's fairy tales. Last week Hezbollah called a rally to celebrate its victory in the war. That rally is the real living proof of the strength of Hezbollah. This rally was called in a country where as a result of the Israeli bombardment 1,191 civilians died, 974,184 people were displaced, 4,405 were injured and 30,000 homes were destroyed. (Source: Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, 26/07/2006). This must be a source of a pride for the barbarian Prime Minister of Israel.

On August 23, Amnesty International presented its report on the Israeli policy of deliberate destruction of the civilian infrastructure. According to this report: Israel destroyed or damaged in south Lebanon 1489 buildings, 21 of 29 bridges over the Litani River, 535 sections of road and 545 cultivated fields during its 34-day military offensive. In Beirut, 326 residential buildings were either damaged or destroyed in the southern suburbs, of which 269 were located in the Haret Horaik area. The oil spill, caused by an Israeli strike on the power station in Jeyyeh, threatened the entire 105-mile long coastline. It could take up to 10 years for the affected area to recover.

The Israeli Armed Forces caused far more damage to Lebanon than Hezbollah's rocket attacks on Israel. While

the Israel army deliberately killed more than 1000 civilians, most of them women and children, Hezbollah with its rockets attacks on Israel killed 43 civilians and 119 soldiers.

Lebanon is facing an economic slump this year according to the IMF World Economic Outlook: "The Lebanese economy is expected to contract by 3.2 percent in 2006, after 1.0 percent growth in 2005 and a 6.0 percent expansion in 2004." Political polarisation in Lebanon is sharper now than at any time since the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon in 2005. On the one hand there are the rich and the supporters of the imperialists led by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, whose role as an American puppet has not escaped the masses, and on the other the poor and the workers, most of whom at the present see Hezbollah as their leadership.

The Lebanese Finance Minister Jihad Azour, has been openly speaking of "grave political and social consequences" if the donor states do not help reduce the country's public debt which will reach the staggering figure \$41 billion by the end of this year. The cease-fire agreement and the deployment of international imperialist forces have increased the feeling of insecurity among the people in South Lebanon who prefer to rely on Hezbollah fighters. They trust only in Hezbollah. In spite of the war damage it has suffered

during the bombings it has come out stronger politically and possibly even militarily. Thus what we have in Lebanon is a kind of dual power. On the one hand the power of a pro-imperialist government protected by foreign troops and on the other hand Hezbollah supported by the poor. Proof of this facts came last week on Thursday (September 21), when thousands of poor people were seen marching from all over South Lebanon towards Beirut. On Friday the roads leading to Beirut were full of cars and buses waving Hezbollah flags as they were coming to the rally. At the site where the rally was to take place in south Beirut, workers set up tens of thousands of white plastic chairs facing the podium and organisers prepared tens of thousands of banners and flags. Two hours before the rally was to start, thousands of people had already arrived at the site on foot, in buses and in cars, chanting Nasrallah's name and waving Lebanese and Hezbollah flags.

The final turnout was really huge, with 800,000 at the rally! The huge turnout in a country of just four million was not only an act of defiance to Israel but also a clear challenge to the U.S.-puppet government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, whose army did not participate in the war to defend Lebanon even though it was attacked more than once by the Israeli air force. Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan

Nasrallah appearing before this immense cheering crowd said that Hezbollah would not hand over its weapons until a new government was established in Lebanon. "The existing government is unable to protect Lebanon, nor to rebuild Lebanon neither to unify it" he said. And he called for a "new government of national unity." Giving up weapons now "under this government... means leaving Lebanon exposed before Israel to kill and detain and bomb whoever they want, and clearly



Israel-Lebanon

we will not accept that...No army in the world would be able to disarm Hezbollah" he said. Nasrallah further added that Hezbollah has emerged from the war stronger than it had been before it. "It has recovered all its organizational and military capabilities," he said. "It is stronger than it was before July 12. It has now more than 20,000 rockets".

In response to the show of strength that contradict the Israeli government's claims, Israeli Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mark Regev said Hezbollah, "is not only challenging the government of Lebanon, but the entire international community and as a matter of fact is spitting in the face of the international community by refusing to disarm and should not have any rockets." In Lebanon, echoing his master's voice, Butros Harb, an MP who supports Siniora's government, said Hezbollah's refusal to disarm was unacceptable and expressed concern about the rally. These comments should be taken as a warning to Nasrallah, as no state will tolerate for ever a state within a state, as the PLO experience in Jordan in 1970 proves. Either Hezbollah will take power or sooner or later the Lebanese government with the support of the imperialists, including Israel, will smash it. And as to a government of "national unity", Hezbollah can learn much from the experience of the Palestinians. The imperialists will not allow such government unless it serves their interests.

Hezbollah is not a Marxist revolutionary organization that can overthrow the capitalist state and establish a workers' state as part of the revolutionary transformation of the entire region. If it comes to power within the existing state it will face the same problems the Hamas government is facing. It will be blamed for the suffering of the population under imperialist siege. Nevertheless, the victory of Hezbollah is a turning point for the Middle East as it has aroused the masses. But Hezbollah cannot offer a way out. It has no real alternative to capitalism. If it were in power in Lebanon it would attempt to run the system and not fundamentally change it. Therefore it would end up applying the same old economic policies that are dictated by capitalism. To finish the job and to end the imperialist order a Marxist revolutionary leadership, fighting for a socialist federation throughout the entire region is required, a leadership that will



be able to speak to the workers and poor over the heads of the ruling cliques, including in Israel, and offer them a common future free not only from imperialist domination but also from capitalism.

Israel in crisis

While the people of Lebanon celebrate, the crisis of the Israeli state deepens while the same government remains in office. In spite of the government's claim that it won the war, very few people in Israel believe it. Israeli Defense Forces Chief Education Officer, Ilan Harari, stated that Israel in actual fact had lost the war. At the same time as the 18 richest families in Israel are becoming richer, the attacks on the workers and poor continue. According to the 2005 report of Israel's National Insurance Institute (NII), the government agency responsible for social support payments, pensions and child allowances, the gap between the rich and poor is growing. This growing inequality is despite the economic growth of 5.2 percent in 2005. The number of Israelis living below the poverty line increased from 1.53 million in 2004 to 1.63 million in 2005. 24.7 percent of all citizens are living below the poverty line. At the same time the percentage of Israeli Arabs living below the poverty line increased from 49.9 percent to 52.1 percent. At the same time the income of the top executives has increased from 2000 to 2005 by 39%. According to the Adva Centre, a social research organization, the incomes of the wealthiest 10 percent of Israelis continue to rise. Over the past five years, the growing gap between rich and poor has accelerated. In 2003, the top 10 percent of Israeli families received 28 percent of total income, while the bottom 50 percent received just 24 percent.

These figures do not reflect the real situation following the war in Lebanon

that has only increased the inequality. The war cost at least as much as 14.5 billion shekels, according to the Finance Ministry. The workers and the poor rather than the rich, according to the logic of the government, should pay the price of the war of the ruling class. The 2007 budget that was passed recently put a freeze on any spending aimed at helping Israel's poor while the military gained over 8 additional billion shekels. This growing inequality is nothing less than a war on the workers and the poor and it will increase the instability of Israeli society. Polls have revealed the public is dissatisfied with Olmert and would vote him out of office if elections were held today. The same polls indicated that the popularity of the right wing opposition Likud Party, is on the rise. We can expect sharp changes of moods and shifts not only to the right but also to the left. Clearly there are two Israels, those who are gaining from the situation and are part of the imperialist order, and the majority who are exploited, becoming poorer and are used as cannon fodder by the local rich and their imperialist friends.

The only solution for the Israeli majority is to join the masses of the region in an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle, to struggle for a federated Israeli-Palestinian socialist state as part of the socialist federation of the Middle East. The Hezbollah victory that is also Iran's victory has threatened not only the ruling class in Israel that is losing its position as the only regional power, but also the Arab regimes backed by the imperialist powers. This has led Bush's advisors to plan a new strategy to control the Middle East. The idea is to forge an alliance either with the Arab governments, including Syria and Hamas, in order to isolate Iran, or to forge close ties with Iran and help it to become a regional power supporting the US order.

The rulers of Israel do not like this development, but Israel is only one of the cards in the hand of the White House and Bush is not playing solo any more but poker as other imperialist powers are competing for influence in the region. This changing reality was not only reflected in Bush's speech to the UN last week, but also in the so-called Arab League peace plan.

In this context Iran's former president, Mohammad Khatami, received a tourist visa to visit the United States, and clearly President George W Bush

himself approved the visa request. Then the president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, received a visa for the United Nations General Assembly, and also an invitation to appear in New York before the Council on Foreign Relations. At the same time Bush invited a well known journalist of the Washington Post, David Ignatius, to interview him in the White House on Iran.

The interview indicated an important shift in Bush's approach. He did not threaten military action against Iran; he did not even mention sanctions. He limited himself to saying he had deep concerns over the desire of some of Iran's leaders to develop nuclear weapons and their attitude toward Israel. America recognizes Iran's role "as an important nation in the Middle East," Bush said. And then added. "I would say to the Iranian people: We respect your history. We respect your culture... I recognize the importance of your sovereignty that you're a proud nation... I understand that you believe it is in your interest, your sovereign interest, and your sovereign right to have nuclear power... I would want to work for a solution to meeting your rightful desires to have civilian nuclear power. I would tell the Iranian people that we have no desire for conflict."

Bush is basically saying that the US will help Iran to develop into a regional power with economic capability if Iran gives up the idea of nuclear weapons. Of course we cannot know whether Iran will give up on the idea of having nuclear weapons, but the Iranians must be aware of the fact that the US does not dare attack North Korea because it has such weapons but it did attack Iraq knowing full well that Saddam Hussein did not possess such weapons on the eve of the war.

We have no way of knowing whether the president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will accept the role the US wants him to play. He is aware of the fact that at the same time that Bush has changed his tone the imperialists are working to replace him with a puppet government like the current one in Lebanon.

At the moment he appears as a friend of Lebanon and president Chavez of Venezuela. One thing is sure the only real friends of the people of Lebanon and Venezuela are the workers and poor of Iran and not the ruling

clique. At the same time as this game is going on, Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal of Saudi Arabia and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, in separate interviews with The Associated Press during the meeting of the UN General Assembly, spoke of the urgent need to revive the process which has been bogged down for three years. At a Security Council meeting on Thursday, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa called for an immediate negotiation between the Arab states and Israel. He said that a final settlement would have to include Israel's full withdrawal from the Palestinian territory, resolving the problem of Palestinian refugees, and the creation of a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem. Lavrov reflecting the growing role of Russia in the region, said this sentiment is not limited to the Arab countries. Support for such an agreement is also "growing among Russians as well as other power brokers overseeing the peace process, that it must be re-energized to prevent further conflict.

New peace process?

Since the end of Israeli-Hezbollah fighting in Lebanon on August 14, the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria have been saying that in order to prevent further conflicts, the time for a new push in the peace process is now." The Saudi foreign minister said he had been encouraged by the fact that George W. Bush is now showing a "new concentration" on the Middle East peace process. But he added that Washington is not yet viewed as an honest broker within the Arab world. He went on to point out that the US Administration is coming round to the idea that peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis would help its other interests in the region, including fighting terrorism.

The changing reality of the Middle East was reflected by the announcement of the so-called "Quartet" (the U.S., the European Union, the United Nations and Russia). This body welcomes the efforts of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to form a government of national unity, in the hope that the platform of such a government would reflect "Quartet principles and allow for early engagement." The Quartet is not demanding that the new government recognize Israel, and

Hamas is not even being asked to recognize the Arab League peace initiative! Thus, the imperialists are ready to recognize Hamas on condition that this movement plays a supportive role in the imperialist order. Hamas is simply being asked not to undermine this order with statements such as "we will never recognize Israel." Under such circumstances the EU would consider renewing its ties with the Palestinian government. The problem is that to get the leaders of the Palestinians to play the game the imperialists want is easier said than done. It is one thing for the leaders to agree, it is another thing to get this accepted by the Palestinian masses who are suffering daily.

The destiny of this peace plan, as well as the US attempt to bring Iran on board, is the same as all other attempts to solve the conflicts by the imperialist. It will end up in the same place as all other such plans, in the dustbin. The rulers of Israel will not allow Palestinian self-rule, not even within the 1967 occupied territories with Jerusalem as a capital; not to speak of the return of the refugees. Nor will it return the Golan Heights. Neither will it quietly accept Iran as a regional power. The same is true for the Arab regimes that will oppose Iran as the major power in the service of imperialism.

The imperialists and their servants are very good at creating problems that they cannot solve. The root of the problem is that the entire imperialist order based on decaying capitalism is an obstacle to the development of the productive forces, an obstacle that keeps the majority of the population in the region in dire poverty. This contradiction is destined to get bigger. The only way out is for the working class to place itself at the head of the masses in the struggle to solve the democratic tasks. Only if the working class takes power into its own hands will there be any hope of a solution.

The contradictions within the present socio-economic order to not allow for any long-lasting "peaceful" solution. The underlying contradictions will come to the surface again and again. That is why genuine socialist in the region must join together in a common struggle for socialist transformation of the entire region. And this can only take place as part of the common struggle of workers in all countries for the socialist transformation of the world. □

fighting fund

Help Us Raise £5000 Before the End of the Year

During the summer one helpful reader passed a glossy leaflet to me headed 'Raising Funds from The Rich.' Ah, Ha! I thought, the solution to all our problems. Instead of writing this column each month to raise funds from readers, why not simply empty the pockets of a few toffs?

The leaflet refers to a one-day conference set for this October in London. We are promised a whole load of rich people will be there to 'share their enthusiasm for philanthropy and give advice... on how to build successful relationships with wealthy people.' Simple then, I go along and explain to these people who have money burning a hole in their pockets that their wad of dosh is the surplus value stolen from the working class and that society would be much better off under socialism with a planned economy and the defeat of capitalism and imperialism. Then the credit cards would start flashing. Well, maybe not. Philanthropy on the part of the ruling class is their way of feeling less guilty about the huge sums they have secured at our expense.

In fact this conference looks more like an attempt to raise funds FOR the rich since those hopeful souls attending are being asked to stump up £135. Maybe I'm better off sticking with my original approach of making a class appeal to those who have most to gain from the struggle for socialism and the ideas of Marxism.

Over the last month we have been concentrating on the Ted Grant memorial appeal. Adding donations and pledges together means that after deducting costs of the memorial meeting we

have over £4000 to start the book project. Of course, this figure is dependent on all the pledges and IOUs being redeemed as soon as possible otherwise we will be left short. So if this applies to you, please get the cash in!

We have a target of £5000 for the fighting fund by the end of the Xmas period. This can be reached if every reader and seller plays their part. The whole history of our movement is one of sacrifice to build our forces. This has always involved time, effort and money - and it is the money I am after here. Even a small donation can make a difference if it is added to others, just as we know that when we take joint action no force however powerful or rich can stand against us.

Donations can be made in a number of ways:

- By cheque to us at PO Box 2626, London E14 6WG (made payable to Socialist Appeal SC).

- Cheques and cash can also be paid in over the counter at any branch of Abbey National quoting account number K2018479SOC.

- TransCash payments can also be made at any Post Office into Alliance and Leicester account number 562 528 601, sort code 72 00 00, reference BBC.

If you wish you can also ask your bank to pay a regular amount by standing order each month into our accounts. Simply use the information above when instructing your bank or contact us and we will send you a special form you can just fill out and send in. Your support is appreciated - thank you in advance.

Steve Jones

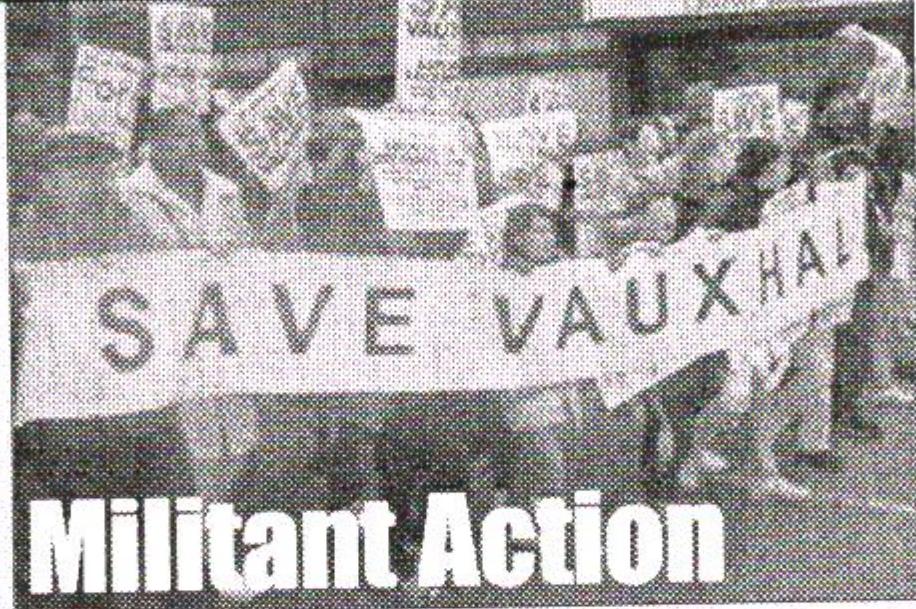
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Ted Grant Memorial Meeting

in Newcastle.

Saturday, 14 October, 2-5pm at the Ouseburn Farm, Lime Street ,
under Byker Bridge

ALL WELCOME

Ted Grant Memorial Meeting

in Glasgow.

Tuesday, 17 October, 7.30pm
at Friends Meeting House,
Elmbank Crescent, Charing Cross. Charing Cross metro.

ALL WELCOME

Ted Grant Memorial Fund

We are appealing to all our readers to give a donation to this fund to raise the necessary resources to help publish Ted Grant's writings. This is the real way to celebrate Ted's priceless legacy. Please make cheques payable to Socialist Appeal and send to SA, PO Box 50525, London E14 6WG

noticeboard

October 2006

"Hands Off Venezuela! Many thanks to all you fighters of the world who are backing this campaign for the freedom not only of Venezuela but the whole of the world."

President Hugo Chavez

Join Hands Off Venezuela!

Send us your details with a cheque payable to "Hands off Venezuela" for £7.50 or £5 unwaged (suggested fee) to HOV, 100 Armadale Close, London, N17 9PL

www.handsoffvenezuela.org / britain@handsoffvenezuela.org

Socialist Appeal Stands for:

✚ **No to Blairism! For a Labour government with a bold socialist programme!** Labour must break with big business and Tory economic policies. Vote Labour and fight to reclaim the party.

✚ **A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.** £8.00 an hour as a step toward this goal, with no exemptions.

✚ **Full employment!** No redundancies. The right to a job or decent benefits. For a 32 hour week without loss of pay. No compulsory overtime. For voluntary retirement at 55 with a decent full pension for all.

✚ **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.

✚ **The repeal of all Tory anti-union laws.** Full employment rights for all from day one. For the right to strike, the right to union representation and collective bargaining.

Election of all trade union officials with the right of recall. No official to receive more than the wage of a skilled worker.

✚ **Action to protect our environment.** Only public ownership of the land, and major industries, petro-chemical enterprises, food companies, energy and transport, can form the basis of a genuine socialist approach to the environment.

✚ **A fully funded and fully comprehensive education system under local democratic control.** Keep big business out of our schools and colleges. Free access for all to further and higher education. Scrap tuition fees. No to student loans. For a living grant for all over 16 in education or training.

✚ **The outlawing of all forms of discrimination.** Equal pay for equal work. Invest in quality childcare facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act.

✚ **The reversal of the Tories' cuts in the health service.** Abolish private health care. For a National Health Service, free to all at the point of need, based on the nationalisation of the big drug companies that squeeze their profits out of the health of working people.

✚ **Reclaim the Labour Party!** Defeat Blairism! Fight for Party democracy and socialist policies. For workers' MPs on workers' wages.

✚ **The abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.** Full economic powers for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, enabling them to introduce socialist measures in the interests of working people.

✚ **No to sectarianism.** For a Socialist United Ireland linked by a voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain.

✚ **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.

✚ **Socialist internationalism.** No to the bosses European Union. Yes to a socialist united states of Europe, as part of a world socialist federation.



Socialist Appeal

Marxist voice of the labour movement

NUS Demo: For A United Struggle of Students and Workers

While the Blairite education ministers tell us to "learn to love top-up fees" tens of thousands of students pump up the profits of the loan companies and thousands drop the idea of going to university altogether. This is the perspective that the system offer us.

The demo called by the NUS for 29th October is a good opportunity to put up a fight against the plans to further the privatisation of our education system, but also another example of the need for a serious fight against that privatisation. We have witnessed many demonstrations in recent years that were successful but never went far enough a challenging the plans of the government and the bosses. Students are nowadays more dependent on bank balances than their abilities or aspirations to enter university, this situation must be halted. The debate about top-up fees, extended loans or whatever formula they come up with to make more profit is alien to the student movement. We must oppose any further privatisation and we cannot settle for anything less than a return to 1997, ie no fees and living grants.

It will be those universities with high top-up fees that will be able to afford the most eminent staff and the most impressive resources. Meanwhile, students from poorer backgrounds will be most likely to congregate in universities that charge lower fees in effect these will become "second class univer-

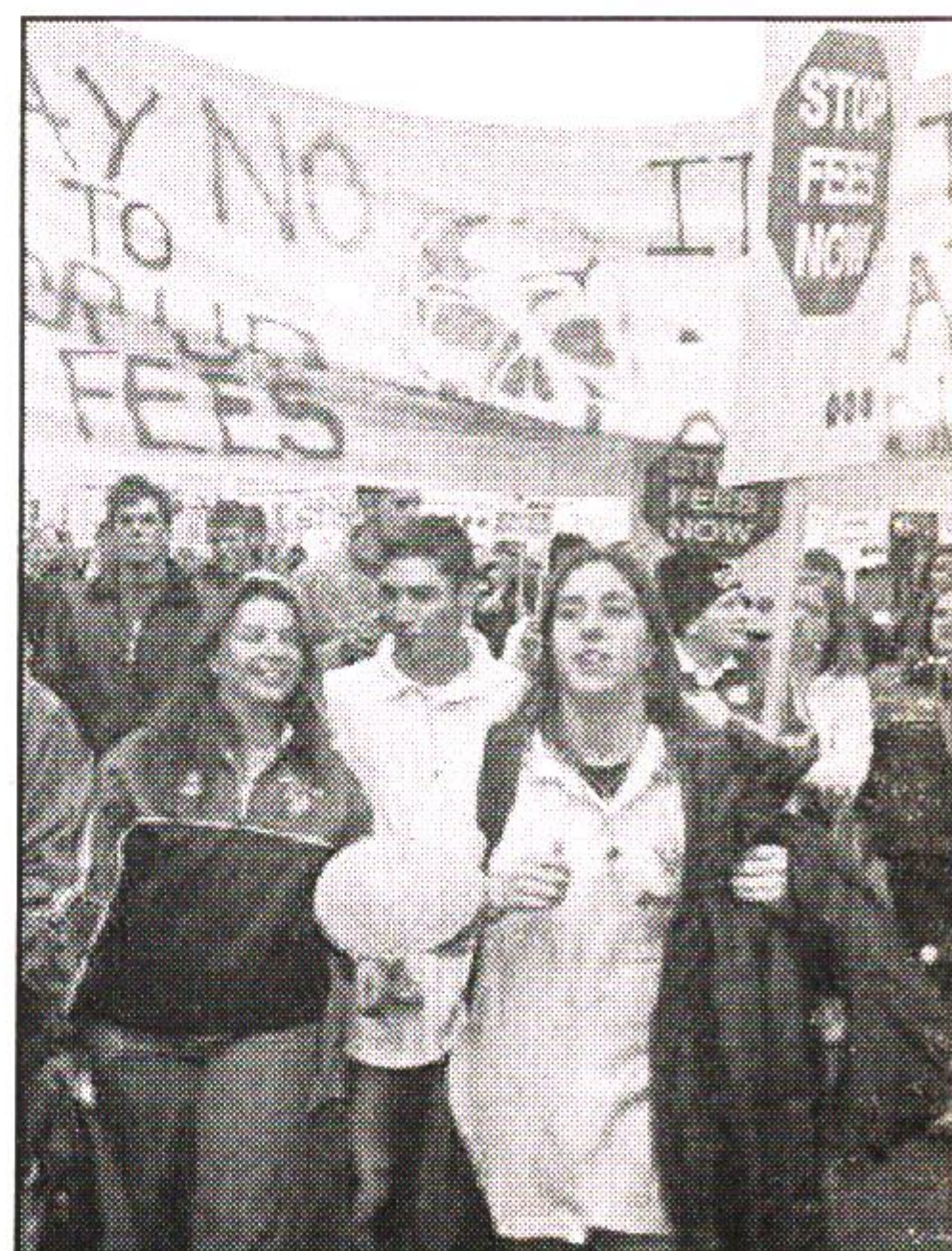
by Adam Ley-lange, Edinburgh

sities".

According to NUS figures, average student debt increased from £2,212 in 1992 to £13,501 in 2005 and is predicted to reach £20,000 for entrants in 2005. Shockingly, average graduate debt is forecast to be £44,000 by 2023. But it is not enough to denounce this scandalous situation it is time to act, we cannot wait for the next government or 2009 when the next review is due, by then hundreds of thousands of ex-students will be drowning in debt and de-facto poverty wages while the banks increase their profits.

This is not just a British phenomenon, all over Europe attacks have been taking place in the last few years, the NUS should pay attention to how some of those attacks - the so called Bolkestein offensive- have been stopped. France is probably the best example that proves that militancy pays off. We should study the French victory and the Greek mass demonstrations, we cannot just moan about how bad the situation is, a one-off demonstration is not enough. Plans must be made for further action to keep up the momentum, and an appeal must be made to all education workers and the wider labour movement for solidarity and support if the privatisation of our education is to be defeated.

- No to top-up fees and student loans!
- Free quality education for all and at all levels!
- A living grant for all students!
- For a united campaign of school students, university students and education workers in defence of our education!
- For a socialist system that puts education before the profits of big business and the rich!



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