

GOODBYE AND GOOD RIDDANCE

by Daphne Liddle

PRIME Minister Tony Blair has never had an easy relationship with Britain's organised working class – the trade union movement. He comes from a middle class Tory family and has never grasped the socialist vision of giving real power to workers.

Control freak Blair has always been afraid of them and prefers to patronise workers from a safe distance.

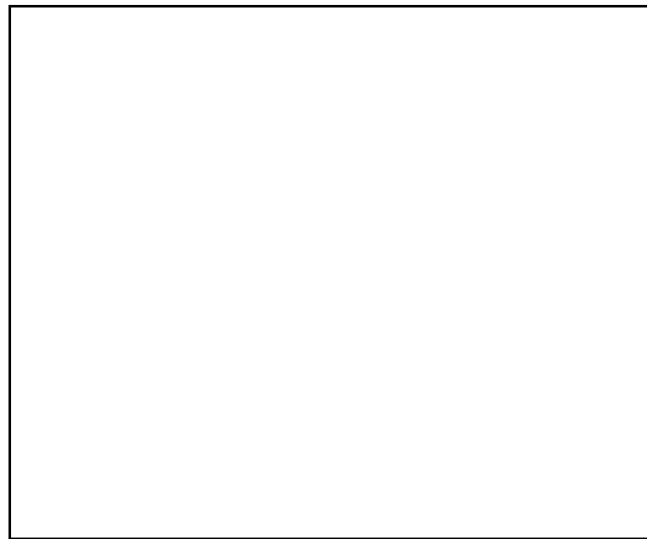
And in his final speech to the TUC annual conference in Brighton last Tuesday, without a barrier of spin doctors to protect him, he showed his real feelings when flustered by some serious heckling and a protest walkout by members of the RMT union.

He expressed his contempt for trade union and Labour Party internal democracy: "Government is a hard, difficult business, but it is a darned sight better than wasting our time passing resolutions that no one ever listens to and people never even think about.

That is the brutal truth," he said.

In other words *he* never listens to debate or resolutions or considers such things worthy of thinking about. To him, the only thing that matters is power, no matter what the compromises on principle that have to be made to secure it. But of course that is not power at all, when you surrender your moral compass to people like George Bush and Rupert Murdoch – the people with real power in the western world. The willing puppet has no real power at all.

In the late 1990s, not long after he came to power, Blair complained about "the scars on my back" from fighting trade



• TUC delegates give Blair the message.

union opposition to the Tory privatisation policies he was implementing. He made no secret then of his hatred for the unions. In those days it was beneath him to attend TUC conference. Nowadays he cannot get away with that – there has been some shift in power.

Last Tuesday he began by casting about for some positive common ground

with the delegates in front of him and spoke about joint initiatives for training young workers.

He asked them to remember a list of Labour achievements since he was elected in 1997. But the trade union activists had memories of the Liverpool docks dispute, Magnet, Gate Gourmet, Friction Dynamex and of workers handicapped by Tory anti

trade union laws still in place.

They remembered Britain's disappearing manufacturing industry: Rover, Corus Steel, Jaguar and many more – British workers sacked by multinational companies because they have least protection from employment laws.

They remembered the theft of their occupational pensions they have paid into for decades – only to disappear when stocks and shares fall. But the pensions were not restored when the stocks and shares recovered.

They remembered the thousands of jobs transferred from the public sector to the public sector – and the cuts that result from public funding disappearing into private PFI pockets.

But what they remembered most was the disastrous illegal invasion of Iraq. The conference chamber was full of placards telling Blair it was time for the troops to leave Iraq and time for him to go.

It was while he was being barracked about Iraq that Blair lost his cool and told the conference that British troops in Iraq and Afghanistan are fighting to defend fragile democracies there. He had completely forgotten about the spurious weapons of mass destruction. And if the continuing chaos and bloodshed in Iraq and Afghanistan are Blair's idea of democracy, it was not a delusion shared by the TUC delegates.

Blair also managed to upset the City by leaking the latest unemployment figures in advance – this could have upset the stock market. He wanted to boast that unemployment is going down and told the conference that the numbers signing on for benefit have decreased by 3,900 to 950,000 in August.

But even that was misleading. Not everyone out of a job is eligible to sign on. The full official rate of unemployment is actually up by 93,000 and is now at 1.7 million, the highest figure since 2000.

Commenting on Blair's

speech, Unison general secretary Dave Prentis said: "He has never been that comfortable at congress and it really showed today. His heart was not in it."

GMB general secretary Paul Kenny said: "He left the stage without a chance of being nominated for an Oscar."

Later that evening Gordon Brown fared a little better with a speech at the TUC general council's annual dinner. One union leader reported that "he made everyone feel good about themselves".

But Brown refused to budge on New Labour's plans to privatise everything he can when – and if – he succeeds Blair. This is all the more reason for trade union activists to back John McDonnell's challenge to Brown in a coming leadership challenge.

FUND

Our fund has brought us a healthy £978.25 this week, bringing our September total so far to £1,626.75 and leaving £1,373.25 to raise to meet our £3,000 monthly target.

We thank our London Scot for £10, a south London friend for £30, a South Wales comrade for £10 and a close Vauxhall friend for £100. We also thank a reader from Buckinghamshire for £11.50, another Buckingham comrade for £30 and a supporter for £4.50.

Two comrades from Southall sent £100 in memory of three great comrades: Alf Burtman, George Woolley and Myrtle Piggott. A Woking supporter sent £40, the Southall NCP stall at the Turnham Green Peace fair raised £55 and a collection at last weekend's Central Committee meeting raised £28.

All the rest came from bankers' orders and we thank the comrades who give in this way every month.

It may seem like a good collection this week but it is all desperately needed. We ask you to keep it up and carry on sending whatever you can to the New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.

Blair visit pointless and futile

by our Arab Affairs Correspondent

THE PRIME Minister's visit to the Middle East predictably achieved nothing apart from getting Blair away from the furore within the Labour Party over the timing of his departure. Pointless and futile, it demonstrated how low the prestige of British imperialism has sunk in the Middle East in recent years.

Blair naturally got the red-carpet treatment from the Israeli and the Palestinian leaderships during his whistle-stop tour designed, we're told, to breathe new life into the "road map". The Olmert coalition in Tel Aviv and the Palestinian presidency are, in different ways, both isolated internationally and they need all the support they can get.

Olmert is smarting from Israel's defeat in Lebanon and he's still not obtained the release of the Israeli soldiers held by Hamas and Hezbollah. Beleaguered Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas desperately needs the economic and military blockade of the Gaza Strip lifted to survive politically and strike a compromise with his

Hamas-led government that might lead to the unblocking of Western aid that his "autonomous" Palestinian Authority depends on.

Successive British governments have tried to use the Palestinians, from the signing of the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s, as a bridge to maintain and expand British imperialism's influence throughout the Middle East. Though this consisted of little more than the usual platitudes about "justice" for the Palestinians, British aid and diplomatic assistance to the Palestinian administration enabled British imperialism to pose as an honest broker in the quest for peace in the region and provide an alibi for the feudal Arab states that rely on imperialist support for their survival.

Anglo-American imperialism's invasion of Iraq in 2003 changed the equation as Blair discovered for himself in the West Bank and Lebanon. In the Palestinian administrative centre of Ramallah, opposition was muted and confined largely to petitions calling on the British premier to stay away. In Lebanon Blair was shunned by Hezbollah leaders and

other Shia politicians whose people bore the brunt of the war, while thousands took to the streets to demonstrate their anger at the Anglo-American blocking manoeuvres at the UN which prolonged the war with Israel.

Lebanon's most senior Shia cleric had tried to have the visit cancelled and several Shia officials refused to attend meetings with Blair, including the Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri, and two Hezbollah Cabinet ministers.

Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah characterised Blair as a "killer of children, women and the elderly" who was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Lebanese civilians during the 34-day war because Britain supported the United States in refusing to demand a quick ceasefire.

Now UN troops, mainly from France and Italy but including some from neutral Islamic countries, are moving into southern Lebanon. Russian combat engineers are expected next month, under a separate agreement with Lebanon, to carry out bomb disposal work and build pontoon bridges.

While Blair was talking with Lebanese premier Fouad Siniora in a sealed off area in central Beirut, thousands of demonstrators gathered nearby to hurl abuse and accuse Blair of complicity in the deaths of 1,100 Lebanese civilians from Israeli bombing in the recent conflict. Several protesters disrupted a joint news conference, shouting: "Shame on you" and accusing Blair of complicity in the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon. Caoimhe Butterly, a well-known Irish peace activist, unfurled a banner declaring "Boycott Israeli apartheid" in front of live TV cameras. "It's all right. We are in a democracy.... We respect all sorts of expression," Siniora commented as she was dragged out of the building.

Blair admitted his policies were controversial, both at home and in the Arab world, but he expressed "deep sympathy" for those who had lost family members in the Israeli bombing. And in a Clintoneque moment he said "he understood the anger in Lebanon". Few care what Blair thinks these days.

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Where the real power lies

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown is moving into the flat at Number Ten Downing Street with his expanding family – apparently because he has been advised by security officials that this will make it easier for them to protect him and his family.

The reality is that behind the doors of Number Ten and Number Eleven is just one long building providing accommodation for the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and offices, entertaining rooms and so on. Nevertheless the symbolism of the move has been noted by the press and we are told that Cherie Blair was deeply alarmed to be told that new curtains had arrived – chosen by the Browns.

It is also a cause of deep unease within the Labour Party rank and file and the trade unions because it suggests that the coming handover of power from Blair to Brown – whenever it happens – is a foregone conclusion and that any challenges will be mere cosmetic exercises. The Labour leaders are acting as though they own the Government of this country and nobody else's opinion counts.

It rankles all the more because it betrays an important point about this bourgeois "democracy" that we live in – the democracy bit is something of a cosmetic sham. Big business – the capitalist system – does own the state, which it created to defend its own interests. It also owns Blair and Brown and most of the Cabinet.

Whoever we elect to sit on the front benches in the Palace of Westminster will carry out the same policies because the ruling class, who have the real power in this country and the western world, tell them what to do. Blair does what George Bush tells him to and right now Bush is telling him to stay put until after the Congressional elections in America.

The trade unions created the Labour Party to give the working class a voice in Parliament to counteract that of the capitalist ruling class in the Liberal and Tory parties.

But however many Labour MPs sit in Parliament they can never enact real socialism. Parliament has no power over the bourgeois state or global capitalism. Nevertheless in the past Labour has introduced real reforms that have benefited the working class: state welfare, council house building programmes, the NHS, trade union rights and pension improvements.

But these have only happened when the working class organisations outside Parliament have been strong. Just after the Second World War, thousands of workers had just been demobbed after taking part in the defeat of Hitler's armies. They were strong and confident. In the 1970s the trade unions were strong and ready to strike to defend and improve living standards.

This is where true working class power lies. What happens in Parliament is simply a reflection of class struggles and strengths and weaknesses outside, in the workplaces and communities.

The current Labour government is serving the interests of the bourgeois ruling class because the trade union movement is weakened by Tory anti-union laws – and internationally by the failure of Soviet socialism. Such a government, under Blair, Brown, Johnson or any other lackey of the ruling class is not going to give the working class and the unions any favours. It is no good waiting for that to happen. We must take what they refuse to give.

This means being prepared to break the anti-union laws in order to exert the real power of the working class. And a united labour movement strong enough to force real working class reforms from Westminster is on the way to being strong enough to do away with the whole bourgeois state and establishing a worker's state.

Don't mention the war

Three hundred people in Latvia have been knitting 4,500 pairs of woollen mittens as gifts for delegates at the November Nato conference in Riga. But they have been ordered not to incorporate a traditional Latvian folk symbol into the design because the Latvian Thunder Cross or Fire Cross looks exactly like a swastika.

Each pair of mittens will carry a unique design but will avoid the folk lore symbol that was used as a charm against evil, though it quite commonly features on such mittens and other folk items in Latvian shops.

Delegates will also be given a bottle of traditional Latvian spirits – Black Balzam – a CD of local folk music, a jar of honey and some Latvian tea in a gift bag.

Green cross code

Scientists studying a community of wild chimpanzees in Bossou, Guinea, discovered they have

Say no more

evolved a system to cross roads safely with males positioning themselves at the front and rear of the line to protect females with young in the middle. The animals cooperate with a high level of flexibility, helping the scientists to understand how human social evolution may have happened.

Unintelligent designs

Catholic cardinals from the Pope's *Schulerkreis* (a group of his former doctoral students) gathered last week in a closed annual conference in Rimini to discuss evolution, creationism and the theory of intelligent design.

The previous Pope, John Paul II declared that Darwin's theories were "more than a hypothesis". But, according to Cardinal Schönborn of Austria, Pope Benedict had chosen the subjects for this year's conference and in previous years, before he became Pope, Joseph Ratzinger had argued for a return to creationism.

Dominique Tassot, a prominent anti-evolutionist and Roman Catholic "scientist", told a Catholic newspaper in America that the conference was "to give a broader extension to the debate. Even if the Pope knows where he wants to go, and I believe he does, it will take time. Most Catholic intellectuals today are convinced that evolution is obviously true because most scientists say so."

Apparently the Pope's astronomer asked to be excused the conference – perhaps he was worried he might be expected to deny the existence of Jupiter's moons.

Conversation stopper

The latest proposals in the "war on terror" from a European Union safety project are for spy cameras and microphones to be positioned on planes to monitor the conversation and behaviour of passengers during flights to pick up on any terrorist plotting – or "suspicious behaviour".

The monitoring would be done by computer – designed to respond to key words in several languages – so that passengers "would not feel they were being snooped on". The cameras and bugging devices would also be located in the toilets "because that's where terrorists go to assemble bombs".

The devices would "pick passengers who are behaving oddly or in an unruly manner," said Catherine Neary of BAe Systems. "They may appear nervous, or could be getting up while the plane is taxiing. If someone looks as if they're praying, the microphones would be able to tell if they were picking up key words."

Rough house

Russians who were playing rugby recently were arrested by police who mistook the game for a mass brawl. Nearly 100 supporters and players were arrested in Rostov on Don, where the game has been newly introduced.

Plymouth protest at NHS cuts

by Caroline Colebrook

THOUSANDS of people from Cornwall and Devon marched through Plymouth last week in protest at planned cuts in the local Derriford Hospital – the latest in a series of mass marches all around the country against NHS cuts backed by health service unions.

The march included thousands of staff from southwest England's biggest hospital. The protest began at Plymouth Hoe and marched to the city centre. Among them were a consultant, sisters, staff nurses and healthcare assistants.

The march was led by a pipe band and a hearse carrying flowers, which spelled out RIP NHS. Banners read: "Save nurses, sack managers".

The Derriford Hospital Trust plans to cut 50 beds and 400 jobs to resolve a £25 million budget deficit. Seventy workers, including nurses, are expecting to receive redundancy notices this week.

Iain Andrews, speaking for the public sector union Unison, said: "This isn't just about the loss of our members' jobs, it is also about the terrible risk that the proposed cuts could bring to patients, their families and carers living in Plymouth, South Hams and east Cornwall."

"We know that Derriford is staffed by professionals who save lives on a daily basis, they are overstretched and morale is at breaking point, something has to be done."

Staff nurse Camille Bellamy-Hillyer, 43, who works in a coronary care ward at the hospital, said: "We are not that badly off in terms of staffing, but there is a recruitment freeze which is starting to affect work."

"There are people who have to stay back at the end of shifts. You have to forego



• Marching for Derriford Hospital.

breaks and psychological care."

Another Derriford nurse said: "We cannot spend the same amount of time we used to with people."

"I was speaking to one patient yesterday who said no one had listened to her for 10 days because they did not have the time. I felt so sorry for her."

overstretched

She added: "Even spending two minutes with patients is difficult because we are so overstretched."

Last month some 27,000 people took part in a march protesting against a decision to cut health services and jobs in Cornwall.

And just before this week's TUC conference in Brighton, Unison issued a warning that it is the "fog of reform" that is the real threat to Labour's chances of winning the next general election.

General secretary Dave Prentis stood side-by-side with Royal College of Midwives leader Dame Karlene Davis to demonstrate their unprecedented solidarity in protesting at the crisis in the NHS.

Dismissing the past

week's hysteria over the upcoming Labour leadership race, Dave Prentis declared: "We need real debate over policy, real renewal in our party and a proper discussion on what will win us a fourth term. And we will only do that by providing world-class public services."

He said the Government needs "to call time on competition and markets, which are creating a crisis in the health service" and warned that the NHS is "under threat in a very insidious way – from within – from the very party that created it".

co-ordinate

Unison called on the TUC to co-ordinate a major campaign including all health unions and, for the first time, non-TUC affiliated professional organisations to demand an end to the "marketisation" of our health service.

And the union is also preparing to take the debate "to the heart of the Labour Party conference" later this month.

Prentis warned that "it is not just the usual suspects" who are prepared to stand up and defend their NHS from endless reform and the grow-

ing influence of competition and private companies.

He pointed out that a demonstration in Stroud against the planned closure of the maternity unit had attracted 10,000 marchers. "Local people – mothers with pushchairs – stopped their shopping and joined in," he said.

Karlene Davis added that the public was being conned into believing that they are being offered "choice" in the NHS and that decisions are made locally, when in fact the Government holds the purse strings.

Joining the two general secretaries was Elaine Bass, a medical secretary and a Unison member from Brighton and Sussex University Hospital NHS Trust.

Her employers are proposing to axe 44 per cent of medical secretaries and send patient notes to be typed up in South Africa in order to save money.

The health unions also promised a "winter of strikes" involving NHS staff and civil servants to stop further privatisations.

Around 20,000 NHS jobs are threatened and hundreds of newly qualified nurses cannot find work.

Karlene Davis said: "We are hearing every day from soon-to-qualify and recently qualified midwives who were promised jobs only to find as qualification approaches that their jobs have been taken away."

Meanwhile around 1,000 workers employed by NHS Logistics – the Government owned company that delivers supplies to hospitals throughout the country – last week voted overwhelmingly for strike action to stop their jobs being privatised.

The week before the Government had announced the sell-off of the supply network to the German parcels company DHL.

PCS threaten action over pay and privatisation

MARK SERWOTKA, the general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services union, last week warned that the union is considering a national strike in response to Gordon Brown's announcement last week that he intended to intensify privatisation and cut public sector pay.

Serwotka said that time was "running out for Government, who have failed to give guarantees over compulsory redundancies and deteriorating services, as they plough on regardless in cutting civil service jobs."

He added: "Unless the Government move to address these problems seriously in the next few weeks, then the possibility of a second national civil service-wide strike will become a reality."

He told journalists on the eve of the TUC's annual conference that his members – a third of whom earn less than £14,000 a year – would not accept what amounted to pay cuts over the next three years.

He said that with the retail price index running at 3.3 per cent, they could not accept pay rises of 1.9 per cent.

The union had set a timetable until the end of next month to consult its activists but if the Government does not change its policy there will be a consultative ballot on a national strike, which could come in waves to disrupt individual departments.

"My members can't stand by when the Government is spending £2.2 billion a year on consultants, and employing consultants in the Revenue and Customs on salaries at 10 times the rate of civil servants," Serwotka said.

Whitehall has already had a series of one-day strikes and work-to-rule in departments varying from benefit office staff to driving instructors.

He said his driving instructor members were angry that they were being asked to do "a lot of bureaucratic back office work" in addition to their frontline responsibility for taking driving tests and road safety.

The union has already linked up with other public sector unions to campaign against cuts and privatisation and called on the TUC conference this week to vote for a national campaign of protests and demonstrations.

Serwotka also called for support for John McDonnell, the leftwing Labour MP who wants to challenge Brown for the Labour leadership. He is standing on an anti-privatisation programme.

TUC 2006

Defending vulnerable workers

TUC GENERAL Secretary Brendan Barber last Monday launched the annual conference in Brighton with a call for more action to defend Britain's most vulnerable workers: "a vast hidden army of vulnerable workers – many of them migrants – often suffering gross exploitation, doing the work nobody else wants to, and doing it in return for a pittance.

"All too often out of sight and out of mind, they are people without whom our economy and our public services would simply fall apart: the agricultural workers who ensure our supermarket shelves are stocked," said Barber.

"They are the care workers who look after the disabled, the sick and the elderly in our society and the cleaners who make sure our workplaces are fit for us to work in.

"Like the contract cleaners in the Houses of Parliament – migrant workers from all corners of the world – but treated like fifth-class citizens."

He spoke of the TUC's new "One in Five" campaign to protect these workers. "When I met them, their stories were heartbreaking. People like Evrard Ouale from

the Ivory Coast. Starting a 12-hour shift at 4am each day, in order to scrape together £225 a week – and then told not to use the staff canteen.

"Tesfaalen Gebru was doing two cleaning jobs in the Commons and working 64 hours a week all to make ends meet in Europe's most expensive city. And Nestor Barona from Colombia, working an 11-hour shift in Westminster before heading to his second cleaning job in the West End

– until he became too ill to continue.

"Our biggest challenge – indeed our moral duty – is to organise vulnerable workers, to reach out to those whose need is greatest.

"Yesterday, I launched the TUC's 'One in five' campaign because the best protection vulnerable workers can have is the protection of a trade union..."

"Of course, trade unions can only do so much. We

need more from Government. We need action to stop workers being abused illegally. But we also need action to stop the abuse that is within the law: the rights that agency staff don't get; the rights that those without a contract of employment don't get; the rights that home-workers don't get.

"But this is about more than just the law. The vulnerable workers issue cuts right to the heart of what kind of

economy we have, what kind of society we live in, and what kind of political programme we want.

"Indeed we have reached a critical juncture in the life of this Labour government – a defining moment for progressive politics and all of us who believe in social justice."

He had some criticisms of the Labour government, worded rather more meekly than the words of some of his colleagues. "What pains me, he said, "are the self-inflicted wounds: an autopilot foreign policy that has tied Britain to the United States, regardless of whether our national interest is being served or whether it is the right thing to do; a laissez-faire approach to our manufacturing industry that has seen a million jobs lost since 1997, in contrast to the experience of our European neighbours.

"And a disturbing faith in flexible labour markets, with British workers still the easiest and cheapest for multinationals to sack when going gets tough, like the 700 workers at Imerys in Cornwall and the 2,300 workers at Peugeot – facing the dole queue because our employment protections are the weakest in Europe."

Barber also paid tribute to all the trade union struggles in Britain throughout the past 12 months. "In February," he said, "we mobilised successfully against the ill-fated Services Directive. We marshalled our arguments. We lobbied in all the capitals of Europe. We applied every bit of persuasion and subtlety that we could muster to the politicians and opinion formers. All of this so memorably reflected in the sophisticated headline in the *Ucatt* journal – 'Bollocks to Bolkestein'."

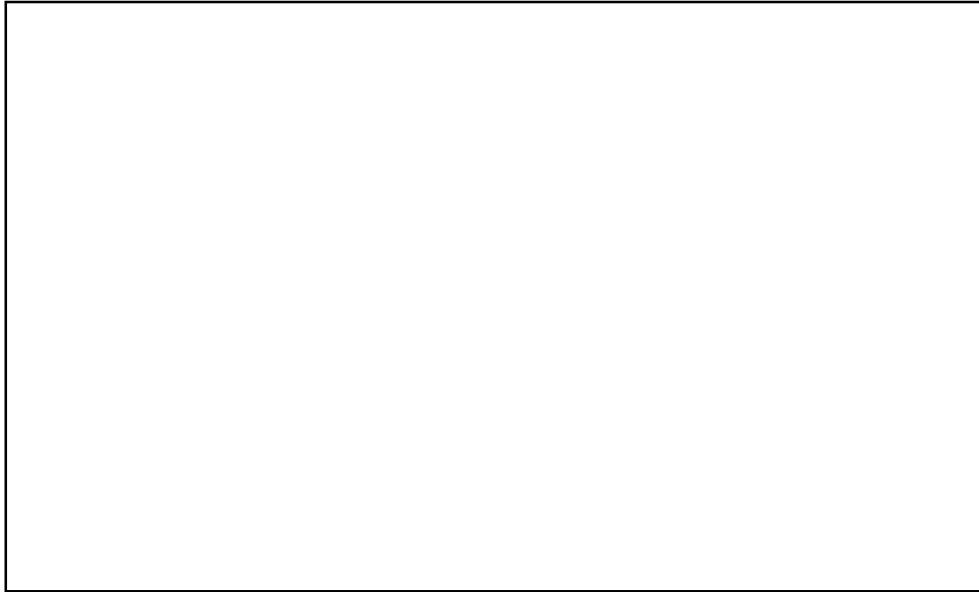
This directive would have allowed companies throughout the European Union to employ workers on projects anywhere within the EU on the minimum wages and employment conditions prevailing in the country where the company was registered.

Brendan Barber continued: "And in May we even welcomed to Congress House a man widely recognised as the Leader of the Free World. I refer, of course, to Hugo Chavez. And as a measure of our appreciation to the people of Venezuela, we bestowed upon them the ultimate honour: a General Council delegation to Caracas."

He paid tribute to all the trade unionists throughout Britain who had turned out in the run-up to the local elections "so that on 5th May many of our towns and cities remained free from the poison of the BNP".

He said he was proud that the TUC had helped unions resolve disputes and defend the pensions of their members, "Proud that public sector unions working hand in hand through the TUC won a historic deal on public services pensions..."

"And proud that we saw the GMB secure a tremendous result in its dispute with ASDA – taking trade unionism forward in the Wal-Mart empire."



• Brendan Barber presents the 'One-in-Five' campaign.

McDonnell calls for TU freedom Bill

LEFT-WING Labour MP John McDonnell, who chairs the Labour Representation Committee, last week called for the restoration of full trade union rights in Britain.

McDonnell is challenging Gordon Brown's succession to Tony Blair when Blair finally steps down from the premiership. This challenge will force a debate and a vote, involving the whole Labour Party: MPs, constituency members and individual members of all unions affiliated to the party.

In an article in *The New Statesman* last week McDonnell wrote: "It is perhaps not surprising that Government ministers have shown little or no interest in marking the 80th anniversary of the General Strike, let alone this year's 100th anniversary of the Trades Disputes Act, which made it legal for trade unions to take strike action.

"In many ways, the trade unionists who won that victory in 1906, and those who walked out in 1926, enjoyed greater rights and freedoms than their counterparts in 2006. Today, not only do trade unionists risk losing their jobs if they take industrial

action, but their union faces the sequestration of its assets and, possibly, total demise if associated with action in solidarity with others, which has been outlawed since the days of Thatcher.

"These harsh industrial conditions were clearly exposed last summer, when a group of Asian women working for the airline catering company Gate Gourmet, many of whom were my constituents, were herded into a shed at Heathrow airport and told by megaphone that they were sacked.

"These women were the victims of the modern industrial process of outsourcing and contracting out of services to reduce costs and maximise profits, following a takeover by a venture capitalist company.

"Despite being heavily unionised the Gate Gourmet workers were virtually defenceless against the ruthless power of a former employer whose sole interest was to offload a contract to cut costs and a new owner well versed in the technique of "sweating the assets" for short-term profit.

"The employer was only forced to negotiate a settlement when, in outrage, workers from across the airport operation threatened industrial action in solidar-

ity with the Gate Gourmet workers, which would have brought Heathrow to a standstill at a peak period. It was a threat that put the whole future of the TGWU at risk.

"Trade union reps will tell you that the Gate Gourmet experience is replicated across every sector of industry, as contractualisation, outsourcing and privatisation gather pace. In smaller firms especially, in which more than six million of Britain's workforce are employed and which are excluded from the Government's trade union recognition legislation, the result is low pay, long hours, bullying and unprecedented levels of work-related stress.

"With such weak trade union rights laws and a lack of effective sanctions against rogue bosses, employers can act with impunity.

"Meanwhile, employees increasingly question the need to join a trade union, if it has no power to protect them.

"For two decades, trade unions and the Labour Party have campaigned for the abolition of the draconian anti-trade union legislation introduced under Thatcher. This campaign has consolidated into the

development of a single, relatively modest piece of proposed legislation called the Trade Union Freedom Bill.

"An early day motion in Parliament expressing support for this Bill has secured the backing of the largest number of back-bench Labour MPs ever for this type of reform. The Bill would go some way to remedy the lack of trade union rights in this country, in particular restoring the right to strike in support of others in certain situations – of vital importance in this age of globalisation.

"So far, not a single Cabinet minister has expressed support for the Bill. Indeed, I was warned by one senior TUC official that it had no support anywhere in the Government. This may be the case at present, but the real world is moving on.

"More and more people are questioning why, in the fifth-richest country in the world, they endure insecurity and stress at home and at work, and they are increasingly willing to stand up for their rights.

"The Government could make up for a lot of lost ground by getting behind the Trade Union Freedom Bill."

The Greek Civil War 1946-1949

Solidarity and Struggle

This is the second part of an article by COSTAS PATERAS.

THE INTERNATIONAL dimensions of the Greek civil war are particularly striking: the involvement of the two major imperialist powers, the diplomatic activity of the Soviet Union, the various missions of and motions to the fledgling United Nations, the impact of Yugoslavia's break with the socialist camp and the large international solidarity movements with the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG). In light of this the lack of reference internationally to this struggle since is remarkable, in stark contrast to the Spanish Civil War.

There has been obviously a transparent attempt to suppress viewpoints which run counter to the agreed imperialist "line". The Greek television broadcasting company which normally gives (brief!) coverage to the activities of the KKE and translates these reports to its English page, omitted to translate its Greek language report of the rally at Lykorakhi on 2nd July.

Another case in point was the British documentary "The Hidden War" (broadcast on Channel 4 in 1986), which for the first time showed interviews with former ELAS and DAG partisans and was extremely critical of British involvement in Greece and the "White Terror". As a result of the outcry from the British ruling class the documentary was banned from being shown again on British TV and the career of the producer seriously damaged.

The fact that the Imperialist powers who connived at the suppression of the progressive forces in Greece still hold sway internationally is the main cause for this silence. It is much easier to criticise the despised Nazi and Italian fascist governments and their interventions in Spain (while ignoring of course the hypocritical stances of the "democratic" countries).

In the first article the role of British Imperialism in Greece in the period 1944-47 was described. The Labour government and its foreign minister Ernest Bevin became more and more disheartened by their failure to crush EAM and the KKE, to establish a stable pro-British regime based on the return of the monarchy. Greek domestic politicians and parties were promoted, rejected and then re-embraced on almost a monthly basis.

It became clear that the "communist threat" could only be averted by massive financial and military investment. The British Empire found itself in a crucial period; the moment of its decline. India was on the point of winning its independence, British interests in China collapsed in the face of the advance of the revolutionary



• Above: Churchill with Eden (second from right) and Archbishop Damaskinos in 1945. Below and bottom right: the KKE continues its internationalist positions.

army and Malaysia was in open revolt against its imperialist masters. Britain announced its withdrawal from Greece would take place on the 31st March 1947, after a winter in which the Greek regular army had been routinely humiliated by the DAG. The prospect of the collapse of the Greek bourgeois state was imminent.

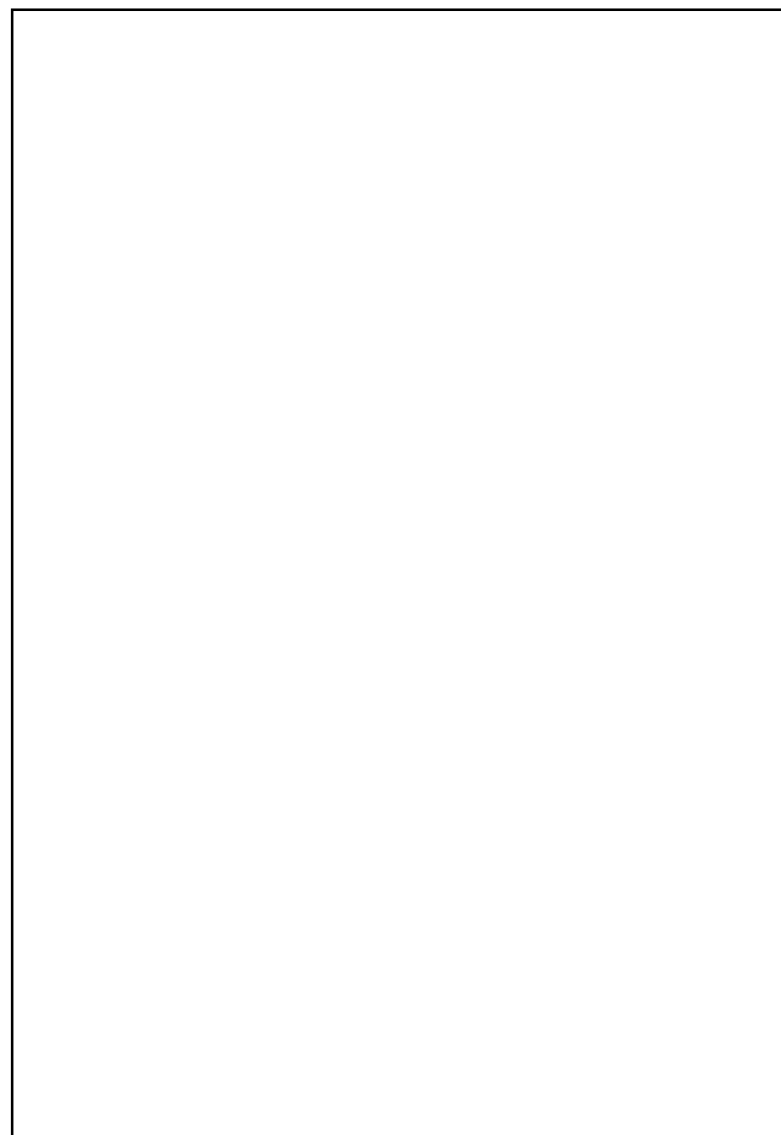
This caused US imperialism to act, in order to prevent "communist expansion" to the Mediterranean and to maintain anti-communist satellites in Greece and Turkey to threaten the underbelly of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. On the 12th March 1947 President Harry Truman announced the "Truman Doctrine", promising US intervention to prop up any regime that was facing socialist revolution. This was soon followed by a package of economic measures for this purpose, the Marshall Plan, named after the Secretary of State.

On the 1st April 1941 the US took "responsibility" for Greece. Outlining his decision Truman stated: "The Greek government is not in a position to deal with the situation. The Greek army is small in number and wretchedly equipped... The British government, which until today supported Greece, has stated that it finds itself unable to provide further support after the 31st March... The situation is urgent, it demands immediate action."

On the 22nd March the US

Congress voted through a package of \$400,000,000 worth of aid to Greece and Turkey. On the

20th June that year the Greek and US governments officially signed the agreement. The US



government made it clear through article eight of the agreement that it would dictate what would be done in Greece from that moment on.

This "aid" was directed to equipment and training for the Greek army: 5,000 US military advisers arrived in Greece and on the 24th February 1948 General Van Fleet was sent to become the de facto commander of the Greek Army (at the airport the Prime Minister welcomed him saying "Welcome to your home, general... Here is your army!"). It is estimated that the US government spent approximately \$50,000 for every partisan of the DAG, providing tanks, artillery, aircraft, training and all manner of explosives, including napalm, which made their "debut" at the Grammos mountain.

American activity was not restricted to the military sphere. The American Aid Mission to Greece was set up under the leadership of Dwight Griswold (within the context of the Marshall Plan), which through the management of US state and private investments into Greece exercised tight control over Greece's internal affairs (Griswold withheld aid from Greece at one point in order to force a coalition government between the Liberals and the Popular party). The Greek government rushed to free US companies from the tax burdens which were imposed on all foreign companies. US strategic goals were neatly laid out in the *Herald Tribune* on the 27th March 1947 "We did not choose Greece and Turkey... because they are shining examples of democracy and human rights, but because they make up the strategic entrance to the Black Sea and the heart of the Soviet Union".

The ruthlessness of US imperialism is illustrated by the murder of left-leaning US journalist George Polk on 16th May 1948 in Thessalonica, by US and Greek security agencies. Polk had been critical of the US-backed regime and its record on human rights. Through massive investment US imperialism succeeded in militarily defeating the people's movement and ensuring a regime subservient to their strategic aims.

US aggressiveness was emboldened by the still weak position of the socialist camp. The Soviet Union had been wrecked by the war, having lost 20 million of its citizens in order to defeat Nazi Germany and large areas of its most industrialised and developed regions had been destroyed. It was faced with a huge rebuilding task. The new people's democracies in Eastern Europe and also been badly damaged in the war. They faced a US strengthened industrially and military, and buttressed by its new Nato alliance, while in the majority of them the question of power had not been resolved when the Greek civil war broke out.

At the same time the imperi-

Features

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alist powers and the Greek regime were not hiding their hostility to the people's democracies of the Balkan countries. Their effort to use the civil war as a pretext in order to launch a direct attack against them did not succeed. On the contrary, one can argue that the heroic fight conducted by the DAG posed significant obstacles in their plans against the emerging socialist states in the Balkans; the fight of DGA had its internationalist contribution to the consolidation of the socialist power in these countries.

In 1945 the atomic bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, a clear message to the USSR. It has become known that dozens of plans were formulated in Washington during this period for pre-emptive atomic strikes on the USSR. It is clear that not only there were no conditions for the socialist countries to intervene militarily, but also the possibilities of offering any material assistance were limited. This was exacerbated after Yugoslavia's break from the socialist camp. Yugoslavia, while opening economic relations with the western powers closed its borders to the partisans of the DAG, refused to allow fighters who were being treated in Yugoslavia back to Greece and stopped providing any material support.

The USSR however did offer considerable diplomatic support concretely. At the meeting of the foreign ministers of the "big powers" in September 1945 it submitted a motion protesting at the situation in Greece. In January 1946 at the meeting of the UN Security Council they submitted a motion condemning the intervention of foreign military forces in Greece, the fascist terror and called for the unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Greece.

Due to the Soviet protests and steps at the UN and other international bodies in 1947-48 hundreds of political prisoners facing the death penalty escaped execution. In June 1949 the USSR made a proposal at the UN for a peaceful resolution of the conflict which called for a ceasefire, a general amnesty, free parliamentary elections, and the end of military aid to the Greek Government. These efforts went hand in hand with the appeals of the Greek democratic forces, which were numerous and include the appeal of EAM to the UN against the terror. The fact that none of these initiatives bore fruit was down to the intransigence of the imperialist powers, which should leave no doubt about who should bear for the disastrous effects and casualties of the Civil War.

In addition to this solidarity committees were established in all the socialist countries. These formed part of massive international solidarity movement, which developed a particularly strong base in Britain and France.

In 1943 the Greek Unity Committee (GUC) was established by Greek and British progressives with the aim of informing the British people about the activities of EAM/ELAS. The GUC cooperated with the Federation of Greek Sailors' Unions (FGSU) which had been founded the same year in Cardiff and had developed political work amongst Greek sailors concerning the national liberation move-

ment. It had close links with the Progressive People's Party of Cyprus (AKEL) and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and produced a weekly paper *Free Greece* and several pamphlets on the situation in Greece.

In 1944-45 the GUC intensified its activities in response to the British-sponsored suppression of EAM. In addition to its cooperation with the CPGB it developed links with some MPs from the left of the Labour party, pushing for a change in British policy, support for the persecuted EAM militants, communists and other left-wingers.

After the electoral victory of the Labour Party in 1945 the need was seen for the establishment of a permanent official pressure group. And so on the 7th November the League for Democracy in Greece was born. Its first chair was Compton Mackenzie, a Labour MP. In its first press statement it declared that its aims were a democratic Greece, based on a general amnesty, free elections, and appropriate punishments for Nazi-collaborators. In addition the League pledged material aid to imprisoned democrats and their families.

The League conducted many campaigns in defence of political prisoners and in support of democratic forces in Greece. In 1946 three Labour MPs visited Greece and wrote a shocking account of the conditions there covering the "White Terror", and the involvement of British troops, called *Tragedy in Greece*.

After the Civil War the League continued its work in defence of imprisoned militants (especially those facing the death sentence) and for the abolition of concentration camps such as Makronissos. This activity continued right up and including the period of the Junta (1967-1974).

In France the Conseil National de La Resistance (CNR) and the French Communist Party (PCF) initiated a campaign, starting in January 1946, in solidarity with the popular movement in Greece. The Communist deputies condemned the Terror and promised their active support for Greek democrats that same month. The PCF, in conjunction with many of the Greeks living in France then (including many leftwing political exiles). These included members of KKE and EAM living in France: Memos



• Above: British troops in Athens.
Below: British troops rounding up ELAS members.



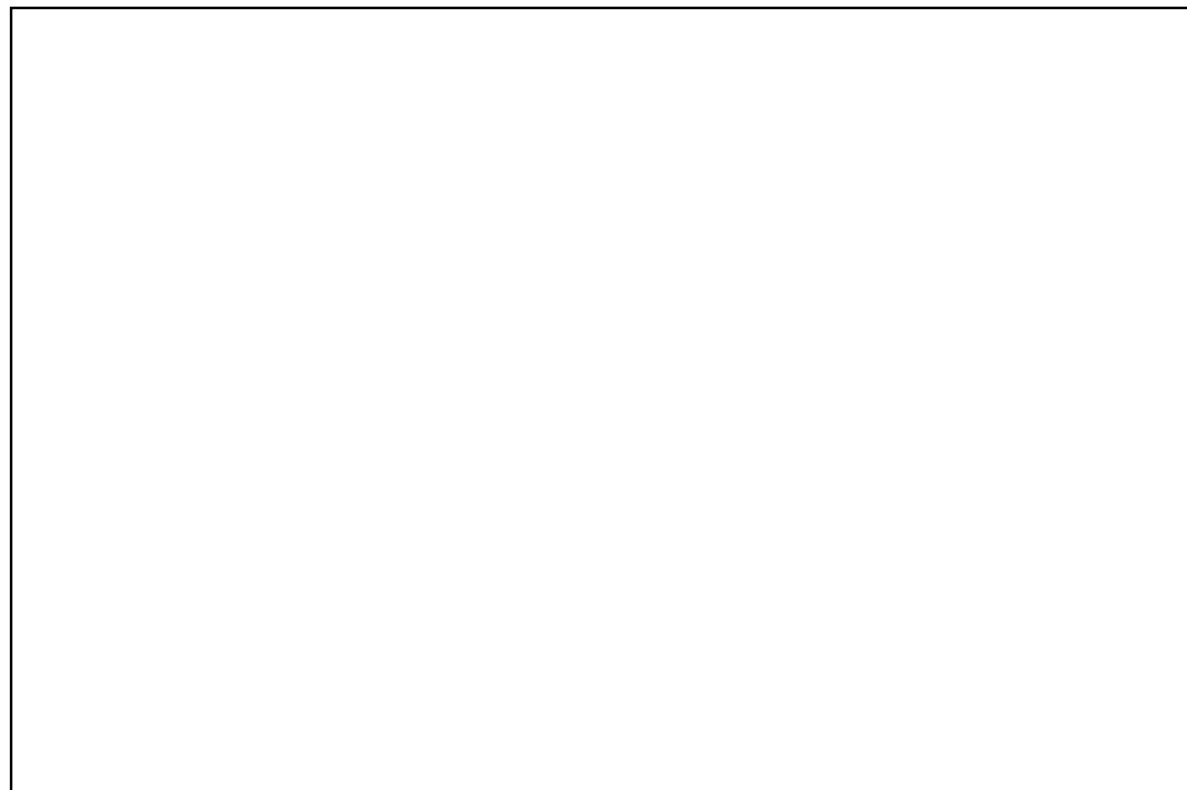
Makris, Dimitris Fotopoulos, Elli Alexiou, Marianna Veaki amongst others. This activity had three aims:

- To establish a permanent press office to inform the French people about the situation in Greece (Hellas press).
- To set up a French solidarity committee (Comite

Francais d'aide a la Grece democratique).

- To send missions of French intellectuals, artists and journalists to Greece, to learn about the situation, and on their return to write articles, speak at meetings and so on.

The PCF officially took on



the full economic backing of these projects. Many notable figures within France sat on the French committee, such as Jacques Duclos, Frederic Joliot-Curie, Paul Eluard, Louis Aragon, Elsa Triole, Picasso, Henri Bassis, Le Corbusier, Yves Farges and many others. It should also be noted that the intellectual grouping around *Les Tempes Modernes* including Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir played a very prominent role.

The committee also received massive support from the French trade union federation, the CGT. Its president Leon Jouhaux visited Greece in September 1946 to support the 8th congress of the Greek General Confederation of Workers and its communist president Mitsos Papparigas, which was under attack from the regime. The CGT raised one million francs for its solidarity fund. By the beginning of 1948 the committee had already raised two million French francs!

The International Conference for Aid to Democratic Greece was held in Paris in April 1948 with delegates from 23 countries. The French Bourgeois state attempted to stifle the event by refusing visas to representatives for Eastern Europe. The US banned presidential candidate Henry Wallace from participating in the conference. Despite this it had a massive impact. An international committee was established, an appeal to the Red Cross for immediate humanitarian aid, a manifesto in support of the struggle of the Greek people and a condemnation of the American intervention was adopted.

The solidarity of the French left did not end with the Civil War. *L'Humanite* and *Les Tempes Modernes* published important articles condemning the concentration camps.

They were joined by magazines such as *L'esprit* and newspapers such as *Liberation* and *Le Figaro*.

The poet Paul Eluard visited Greece. The first time in May 1946, where he denounced the British imperialist intervention at a mass rally at the Attiki theatre declaring that the "Greek people show us that no cause is lost, when the cause is the defence of freedom". He visited Greece again three years later, travelling to the strongholds of the Democratic Army of Greece in the Vitsi-Grammos Mountains.

His message, which was read out on the megaphones to the conscripts of the national army, encapsulates the spirit of the international solidarity movement: "Children of Greece, farmers, workers, intellectuals, I call on you who belong to the government army, which does not represent you. a fratricidal war like yours is more terrible than any other war which benefits only those who led you here. I urge you to think of, you who find yourselves on the side of the prisoners and torturers, all those innocents who every day pay with their blood your future. I urge you; think of the hell of Makronissos and the prisons where tens of thousands of patriots, certain of their victory, wait daily for torture and death."

Costas Pateras is an associate of the international section of the KKE.

Home News

Turnham Green Peace Market

TURNHAM Green Peace Market made history in 2006 with two markets instead of the single market held since the West London Peace Council set up the market in 1979.

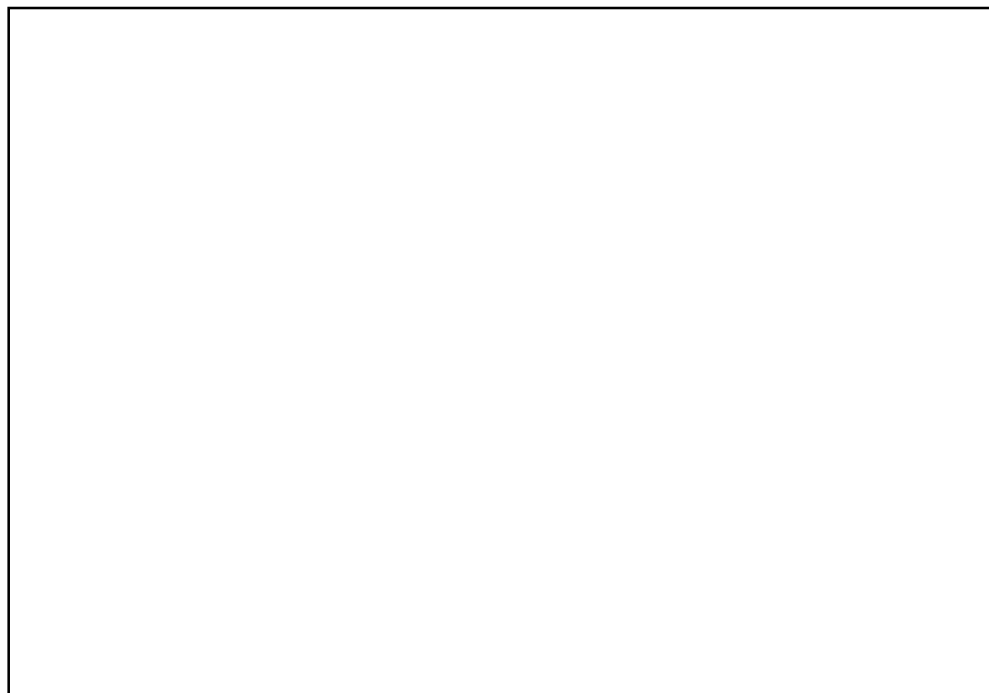
Maybe it was the weather last weekend but the second market had the Green covered in stalls and a good attendance.

Once again Southall New Communist Party put up its stall with a good stock of home-made marmalade and a variety of jams made from lush fruit from the Vale of Evesham in Hereford-Worcester.

But a display of Marxist-Leninist literature on display competed for public attention with the jams.

Comrades working at the stall watched with interest as customers bought copies of Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism* and his famous *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.

Ernie Trory's booklets on Hungary and Poland and Churchill and the Atom Bomb



also drew a lot of public interest.

And people came to talk to us. Labour Party comrades

spoke rather apologetically about the failure to run stalls in 2005 and 2006 but they hoped to do better in 2007.

"See you next year," they said. Ten copies of the *New Worker* were sold, helping to give an overall profit of £55.

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North Sea divers in pay dispute

STRIKE ACTION by more than 800 diving personnel employed in the North Sea oil and gas industries came a step closer last Monday as the RMT transport union announced the massive rejection of a pay offer that failed to address two decades of pay erosion.

Announcing that the offer had been rejected by an enormous 640 votes to two, the union gave notice that only a dramatically improved pay offer would avert strike action by divers and diving support staff from 1st November.

North Sea divers have seen their earnings slip by nearly 20 per cent behind average earnings in Britain since 1984.

RMT's claim is for a 50 per cent increase, and the offer rejected is of just 15 per cent over three years. RMT membership has increased dramatically since the ballot was announced.

"The massive turnout and the all-but unanimous vote show exactly how angry our members are at an offer that simply fails even to dent the chronic pay slippage they have had to endure for more than 20

years," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"We hope that the employers will take note of this tremendous ballot result and table an offer that redresses the real-terms pay cuts and sub-inflation deals our members have been expected to swallow for so long.

"No one can argue that the industry cannot afford to pay decent rates to people who do some of the most difficult and dangerous work in a particularly difficult and dangerous industry," he said.

"Our members have spoken with a single voice and now it is the turn of the employers to respond with a serious offer," said RMT national secretary Steve Todd.

"Our members are utterly united in their determination to win a decent pay deal and if it comes to a fight we are ready, and our sister unions in Europe and beyond have assured us that they will give any assistance we may need.

"We are still ready to talk, but it is now crystal clear that we need to have something more serious to talk about," Steve Todd said.

The Central Committee New Communist Party is sad to announce the death of RICHARD NEVILLE

Formally an agricultural worker, an active trade unionist and a Reigate Labour councillor for many years. Since joining the NCP he served on Plymouth Trades Council and was active in the pensioners movement. We are proud of his service to the working class. Sympathy to family and friends.

Diary

SUNDAY 17 September
30 years since Grunwick.

Speakers & films. 11am-5pm, Tricycle Theatre, 269 High Rd, Kilburn, London NW6. Brent TUC.

TUESDAY 19 September

Justice in Palestine. 7pm, Friends meeting House, Euston, London. PSC.

TUESDAY 19 September

The case against sanctions & war on Iran. 6.30pm, room 101, University of London Union. £3. Action on Iran.

WEDNESDAY 20 September

Socialist History Society. Iran. 7pm, Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1.

SATURDAY 23 September

National demo. Stop the war! 1pm, Albert Square, Manchester. STWC.

TUESDAY 26 September

Stop the War TUC fringe meeting. 6pm, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton.

TUESDAY 26 September

Stop the War! 7pm, Methodist Central Hall, Oldham St, Manchester.

FRIDAY 29 September

MANA concert for peace. 7.30pm, St James's Church, 197

Piccadilly, London W1.

SATURDAY 30 September

10th anniv. of the death of Diarmuid O'Neill. Meeting followed by social. 6pm- midnight, Camden Irish Centre, Murry St, London NW1. Wolfthone Soc. & Justice for Diarmuid O'Neill Campaign.

SATURDAY 30 September

Nigeria's independence, Africa unity & panafricanism. 2pm, Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS, Thornhaugh St, London WC1. Friends of Africa.

SATURDAY 30 September

Film: The revolution will not be televised. 1.15pm, The Rio Cinema, Kingsland Rd, London E8. £5.50/£4.50. Hackney Venezuela Information Centre.

SATURDAY 14 October

Demo: Save our NHS. 12 noon, Churchill Square, Brighton. Keep our NHS Public.

SUNDAY 29 October

'Unauthorised' 24hr peace camp in Parliament Sq. 12 noon. Warning: this demo may be considered illegal. Mass Action Group. 0845 458 2564.

Please contact us if you have an item to place in the diary. We advertise meetings for free. Ensure that you let us know before Tuesday, so we can place it in the next issue of the paper.

30 YEARS SINCE THE GRUNWICK STRIKE

COMMEMORATIVE EVENT WITH SPEAKERS, EXHIBITIONS AND FILMS
SUNDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 2006 -11am-5pm
TRICYCLE THEATRE, 269 HIGH ROAD, KILBURN, LONDON NW6 7JR

Emergency New Worker press appeal

Because of a problem on our printing press we are launching an emergency appeal for

£3,000

to cover repairs and maintenance.

Please send what you can to:

Press Appeal (cheques/PO's to New Worker), New Worker, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.

On the Web...

- New Worker National – www.newworker.org
- NCP Central – www.geocities.com/ncpcentral
- London District NCP – <http://londoncommunists.blogspot.com/>
- Brighton NCP – <http://brightoncommunists.blogspot.com/>
- NCP-PCS – www.geocities.ncppcs/pcs1.html

FROM THE NEW COMMUNIST PARTY

- New technology and the need for socialism* £2 plus 50p P&P.
- The case for communism* £2 plus 50p P&P.
- All in the family* by Daphne Liddle, £1 plus 50p P&P (New Worker reprint).
- Arab nationalism and the communist movement* by Andy Brooks, £1 plus 50p P&P (New Worker reprint). NCP Lit. PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. (cheques to New Worker)

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Chinese mark the passing of Chairman Mao

GE, a Chinese veteran, took a two-hour ride from the suburbs to central Beijing to pay his respects to the late Chinese leader Mao Zedong last weekend.

Ge lined up with thousands of others outside the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall in Tiananmen Square, which contains the embalmed body of the late leader, in order to show his reverence to him on Saturday 9th September, the 30th anniversary of Mao's death.

"Every year on this date I have lots of words that I want to tell Chairman Mao, so I left

home before dawn for this hall," said Ge.

"I wanted to tell Chairman Mao that all my four sons had found jobs after graduating from college, and that I, a farmer, have nothing to worry about in my late years."

Like Ge, hundreds of thousands of Chinese across the country showed their respects in different forms on Saturday to this founder of the People's Republic of China.

In Shaoshan, Mao's home town, visitors and local residents paid tribute to him at the house where he spent his

childhood and youth. Furnished as it was in Mao's, day the revolutionary leader's former residence was first opened to the public in 1950.

Tang Ruiren, the owner of the Maojia Restaurant, who is in her 70s, still recites Mao's works and quotations every day when she welcomes visitors.

"We hope that China will keep unswervingly to the policies of the reform and opening up to strengthen the nation and enrich the people," said Tang, who still wears a badge of Chairman Mao.

In the first half of this year,

visitors to Shaoshan, central China's Hunan province, reached two million. Construction of a museum which will showcase personal possessions of the late Chinese leader and other related relics has begun in Shaoshan.

A memorial hall built by a retired couple in central China's Henan province also attracted visitors from other areas of the province. Qi Chunxin, 71, and her 74-year-old husband Zhang Yongjian returned to Kouzhuan village from Yuzhou City after their retirement and began to collect reports, pictures and badges about Chairman Mao.

They completed the building of their own museum of Chairman Mao in 2001 and enlarged it in 2003.

"We should not forget Chairman Mao, for we would not have lived a happy life today but for efforts of Chairman Mao and other late leaders," said Qi.

Teenagers and young people also paid tribute to Chairman Mao on an Internet memorial for him.

"Thirty years have passed, and I have come to know why Chinese people, including my parents, mourned so much at the death of Chairman Mao at that time — the Chairman was a great figure who had been serving the people heart and soul," said a text message left on the memorial by netizen Li Shan. *Xinhua news agency*

• Mao Zedong rallying supporters in 1944.

Wang Hebin: doctor to Mao Zedong

Eighty two-year-old Wang Hebin was Mao Zedong's medical doctor from 1949 to 1953. He tells the story of the Mao Zedong he knew.

"I was very nervous when I met Chairman Mao in his bedroom after I was appointed his medical doctor. I only gazed at him, waiting for him to give me instructions. He obviously noticed my nervousness and said, 'Doctor Wang, don't feel restrained to work for me.' Afterwards, I became the Life Secretary of Mao (secretary in charge of his daily life) and had more time with him.

"I often read the *Refer-*

ence News (a daily newspaper published by Xinhua News Agency) for Mao. But at the same time, it was also a learning process for me, since through reading the newspaper I could get a view of what was going on in the world. Mao encouraged me to read more newspapers and even suggested that I subscribe to Hong Kong newspapers. He said no matter what views those newspapers took, leftist or rightist, they could help me form my own point of view.

"Chairman Mao wouldn't allow other people to touch his books. I wondered why and so started to search for the reason. After my observations, I found there were many slips of paper placed

between the pages of his books. And on these slips, there are many questions written by Mao. I joked that the books all looked like they were growing beards. Mao was kind to his books and he liked to read books whenever he had time. In the summer, he would like to read books when he was having a rest in the courtyard. And when he was out on a trip, he would also take books with him.

"As far as I know, Mao did heavy farm work when he was a teenager, so he could deeply feel how hard life was for peasants. I was also from a rural family and shortly after I started to work for Mao, he asked me if I often went back to my hometown to see my parents. I said I was un-

able to see them as I had so many people to take care of. (Besides Mao, I was also taking care of Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, and Ren Bishi, all of whom were state leaders). But he said that was no excuse. I then went back to the rural area and provided free treatment to the patients there. When I came back Mao said, 'Open a clinic in the village. Then you can use half your time treating me and half your time treating the peasants.'

"Mao had two hobbies, drinking tea and smoking. I tried more than once to persuade him to quit smoking, but he always said, 'I know smoking is bad for your health, but I just can't give it up.' I eventually motivated his

whole family to join in the anti-smoking campaign: his daughters and his daughter-in-law. We cut his cigarettes in half, gave him peanuts and candy instead and sometimes his daughters would even take the cigarette out of his mouth. After a while, Mao told me that he was not actually a very heavy smoker and that he would usually just hold a cigarette in hand while thinking. He said it helped him think better, while peanuts and candies didn't. I thought these words came from the bottom of his heart. Needless to say, the anti-smoking campaign finally failed."

China Broadcast

Zhang Ding: from folk art to Picasso

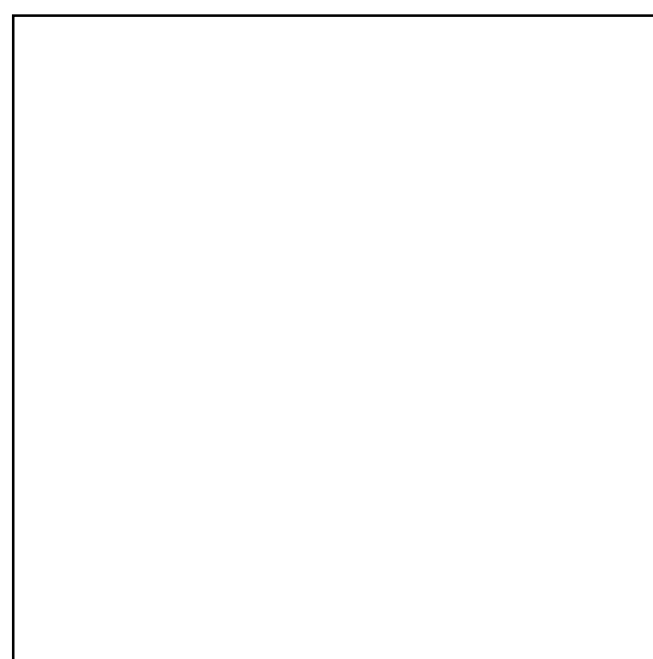
ZHANG DING is described as "a combination of Picasso and a Chinese town god temple" by famous cartoonist Hua Junwu. Zhang Ding has a big name in the art community for his outstanding achievements in cartoons, custom prints, paintings, murals, calligraphy, and landscape paintings.

When he was 15-years-old Zhang Ding left his hometown of Liaoning for Beijing alone and was admitted to the Traditional Chinese Painting Department of the Beijing Art School whose then principal was Zhang Henshui, a famous writer in China.

Soon after he started his studies in the school he began to feel suffocated by the curriculum setting that mainly dealt with paintings of roosters, hermits and palace ladies. The country's serious situation and people's hard lives were affecting him and he decided to draw pictures of the real world and people instead of idyllic leisure.

He had his paintings exhibited in the two-year anniversary exhibition of the school and his art created a strong backlash in both the school and art community. He went to the Luxun Art School in Yan'an and began his cartoon production there in 1938 when he was 21. His cartoons were influenced both by western art and Chinese folklore.

Zhang Ding advocated and researched Chinese con-



• Two very different examples of Zhang Ding's work.

temporary folk art. He and his contemporaries brought Chinese folk art to the attention of the art community. Later, as the principal of the Central Academy of Arts and Design, Zhang was devoted to saving and developing folk art.

He had a wide range of subjects like toys, furniture, wax-dye, needlework, papercuts, pottery, Chinese puppet plays, painted sculptures, decorations, folk architecture, masks, weaving or even farmers' and children's paintings. He thought that the functions, forms and features of folk art-

works should be studied in order to find some rules for the production and development of contemporary art. Zhang believed folk art was the mother of all arts and artists who neglected folk art would never succeed.

In 1934 that Zhang was first introduced to the works of Picasso when he saw a couple of books about Picasso's works in a friend's home. He was immediately startled by Picasso's strong artistic quality and amazing language. Later his works were very much influenced by

Picasso. Later in 1956, after designing the Paris exposition in China, Zhang went to France with a Chinese cultural delegation and visited Picasso. During this visit Zhang researched impressionism, post-impressionism and cubism. Later he went to Italy and paid a visit to big art museums in Florence, Milan and Venice.

Like most masters, Zhang seldom regarded himself as an artist or a distinguished person. Zhang Ding had been working as the general designer of the Red Army's production exhibition and one of the major designers of industrial product packaging in Yan'an.

After the establishment of the people's government in

1949, Zhang Ding was appointed the art consultant of the Office of General Services of the country. He was engaged in the artistic design of the Founding Ceremony. He followed this up by designing the first set of commemorative stamps of the People's Republic of China, the emblem of CPPCC (National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) and the decoration and layout of Tiananmen Square for the Founding Ceremony.

Zhang rescued the art of Chinese murals which had been declining for almost a 1,000 years. His murals were rich and adorn the walls of many famous hotels such as the Great Wall Sheraton in Beijing.

During the summer of 1989, Zhang went to Shenzhen with his wife and painted a large ink mural titled *Kunlun Song* for the edifice of the Bank of China building in Hong Kong, which was considered a milestone of Chinese mural art as well as Zhang's own art career.

Since 1981 Zhang Ding has produced *Xingping Fishing Countryside*, *Praise to the Huge Tree* and *The Wood to Mother of Mencius*. After finishing another pure-ink piece *The Hometown of Ghosts*, Zhang Ding had formed a brand-new style of his own and had brought it to maturity.

China Culture

International News

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Afghan governor killed

THE HIGHEST ranking Afghan official killed in a year in Afghanistan died in a suicide bombing in Kabul, the capital, on Sunday. The slain governor of Paktia province, Hakim Taniwal, was said to be a close collaborator of US-imposed president, Hamid Karzai.

The governor was killed as heavy fighting continued in southern Afghanistan, where foreign occupation and Afghan troops have been battling with resistance forces in an attempt to drive them out of two districts just west of Kandahar, the main southern city.

Taniwal was a former sociology professor at Kabul University who left the country for Australia during the Taliban rule, and returned to join Karzai's puppet administration in 2002, serving as governor of Khost province, as minister of mines and industry, and as governor of Paktia province for the past year.

The blast in which the governor died killed all three men in the car, including the driver and Taniwal's assistant. The blast also wounded six others, including three police officers.

Two Americans were reported killed in the fighting in southern Afghanistan. The two were Special Forces trainers working with Afghan Army troops. They died in separate attacks on Saturday night: one in Kandahar province and the other in neighbouring Zabul province.

Radio Havana Cuba

Adams in Palestine: 'War is not the only option'

SINN FÉIN President Gerry Adams, who was on a two-day peace mission to the Middle East last week, said that in discussions with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, with representatives of all the political groups in the Palestinian Assembly and with Israeli and Palestinian NGOs he had a clear sense that the Palestinian leadership wants the political process put back on the rails and for progress to be made.

He pointed out that 43 members of the Palestinian Assembly are in prison, including the Speaker and Cabinet ministers and said the Palestinian peace process was being "bled to death".

He said the position of the EU, in punishing the Palestinian people for casting their votes in a certain way in an election that was supervised and verified by reputable international bodies and declared to be free and fair was "absolutely wrong".

Adams, who was in the Middle East at the invitation of the Palestinian President, told the Palestinians that Irish people understood partition, occupation and the dispossession of lands. "The area we are driving through right now is bisected by a huge wall built by the Israelis", he pointed out.

The Sinn Féin President held a meeting with the Palestinian President's staff and advisors on 6th September and he spoke to President Abbas by phone.

Following his meeting at the Negotiations Affairs HQ, Adams toured various sites in Ramallah. He laid a wreath at the grave of former Palestinian President Arafat and also visited Ramallah Hospital, a refugee camp and the Headquarters of the Red Crescent.

In Jerusalem on the evening of his arrival in the region, Adams said the purpose of his visit was to encourage the search for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It had been the Sinn Féin leader's intention for some time to visit Palestine and there was a long standing invitation from President Arafat which Adams said he regret-

ted very much not being able to take up while Arafat was alive. Various arrangements were cancelled because of the demands of the process in Ireland or of priorities in Palestine. Adams said that when President Arafat died he resolved to wait no longer and it had taken from then to fulfil that commitment.

He said Irish republicans were very concerned about the suffering of people in the region. Sinn Féin had no magic formula to resolve the problems but believed they could be resolved. "The Anglo-Irish conflict was once labelled as intractable. Talk of peace and of peace processes was dismissed as nonsense, as fantasy. But we proved the pessimists and cynics wrong", he said.

He went on: "Irish republicans are internationalists. We take a close interest in events outside of Ireland and we are always willing to learn

and to share our experience with others seeking to build peaceful alternatives to conflict. Political will and courage in seeking peaceful alternatives to conflict is essential.

"There is an enormous responsibility on political leaders and especially on governments to find peaceful alternatives. Governments have a responsibility to give leadership which is hope and life giving. That is the big challenge facing the Israeli government.

the future

"In my view the future security, strategic interests, freedom and rights of the people of Israel are locked into an acceptance, respect, recognition and defence by Israel of the rights, freedom and prospects of the people of Palestine. War is not the only option.

"Building a political alter-

native, constructing a peace process which can deal with the causes of a conflict, and which can provide stability, justice and democracy, is an option also and one which would have the support of right thinking people worldwide.

"Of course the difficulties here are enormous. The conflict affects every aspect of peoples daily lives in Palestine and in Israel.

"The hostile reaction of the Israeli government, of the EU and of the United States to the election results earlier this year have compounded these difficulties. The withdrawal of financial support to the Palestinian government and the increase in violence is entirely counterproductive.

"What is required is inclusive dialogue based on equality and parity of esteem. It is patently obvious after decades of conflict that there can be no military solution to what

is essentially a political problem.

"Irish republicans do not assume that what has worked in Ireland is relevant to every other situation. But we have learned that there are key principles which are applicable in any process of conflict resolution. These include inclusive dialogue, recognising democratic mandates and upholding human rights.

Adams said it was for people in the region to work out and agree solutions. He appealed to all political leaders to make a fresh effort to rebuild the peace process.

"All of us have to have an acceptance and openness toward other cultures. The notion that western culture or civilisation is better than any other is bogus. All cultures can learn from each other and change accordingly, peacefully and democratically. Suppression is not the way", Adams said.

"The role of the International Community and United Nations is crucial in all of this. So too is the role of the US government. The US, as a strong ally of Israel, has a key role to play.

"In the Irish Peace Process the US played a positive and encouraging role, recognising all of the democratic mandates of the participants, supporting dialogue, and dealing with everyone on the basis of equality. I would strongly urge a similar approach in respect of any efforts to rebuild the peace process here.

"What is clearly required is a comprehensive and inclusive settlement. Such a settlement must be rooted on the rights of the people of Palestine and the people of Israel to live in mutual respect, security and peaceful co-existence and co-operation. Israelis and Palestinians have more to gain from peace than continuing conflict", he said.

AP/RN

• Adams arrives to meet President Abbas.

Against neo-liberalism

THE TRAGEDY of underdevelopment and poverty in Africa, rooted on the colonialism and slavery of millions of its inhabitants, is now being reinforced with the neo-liberalism promoted by the North.

In Africa, the infant mortality rate of children under one year of age is 107 per 1,000 live births and life expectancy is 48 years, 30 years less than in rich countries.

The topic is included in the packed agenda that African nations will debate in the upcoming Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, in which the insensitivity and selfishness of exploiters will be denounced.

Africa plays a key role in the movement because its 53 countries are NAM members and it has been venue of five NAM summits: Cairo, Egypt 1964; Lusaka, Zambia 1970; Algiers, Algeria 1973; Harare, Zimbabwe 1986,

and Durban, South Africa 1998.

"It would be impossible to think of a Non-Aligned Movement, the political organisation of the South, without the valuable support of every country on this continent" said Cuban Foreign Minister, Felipe Perez Roque, at the last African Union Summit, held on 30th June in Banjul, Gambia.

The 14th NAM Summit will go on in the midst of an international panorama dominated by the interventionist policy of the US government, which does not hide its desire to control the entire planet.

African nations promote, along with other Third World countries, changes in the United Nations' system, so that the organisation will equally represent the interests of all nations and stop being a tool at the service of

the West and especially the United States.

Among Africa's demands is to occupy two permanent and five non-permanent seats on the Security Council. Currently Africa does not have a single permanent seat on the Security Council and NAM countries can help to make that aspiration a reality.

Another African priority is to achieve socio-economic development. With cooperation, capital and markets, it could exploit, for itself, its rich variety of minerals, oil and gas reserves, vast arable lands and water resources capable of generating low cost energy for development.

But the so-called Dark Continent depends on the foreign income of its agricultural production and mineral resources, which runs counter to the selfish interests of rich nations subsidising their farmers

and indiscriminately exploiting African subsoil. Africa has asked its western creditors to write off its foreign debt, some \$325 billion, but they have only cancelled the debt in 14 countries.

And this is just one of the problems affecting the continent, whose young people are constantly fleeing to Europe to escape hunger and unemployment, in a region where poverty is responsible for the deaths of thousands of people every day and 30 million of Sub-Saharan Africans are infected with HIV-Aids and many others suffer from malaria.

All these topics will be analysed by the African delegations attending the 14th NAM Summit in Cuba, which could open the way to denounce such ills and design a plan to change the exploitative situation on the continent.

Radio Havana Cuba

