

# IRAQ FIVE YEARS ON: CURFEWS, BOMBS AND ROCKETS

by our Arab Affairs Correspondent

**WHEN THEY invaded Iraq the imperialists talked about having an annual celebration to mark the country's "liberation". Five years later the fifth anniversary on Wednesday was "celebrated" by a dawn to midnight vehicle curfew in Baghdad to deter car-bombers and the regular mortar and rocket attacks on the heavily fortified "Green Zone" which houses the US command and control centre and the ministries of the puppet regime.**

The Iranian-brokered ceasefire that ended the fighting between the Mahdi Army and the sectarian Shia militias that support the puppet regime is breaking down. A puppet brigadier-general was killed in a hail of bullets when his car was ambushed in the east of the Iraqi capital and partisan sabotage of a large number of power lines in Ninawa province has damaged generator capacity at the Mosul dam, leading to a severe shortage of power throughout northern Iraq.

Back in Washington

General David Petraeus, the US head of the Pentagon's operations in Iraq, told Congress he wanted promised US troop withdrawals to be frozen at least until September. Though the US military are still talking about the success of their "surge" offensive the relative lull in the fighting is clearly over. At least 12 American soldiers have died in Iraq since Sunday, and the shelling of the Green Zone has become almost a daily occurrence while attacks on US and puppet forces overall have

more than doubled over the past month.

The Mahdi Army, the militia loyal to radical Shia cleric Muqtada al Sadr, has been in renewed clashes with American troops and puppet forces followed renewed demands by the puppet government for it to lay down its arms. Over the weekend the Americans stepped up the pressure by sealing off "Sadr City" – the Mahdi Army stronghold in the Shia slums of Baghdad – with troops and snipers and sending in helicopter gunships to attack.

**ablaze**

The Jamila market, the largest wholesale food and vegetable market in Iraq, was set ablaze on Sunday and the fires are still burning. Water supplies have been cut and the Americans are refusing to allow Red Crescent emergency medical supplies into the

enclave. Al Sadr cancelled planned mass demonstrations on Wednesday to avoid further bloodshed but he warned that the Mahdi Army's formal truce – extended for six months last February – would end if the US offensive against his movement continues.

Nobody knows why the Americans opted for another fight with Al Sadr within days of a ceasefire deal they welcomed at the time but it clearly was another miscalculation. The first ceasefire brokered by Iran was at the initiative of the puppet Maliki leadership. Now the Americans are having to turn directly to Iran to end the crisis.

"We have received a new request from US officials for holding the next round of talks on Iraq and we are looking into the issue," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini declared at his weekly

• US anti war protesters.

press briefing in Tehran on Monday.

He said that the note had been received via the Swiss Embassy in Tehran, which has looked after US interests in the Islamic Republic after US imperialism broke diplomatic relations with Iran in 1980.

**tension**

Iran and the United States held three rounds of talks about Iraq last year despite mounting tensions over Tehran's nuclear programme. None have been held so far this year amid continued tension over Iran's role in Iraq. An Iranian delegation travelled to Baghdad in March in expectation of a new round of talks that never took

place but the Americans cancelled the talks at the last minute.

The past few weeks have shown that Iran's influence with Iraq's Shia leaders, including Al Sadr and Maliki is immense and there's little doubt about Tehran's ability to broker another end to the fighting. But Iranian goodwill comes at a price. It remains to be seen whether US imperialism is prepared to pay.

## FUND

**Our fund this week had brought us £770, bringing our April total so far to £930.50 and leaving £2,069.50 to raise to meet our monthly target of £3,000.**

We thank a Manchester supporter for £50, an East Anglia reader for £20 and a Bristol comrade for £500.

All the rest came from bankers' orders and we thank everyone who gives regularly in this way.

House prices are falling and the economy seems to be on the verge of a serious fall – hard times are just around the corner – all part of the regular cycle of capitalist boom and bust.

But for us times are always hard. As always we are beset by serious bills as production costs mount.

Please help this paper to carry on by sending whatever you can to the *New Worker* Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.

# Arming the children?

by Daphne Liddle

**PRIME Minister Gordon Brown last week gave his support to a proposal from Labour MP Quentin Davies to introduce military cadet corps into comprehensive schools in England and Wales as a way of improving discipline and raising the public image of the armed forces.**

Davies, a defector from the Tory ranks, has alarmed anti-gun campaigners by proposing that teenagers in the cadet corps should undergo weapons training.

His proposals follow a government commissioned review, which he led, into civil and military relations in Britain.

Davies said he was "alarmed" at the number of schoolchildren who

had no idea of military life and he hoped that bringing basic military training to schoolchildren will lead to more of them wanting to join the armed forces when they leave school.

His proposals are backed by children's minister Ed Balls and defence ministers.

Cadet forces were a feature of the public school system, preparing pupils for a possible career as officers in the armed forces. In the last century many grammar schools emulated them but they fell out of fashion in the 1960s and 70s because of the right-wing authoritarian values they promoted, which were lampooned in the Lindsay Anderson film *If*.

The replacement of grammar schools with comprehensives also led to the decline of cadet corps.

It was one thing teaching the sons of the upper and middle classes to become officers; quite another arming and drilling the children of the working class.

It would be difficult now to impose these values and unquestioning obedience, based on fear, on modern school children. But clearly this is what the Government has in mind and it is part of an emerging pattern that includes the proposed introduction of oaths of loyalty to the Queen and allowing the Ministry of Defence to censor how schools are to teach the history of the war against Iraq.

The aim is to restore "respect" for the state and officialdom to an increasingly cynical population.

Currently there are only 60 cadet forces in the comprehensive system in En-

gland and Wales and only two per cent of pupils are members compared to 200 cadet forces in grammar and independent schools though these schools comprise only 10 per cent of all schools.

Six new military cadet schemes were introduced into state schools last year but nearly all of the £80 million funding that the Ministry of Defence supplies to the Combined Cadet Force goes to independent schools.

Teaching unions are opposing the proposals because the cadet corps were essentially a tactic of military recruitment.

Recently the army announced a bursary scheme aimed to recruit thousands of school leavers because of a 10 per cent shortfall in troop numbers.

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# THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

## On protests and censorship

**NEARLY 20 years ago the supporters of Greenwich Against the Poll Tax saw an opportunity in the coming London Marathon to get a little media coverage for their campaign. The evening before the event fly-posters and slogan painters were out covering walls all along the route as it ran through the borough. On the day other supporters stood alongside the route holding placards and some living in high-rise flats had hand-painted bed-sheet banners unfurled from their windows. But anyone watching TV sports and news coverage or reading press coverage would have been totally unaware of the protests. Camera angles were carefully monitored and coverage edited to make the protests completely invisible.**

Since then numerous other campaigns in all parts of the country that have tried to use major events to snatch a little publicity – campaigns to save hospitals, schools and many other causes – have been rendered invisible by well-oiled and skilful media censorship.

So those of us who have been engaged in such protests know full well that the media coverage last weekend of the progress of the Olympic flame through London, which dwelt on the efforts of protesters claiming to represent the people of Tibet, was giving those protesters all the support it could. And this was a deliberate and conscious decision by a mass media and state machine that has ignored and rendered virtually invisible peace protests involving hundreds of thousands of marchers through the capital. The only people who knew these massive events ever happened have been those who were physically present and those who watch foreign news bulletins – which *do* judge these demonstrations worthy of reporting.

Yet the capitalist British media have the nerve to accuse the Chinese authorities of failing to give enough reportage of the Olympic flame protests, which involved only a couple of hundred demonstrators at the most.

We may safely assume that when a protest involving a couple of hundred is given acres of news coverage in the mainstream media it has ruling class and Government support. Our government does not want openly to sabotage the Olympics – Britain has too much vested interest in the next games and, in this time of growing economic crisis, it wants to remain on civil terms with the government of the People's Republic.

But Whitehall and Washington also want to use every opportunity for a back-handed swipe at the country that is proving that capitalist methods firmly controlled by socialist planning are providing a much healthier economy than their free-trade scramble for profits and unfettered greed.

The people responsible for "Shock and Awe", for Guantanamo Bay, for Abu Ghraib, for Diego Garcia, for the death of Baha Mousa and for the slow murder of Palestine want to lecture the Chinese on human rights!

So they pick on a movement that wants to detach Tibet from China and drag it back to an age of mixed feudalism and slavery, where nearly half of all babies died before their first birthday and where families could be ordered to give up their very young sons to a life of religious and superstitious indoctrination. The imperialists portray this extreme right-wing and racist movement as a heroic band of martyrs fighting for national liberation.

Another event capturing media coverage it does not deserve is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech. Enoch Powell was an ambitious but not too bright right-wing Tory MP, who as Minister for Transport in the Macmillan government in the 1950s sent recruitment teams to the West Indies to encourage people there to come to work as bus drivers and conductors in London.

Later, following the Notting Hill race riots, he sought to gain popularity by campaigning against black immigration into Britain, making lurid predictions of civil strife between black and white communities. His claims became so outrageous even the Tory party had to dump him and he ended up in obscurity with the Ulster Unionists in the occupied north of Ireland.

But it is worth noticing that his dire predictions have spectacularly failed to come true and that, generally, black and white workers are living and working peacefully alongside each other and that immigrant communities in Britain in general have made great contributions.

And now the patronising middle classes and intelligentsia have stopped trying to impose their version of integration, the process is happening naturally, on a basis of mutual respect and equality in the working class.

### Police enquiries

The Metropolitan Police has cancelled 1,400 credit cards issued to Scotland Yard detectives after investigators identified around £2 million expenses unaccounted for.

The cancellation of nearly half the American Express credit cards issued to police officers for use in the course of their work comes at the end of a long corruption inquiry and the arrest of three officers over claims that they used the cards to spend public money on themselves, their friends and families.

Scotland Yard says more arrests over potential "criminal activity" may follow.

### Absolut apology

The Absolut vodka company has been forced to apologise to the United States for an advertising campaign it ran in Mexico. The advert showed a map – based on an 1830s map – of the North American continent with California, Ne-

## Say no more

vada, Utah Arizona, New Mexico and Texas as part of Mexico under the slogan: "In an Absolut world".

The campaign provoked an angry response from the US and calls for a boycott by US consumers.

The ads ran only in Mexico and have since ended; they came as the US builds up its border security amid an emotional debate over illegal immigration from their southern neighbour.

### God botherer

Ex-prime minister Tony Blair last week preached a sermon in Westminster's catholic Cathedral calling for people of all faiths to "awaken the world's conscience" over the failure to tackle poverty, illiteracy and ill health in the developing world.

He also admitted that he had been forced to play down his religiosity while in Downing Street because of public scepticism.

While he spoke a noisy

demonstration outside the cathedral reminded his of his "Christian" actions in joining the US in bombing and blasting the populations of Iraq, Afghanistan and Serbia.

### Air miles

The low-fare airline Flybe has been paying 172 people to fly back and forth across England and the Irish Sea to help it meet a target for passenger numbers at Norfolk Airport.

The company had pledged to deliver a minimum of 15,000 passengers on its Dublin-Norwich route in the year up to 31<sup>st</sup> March and was narrowly falling short of the target and facing losing a £280,000 rebate from the airport.

So Flybe hired 172 temps for £30-£40 each, plus a free bar and in-flight entertainment, though it admitted "it probably sounds like an early April fool".

But the tactic cut no ice with the airport management.

Managing director Richard Jenner called it "ludicrous" and said the target had to be met by regular fare-paying passengers.

### Tea-leaf therapy

When an armed robber pulled a gun on Czech supermarket assistant Marketa Vachova and demanded money from the shop in Cesky Tesin, she invited him in for a "nice cup of tea and a piece of cake". He abandoned the robbery.

Even though his face was hidden by a Spiderman mask, Marketa decided the robber "seemed like a nice young man". She said: "I asked him why he was doing this and we got talking. There was no one else in the shop so I guess he relaxed a bit, and in the end he apologised."

"I said if he wanted he could come and talk to me and have a cup of tea and slice of home-made cake to talk about his problems. He agreed and then walked off."

# Labour revolt over tax rise for low-paid

by Caroline Colebrook

**PRIME Minister Gordon Brown is facing another backbench revolt – which will include some of Brown's own allies.**

The rebels intend to table an amendment to the Finance Bill now going through Parliament to compensate low-paid workers who will suffer from the abolition of the 10 pence lowest rate of tax, which Brown got rid of as his last act as Chancellor last year in order to cut the base rate of tax two-pence to 20 pence.

But the simplification of the tax system, abolishing the 10 pence rate for workers earning between £5,000 and £18,500 a year will hit the lowest paid hard. Some will lose £232 a year and the backbench rebels want to undo this.

The amendment will be tabled on 21<sup>st</sup> April calling for those who lose from this measure to be compensated.

But the Government has been trying to confuse the rebels.

Former whip Greg Pope has withdrawn one protest motion after winning the support of about 30 other MPs because, as he said, "The Government offered to look again at the situation. I have been given assurances by senior ministers that they will look at its impact, especially on pensioners, some of whom are losing more than £200 a year of rising fuel costs."

But Downing Street firmly denies there will be any rethink on the matter.

The change, which will affect people's pay from Sunday, comes less than a month ahead of local elections in England and Wales.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has calculated that, with the number of households affected by the income

### • The lowest paid hit hard.

tax, national insurance and tax credit changes altogether, about 5.3 million families will lose out overall.

The rebels confronted Brown over the issue when he addressed the weekly meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Former ministerial aide Nia Griffith, who was among those to tackle him, said it did "not look good" to voters. "We should have woken up to it sooner and it would have been easier to do something about it earlier on. It's something we should look at," she said.

Labour Leeds North East MP Fabian Hamilton said he feared the change would hit young, single people without families. He said "a number" of backbench MPs who back the Government's general direction were "very concerned".

Former Labour minister Frank Field pointed out that "the money taken from the

low-paid is there to finance those on average and high pay". He told the press: "A home-made time bomb is ticking away under the Government timed to explode just before the local elections."

He accused the Government of "crassness" in changing its taxation policy.

The rebels were alerted by a report from the Treasury Select Committee, chaired by John McFall MP, who said the low-paid would be the "main losers" and were an "unreasonable target" for tax simplification.

McFall added: "While tax simplification is a laudable aim, it seems strange that the abolition of the 10 pence starting rate of income tax disadvantages mainly low-income households."

He said "appropriate help" must be given to ensure they get the right benefits and called the report a "sober analysis" which had "reminded the Government of its responsibilities".

## Unite fights BAe job cuts

**THE GIANT general union Unite last week expressed shock at the scale of redundancies at BAe Systems at Brough and Woodford. The union has vowed to resist compulsory redundancies.**

Four-hundred-and-fifty jobs are to be lost at the Brough facility which is the home of Britain's Fast Jet Trainer Aircraft, Hawk and 134 jobs will be lost at Woodford the home of Nimrod, the new world class MRA4 aircraft.

Unite national officer Bernie Hamilton says, "Only a few days ago the Red Arrows had the Hawks on display to celebrate the RAF's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Sadly, the future for the skilled workers that built these state of the art jets is now uncertain."

"Unite will resist any compulsory redundancies and will be working with management at both sites to find alternatives including, re-skilling, transfers to other operations and work packages from other projects."

"We have known for sometime that we had a challenge on our hands at both sites due to the completion and delivery of current orders for the Fast Jet Trainer and the completion of work cycles at Woodford. Winning new orders in a competitive market is very challenging. At the same time the industry is rising to meet demand for new technologies like the Unmanned Combat Aircraft (UCAV's)."

"In the long term, it is imperative that the aerospace industry and the UK Government reaches an agreement to safeguard the UK's large fixed wing capability for future generations."

## Nursing unions back pay offer

UNISON and the Royal College of Nurses have backed a three-year eight per cent pay deal offered to their members by Health Secretary Alan Johnson.

Only the Royal College of Midwives has rejected the deal on the grounds that inflation is likely to race ahead and wipe out any benefits of the deal.

The proposed deal would give over a million staff an increase of 2.75 per cent from April, followed by further increases of 2.4 per cent in 2009/10 and 2.25 per cent in 2010/11.

The offer – the highest in the public sector – is aimed at heading off the threat of NHS industrial action.

RCN general secretary Dr Peter Carter said the deal was better than expected and said his union would recommend acceptance to the members.

Karen Jennings, head of health for the public sector union Unison, said the proposed deal set a new minimum wage for NHS workers of £6.77 an hour, and gives more money to nurses, midwives and paramedics stuck at the top of their grades.

She said: "We will be asking our executive to consider recommending this deal to members as a well-balanced package."

But the Royal College of Midwives said it would not be recommending the deal as the second and third years may end up being below the rate of inflation.

# NUT strike becomes memorial to Sinnott

**LEADERS of the National Union of Teachers, preparing for the union's first strike in 21 years, last week declared that the strike will become a memorial to NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott who died suddenly last Saturday from a heart attack aged just 56.**

NUT officers have pledged to go ahead with the one-day action over pay as a mark of respect to Sinnott.

Christine Blower has

taken over as acting general secretary. She said: "I know that he would have wanted the union to go ahead with all its campaigns because he believed in all of them with his heart as well as his head."

"The best way to mark our respect would be to maximise the effect of the campaigns to which he was so committed."

The strike is expected to close more than 10,000 schools on 24<sup>th</sup> April. A strike ballot of around 200,000 NUT

members resulted in 75 per cent of those who voted opting for strike action in a 32 per cent turnout. The strike is a protest at Government attempts to impose pay caps of 2.45 per cent this year and 2.3 per cent in 2009 and 2010. The teaching unions are demanding four per cent.

The National Association of Head Teachers has said its members "will not act as strike breakers" and keep children in school. NAHT general sec-

retary Mick Brookes said: "We're not going to be asking our members to take this class or that if the teacher is off."

A survey carried out by the *Times Educational Supplement* last week found that six out of 10 teachers supported the NUT action. Even among other teachers' unions, who opted against strike action, 52 per cent of those polled supported their colleagues' action.

## Big changes in Pakistan

**A WAVE of big changes in favour of popular democracy is sweeping Pakistan after a year of desperate efforts to suppress change by military dictator General Musharraf, culminating in the assassination of people's Party leaders Benazir Bhutto, Taimur Rahman of the Communist Workers' and Peasants' Party told a meeting organised by the London District of the New Communist Party.**

He explained the history of Pakistan, created as a land of landowners and indebted peasants with a powerful military clique, in contrast to the popular

democratic traditions of India.

But the people of Pakistan want democracy, progress and prosperity. Taimur gave a brief history of popular democratic and working class movements in Pakistan and the formidable obstacles they have faced.

Then he gave an eye-witness account of the recent elections there and the mood of the people. Now big advances are possible, and though this is not a socialist revolution, the unprecedented popular unity against Musharraf and his United States backers has created a mood of optimism.

Many had feared that Musharraf would rig elec-

tions earlier this year, with the lawyers and supreme chief of justice arrested and unable to supervise the polling process. But the vote against his party was so great after the death of Benazir Bhutto – which many suspect he had a hand in – that he could not hold back the tide of popular indignation. The religious right-wing also suffered heavy losses in the poll. The Communist Workers' and Peasants' Party, though it did not stand in the elections, has made many recruits and built important alliances with other progressive and trade union bodies.

• Taimur Rahman.

## European Court threat to London Olympics?

**THE GIANT general union Unites warned that a judgement made last week by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) could mean that London's Olympics will either be built on poverty wages or not at all as industrial unrest spreads**

Unite is warning that the ECJs decision that a Polish subcontractor operating in Germany can lawfully pay construction workers less than half the German construction industry's agreed wage could have a devastating affect on the building of London's Olympic infrastructure.

Unite says the ECJs judgement could mean that foreign companies employing people in Britain can ignore employees' collective agreements and legally pay workers below agreed wage levels.

The ECJ judgement on the Dirk Ruffert v. Land Niedersachsen case concerned a Polish subcontractor of the company Objekt und Bauregie, which paid employees working on a prison building site only 46.5 per cent of the prescribed industry minimum wage.

The ECJ decision found in favour of the company on the grounds of freedom of movement and the provision of services across the European Union.

Unite is now calling for the powers of the ECJ to be curbed to allow national governments and national courts to have sovereignty on collective agreements and collective action.

Derek Simpson, joint general secretary of Unite, said: "The European Court of Justice has made a number of decisions that we believe threaten EU countries with being forced to use cheaper agency labour, the undercutting our industry agreements and the ability of trade unions to defend them. Today's judgement is by far the most damaging."

"This decision effectively means that foreign companies working here in the UK, or in any other European country, can flout domestic laws and collective agreements with regard to pay."

"This is a recipe for disaster and, if applied here in the UK, will cause massive industrial unrest and threaten the delivery of major infrastructure projects including the Olympics site."

"We are calling on the UK government and the European Parliament to act to ensure that minimum industry standards are upheld and we want the role of the ECJ, which has greater powers with regard to these vital issues, to be revisited."

## Remembering Ruth Frow

by Mervyn Drage

**MORE than 400 people attended a celebration of the life of Ruth Frow – communist, teacher, historian and co-founder of the Working Class Movement Library in Salford – at the Peel Hall of the University of Salford last Saturday.**

Ruth Frow was born in 1922 as Ruth Engel into a well-off north London family. She was educated as a teacher but it was her wartime experiences in the Women's Air Force that prompted her to join the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1945.

In 1953, when working as a teacher in Wythenshawe, Manchester, she married Eddie (Edmund) Frow, an engineer and fellow communist.

The young pair moved to Stetford and began the work that made them both famous – creating a library of working class books, pamphlets and other literature.

They travelled the country in a caravan visiting trade unionists, comrades and other political activists collecting all the written materials they could, bringing it all home to the library they were building in their home.

In 1987 Salford City Council voted to grant them a building to accommodate the growing library where it could be properly catalogued and made available to students of working class history.

Eventually they were granted funding from the lottery that made the library independent from Salford coun-

Burns' *What is Marxism?* Alice paid tribute to the kindness and encouragement that Ruth gave to all she met.

Both women were devastated in 1987 when the revisionists then in charge of the CPGB expelled them.

Francy Devine described Ruth and Eddie's links with the working class struggle in Ireland and their contribution to collecting and preserving Irish labour history and their activity on behalf of Irish political prisoners.

Hilary Jones from the International Brigade Memorial Trust spoke of Ruth and Eddie worked to support the war against fascism in Spain; one section of the library is dedicated to works about the war.

This was followed by Aidan Jolly singing the IB song *Jarama*.

Contributions from the floor included an emotional tribute to a great comrade from John Smethurst and Eric Chaplain, of the North West Labour History Group, who spoke of the contribution Ruth had made to developing the important role of women in the working class struggle.

Francy Devine sang the *Ballad of Joe Hill* and the Maggie Cohen spoke on securing the future of the library, which now fills 40 rooms with works dating back as far as 1760 – and is now regularly visited by parties of schoolchildren.

The event finished with the singing of the *Internationale* by everyone present.

## House prices tumble

**THE PRICE of houses in Britain dropped sharply in March following a mortgage lenders cutting back on the deals they are offering to home buyers and some banks have stopped selling mortgages altogether.**

Figures released on Tuesday by the Halifax Building Society – Britain's biggest mortgage lender – show that the average cost of a home fell by 2.5 per cent within the month, the biggest drop in one month for 15 years.

The Chief Economist with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Simon Rubinsohn, played down the fall, saying he believes prices will be stagnant at best this year.

But this is not quite honest. Just 73,000 home loans were approved in February compared to 120,000 in the same month last year.

Up to last September prices were steadily rising, but with banks now less willing to lend money they are dropping at their sharpest pace since the recession of the early 1990s.

Within a week First Direct, the Cooperative bank and the American-based investment bank Lehman Brothers all closed their doors to new mortgage customers within Britain.

On Wednesday the HSBC Bank bucked the trend but offering deals to customers of other mortgage companies whose deals had come to an end, indicating that this bank still has some funds available. Around 1.4 million borrowers are coming to the end of low fixed-rate deals this year and are unlikely to get such good terms in future.

Lehman's two British subsidiaries, Southern Pacific Mortgage Limited and Preferred Mortgages, had both specialised in lending to people with low credit ratings – Britain's version of sub-prime. Lehman's has also cut 200 jobs from its businesses in Britain recently.

## Consultation rights at work

**THE TUC last week welcomed new information and consultation rights for workers employed by companies and organisations having between 50 to 100 staff.**

From last Sunday these employers will need to have systems in place to allow meaningful dialogue to take place between managers and staff, says the TUC.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "These changes mean that employees in smaller companies will have a right to be told what's going on in their workplaces."

"It should put a stop to shock situations where in the past staff heard their jobs were to be axed via text messages or found out from local media."

"Well-run companies have been informing and consulting their employees for years. Sensible employers know that helping staff feel valued and involved in the running of their firm or organisation gives them a more competitive edge."

# Russia: the significance of the communist vote

**LAST MARCH** saw the climax of the electoral marathon that lasted many months. People voted for a new President. Simultaneously, legislative assemblies were elected in eleven regions. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) said that there were two main forces in the presidential election of 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

One was the alliance of the oligarchs and the arrogant bureaucracy, represented by Dmitri Medvedev. The other was the left-wing patriotic alternative, which nominated Gennady Zyuganov as its candidate. The wish of the ruling circles to hold on at all costs to the property they had grabbed and to political power forced them to resort to widespread and cynical violations of the law. Administrative pressure was brazenly applied. Intensive use was made of the methods of information and psychological warfare against their own people.

In spite of the whole vertical power structure being pitted against it, the CPRF stood its ground, strengthened its positions and scored an important moral victory. An important shift has taken place in the public perception of our party as the genuine opposition that thinks and fights; as a party that meets the tough challenge of modern-day electoral contests.

Millions of new supporters have turned to the CPRF, become aware of its potential and backed it in the elections. Our main base is increasingly the thinking part of the population, which has preserved its dignity and the capacity to make independent choices.

## Dynamic party of action

The popular masses more and more clearly perceive the CPRF as the dynamic party of action – the party of the future. These substantial changes were revealed during the course of the election campaign as the party was getting its ideas across to the citizens. If given permanent access to the media, the CPRF is capable of influencing the position of the voters in a decisive way. It is ready to assume power in a democratic way.

The forces ruling Russia have proved to be ill-equipped for competing and winning in a fair contest. The refusal of the “party in power” to take part in public debates is eloquent proof of its weakness.

The hullabaloo over Dmitri Medvedev’s “success” in the presidential election is devoid of any meaning. This was not a free and fair election. The recent elections provide graphic proof of the fact that the oligarchic government does not merely manipulate the popular expression of the people’s will. More and more of-

ten it rigs the electoral process, thus putting it outside the law. It eliminates political contest and brings ferocious pressure to bear in favour of its candidates. It is not above the threat of reprisals against local chief executives.

## Crude blackmail

Millions of Russian citizens were exposed to crude blackmail on the part of the whole vertical power structure. Under threat of dismissal, the heads of enterprises, educational institutions, social and medical facilities, commanders of military units were forcing their subordinates to vote for the “successor”. The “successor” was seen on all the TV channels day in and day out. The triumph of “Putin’s plan” and the so-called “national projects” were widely trumpeted.

But the election took place against a background of another spurt of prices and tariffs, runaway inflation and continuing stagnation of production.

A whole system of rigging was built up. Citizens were struck off voter lists en masse. The number of registered voters in the presidential elections had shrunk by more than two million compared with the parliamentary elections in December 2007. That made it possible to inflate the turnout figures and significantly improve the “successor’s” results.

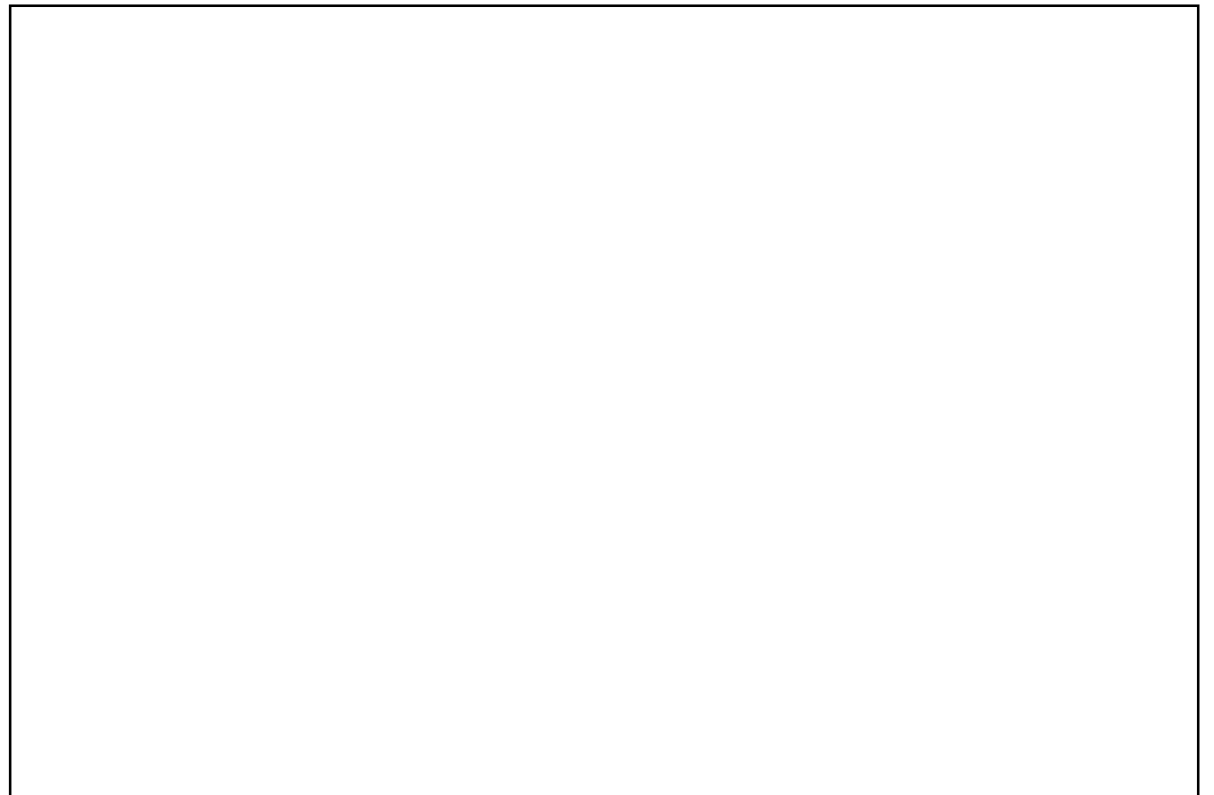
Such “arithmetic” did not arise fortuitously. Our Party’s representatives were banned from the commissions, prevented from entering the polling stations and detained by the law-enforcement bodies. Ballot-stuffing and tampering were widespread.

## Democratic norms ignored

The CPRF does not recognise such an approach to elections. With democratic norms totally ignored, it is impossible for citizens to freely express their will. In the opinion of the Communists, the official results of the vote for the President of the Russian Federation – 70.28 per cent for the United Russia candidate Dmitri Medvedev versus 17.72 per cent for the CPRF candidate Gennady Zyuganov – do not reflect the true results of the poll.

At the same time the Party was right to take part in the elections. The Party treated the parliamentary and presidential elections as a single campaign. It has indisputably broken the information blackout.

The Communists published the *Programme* of the CPRF and its candidate. The Party warned the citizens that the continuation of the disastrous course of “reform” spelled more privations. It won over many new supporters, including young people. It gained valuable experience of political



• The flag of the USSR and the CPRF flying together on a cold Moscow evening.

struggle. The Party’s cadre passed a serious test. Zyuganov’s candidacy for President of the Russian Federation was nominated by primary and regional Party cells. He won the votes of representatives of 28 non-governmental organisations – trade unions, veterans, women’s and youth organisations. Prominent scientists and cultural figures were very supportive. Impressive results were recorded in “science cities” and in centres where the most active and independent-minded people were voting.

## 13 million

Gennady Zyuganov won more than 13 million votes, which is a significant improvement on

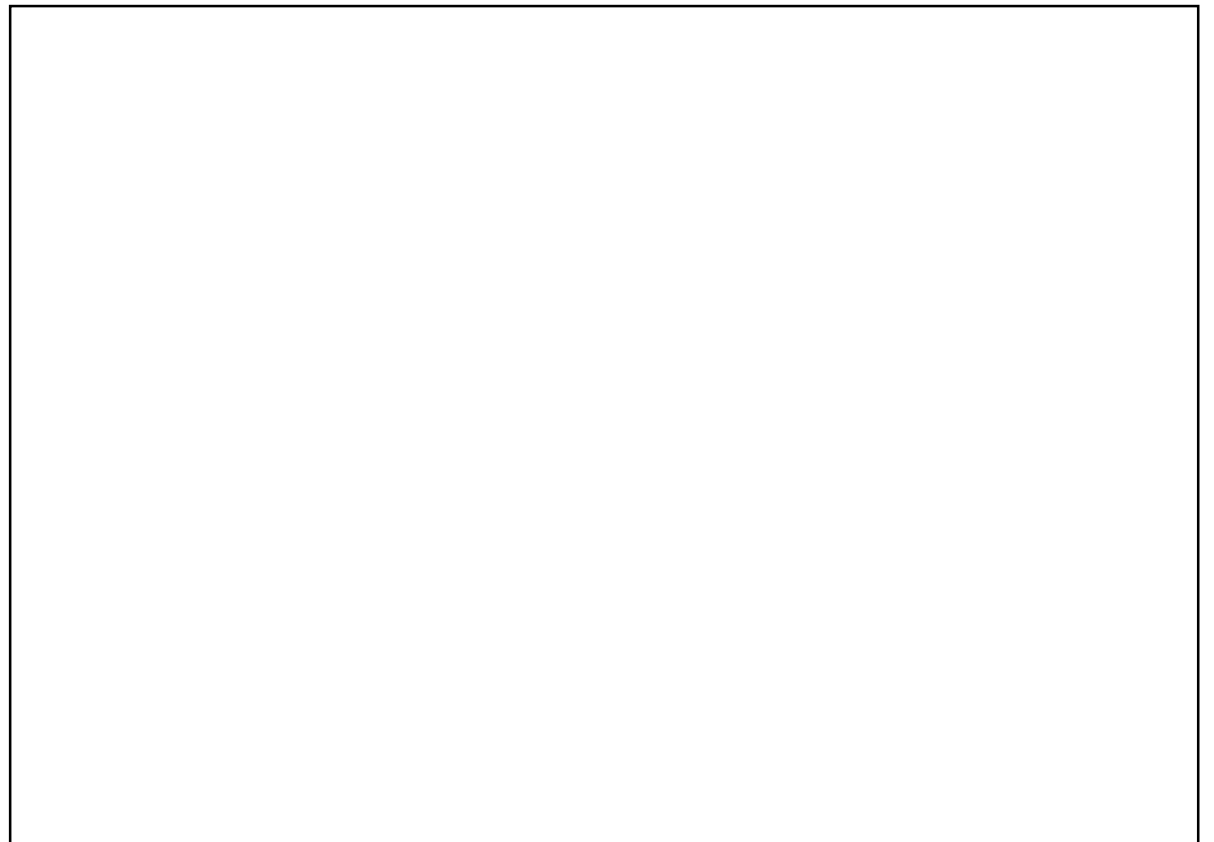
the party’s performance in the parliamentary elections. In addition, the CPRF strengthened its positions in the elections for regional legislatures on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, gaining 58 seats.

During the elections the Communist Party mounted a massive propaganda campaign. It issued more than 200 million copies of the newspapers *Pravda*, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, regional and local publications. It distributed millions of pamphlets, booklets, posters and leaflets. The nation could see the Party’s videos, listen to the speeches of hundreds of its representatives in the media.

Unlike United Russia and its candidate, the CPRF team and its leader took part in all the radio and television debates. It de-

clared that it was ready to take the country out of the social and economic impasse. It held thousands of meetings, with deputies reporting back to their urban and rural constituencies. It explained its position on key issues of our time. It consolidated its authority presenting itself as a real alternative to the diktat of the oligarchs and bureaucrats as well as to a bourgeois right-wing liberal comeback.

The CPRF has serious grounds for presenting legal claims to the authorities. Proven facts of flagrant violations of electoral law on the part of federal and regional executive bodies will provide the basis for the Party’s championing of civil rights. The “results” of the latest elections prompt society to stage



• Zyuganov, centre, marching with supporters.



well-justified acts of civil disobedience. We will take all possible measures to bring the falsifiers to justice.

The CPRF, backed by the public, intends to promote its initiatives aggressively. The Party will seek to gain access to the media. It will work towards the adoption of a Federal Law On Opposition, defining the rights of the shadow government, the creation of a system of public monitoring of the fulfilment of electoral promises, and government financing of the printed organs of parliamentary parties.

The recent election campaign highlighted both our strengths and weaknesses. We take a sober view of our results. We are aware of our shortcomings. We are ready to take a long hard look at the effectiveness of local party committees.

The Presidium of the CC CPRF thanks the millions of citizens in the country, both Communists and non-party members, for supporting our Party and its candidate, for their courageous stand and for their faith in the triumph of the ideals of people's rule and socialism.

The Communist Party has confirmed that it is ready to fight for the power of the working people. The *Programme* of the CPRF will become ever more relevant and necessary for the country with every passing day. The outgoing president is leaving a dire legacy to his "successor". Russia is still addicted to oil. Its economy is stalling. Food security has been lost. Social problems are not being addressed. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The building of the Russia-Belarus Union is on hold. Ukraine is drifting further away towards Nato.

In the eight years of Putin's rule the problems that are crying out for solution have not been solved: the shrinking population, the economy geared to the export of raw materials and the appallingly run-down system of life support in a vast country with a severe climate. The new president will have to assume responsibility for tackling these tasks and countering the severe geopolitical threats.

## Cooperate

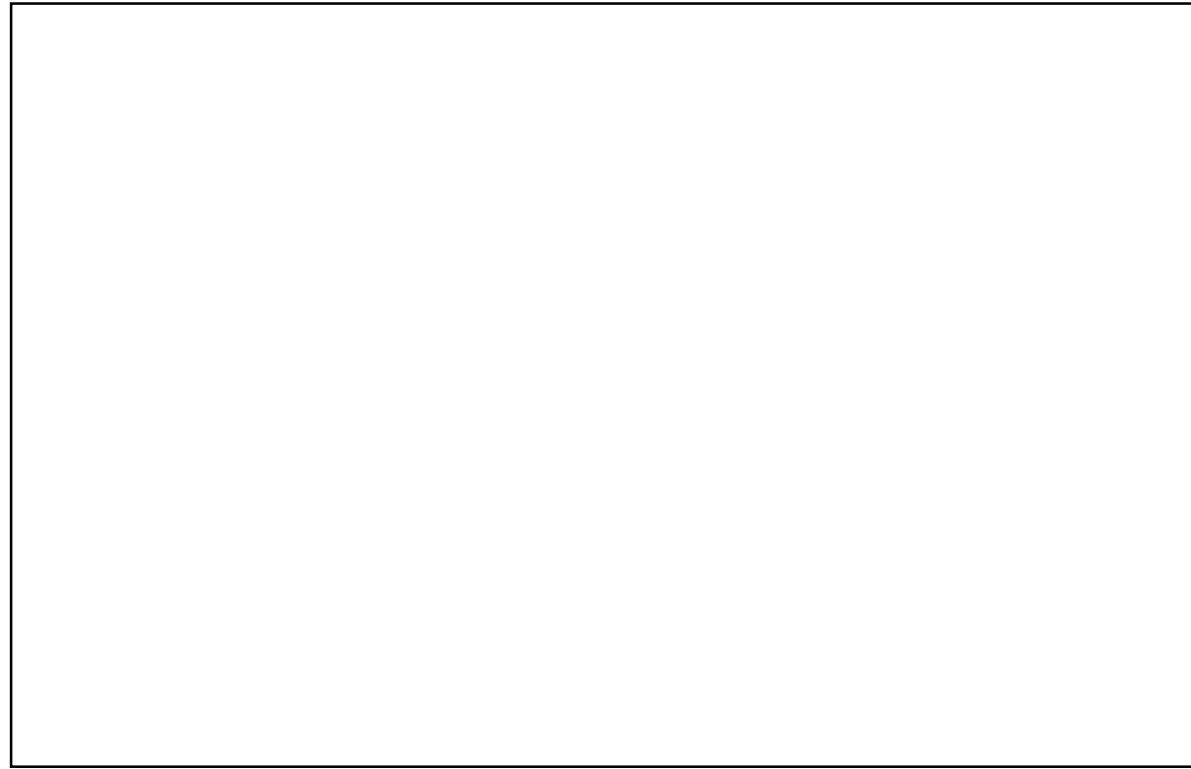
As ever the CPRF is ready to cooperate with a government that would adopt the key provisions of our *Programme* as the basis of its work.

A government that would recover the natural resources for the state, use the Stabilisation Fund money to develop the economy and provide a social safety net, substantially raise wages, pensions and benefits and keep housing rent below 10 per cent of the total family income. We are sure that there is no other way for this country.

A turn to the left will save Russia. Life shows that the country needs the CPRF with its team and its programme of action. The millions of votes cast for the CPRF strengthen our confidence in our eventual triumph. They make us fight with still more determination for the power of the working people, to move towards our goal knowing firmly that *socialism will triumph!*

Presidium of the CC CPRF

# Bread price rise stirs struggle in Egypt



by G Dunkel

• Cairo street kids on a rubbish dump.

**A RISE in the price of wheat flour as February ended has led both to an increase in hunger and to a series of sharp workers' struggles in Egypt, as well as attempts by the government to make concessions.**

The vast majority of Egyptians depend on bread for 70 per cent of their calories and protein, and some reports say more bread is eaten per person in Egypt than in any other country. Since the price leap, bread lines in the poor neighbourhoods of Egypt have

grown ever longer and more contentious. Al-Jazeera Television on 12<sup>th</sup> March reported that some people were waiting seven hours or more for their ration and that at least 10 people had died on breadlines in the first two weeks of March.



• Medvedev has a word with Putin.

## Huge mansion for Dmitri

**A HUGE residence is going to be built on one of the islands in Lake Seliger for Russia's recently elected president Dmitri Medvedev but the exact location has not been made public to preserve the president's privacy.**

Lake Seliger is a beloved place of rest for the citizens of Moscow, particularly the most famous and important ones. Active tourism propaganda has gradually turned the lake into a luxury place of rest. It's not by chance that this lake is the only one in Moscow that Vladimir Putin has visited.

Primarily the lake attracts

the tourists with its primeval nature and ecological purity. Then the lake is situated relatively close to Russia's main cities – Moscow and St Petersburg, which makes it easy to organise informal meetings in the resort area by the lake.

"Dmitri Medvedev is about to possess a three-storey mansion in a form of an ancient Russian palace. Somewhere nearby will be staff houses that are going to look like country huts," said a source in the president's administration. The entrance to the president's mansion is going to be guarded by huge stuffed bears. It remains though uncertain what they are going to symbolise: ei-

ther the power of Russia or the connection with his famous political party United Russia.

The representatives of the president's administration refused to give us a detailed planning map of the future residence for privacy reasons. But they insure that the president is going to live in the best conditions. It is certain that the residence is going to contain bath-houses for men and women, several tennis courts (which means the island is rather big) and even a small Russian arms museum, not to mention such a commonplace as the guarded helicopter parking.

Pravda.ru

The Egyptian government will spend nearly \$2.6 billion this year on subsidising bread and cooking oil, but it admits that a lot — as much as 40 per cent — of the bread production destined for the poor is being diverted to the private market.

Doctors held a two-hour protest 15<sup>th</sup> March over their low salaries — averaging \$50 a month — which the jump in the price of bread made it harder for them to accept. What was notable about this strike is that the doctors' union is led by a Christian woman. (Coptic Christians make up about 15 per cent of Egypt's population.)

Textile workers, who held a series of very successful strikes last year, have said that they will go out in early April to demand immediate wage hikes that will compensate them for the increased cost of bread. There have been a number of actions at individual textile plants already.

Ever since the 1978 Camp David meeting, Egypt, with its 76.2 million people, has been the United States' most important client state in the Arab world. Egypt has had billions in military aid and in the 1970s and 1980s also got substantial economic support. Currently it has a 10-year military aid commitment from the United States worth a total of \$13 billion.

In return for this substantial aid, Egypt protects Israel's western flank and safeguards American access to key transportation arteries, like the Suez Canal. Some 861 US ships had expedited passage through the canal from 2001 to 2005, and Egypt allowed 36,553 overflights by US combat aircraft during the same period.

The neo-liberal restructuring that the US imposed on Egypt, along with its military aid, began paying off last year for the Egyptian bourgeoisie. The World Bank ranked Egypt as the most improved investment economy in the world and Egyptian companies' profits and opportunities soared.

Similarly, the Egyptian bourgeoisie has been able to use its US-empowered army and repressive forces to disrupt its internal opponents like the Muslim Brotherhood.

But the Egyptian workers and poor, the vast majority of the country, have been left holding a bag that is mostly empty except for promises for a future paradise. Unemployment is down, but almost all the new jobs are in the service sector with no benefits and no stability. Housing is booming for the wealthy and in short supply for anybody else. Education and health care are also in sharp decline.

But people will struggle if they can't get enough to eat, and right now that is the overriding issue in Egypt. President Hosni Mubarak has called on the army to use its own ovens to bake bread to feed the people. Given the continued upward pressure on the worldwide price of food, it is not clear how long this army campaign can last.

Workers World (US)

Home News

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

Thank you for publishing in the New Worker on 14th March a positive report about our successful public meeting, which was held in central Manchester on 6th March.

Peter Hendy, our main speaker, made an excellent contribution on the topic: "What is the Philosophy of Marxism?"

But it raised some points in my mind about the differences between idealists and creationists on the one hand and dialectical materialists on the other.

I believe it is important to get this right because as communists we adhere to the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of dialectical materialism, which asserts that the universe has always existed.

It is the bourgeois idealists and creationists who, on the contrary, believe that the universe was created by a superior being or a god. This then leads to mental aberrations such as the "Big Bang" theory and "black holes" as espoused by Professor

Stephen Hawkins.

These erroneous philosophical idealist concepts are taught in university departments of physics and astronomy across the capitalist world, as if they were real, instead of just being constructs of the mind.

At the next meeting of the Manchester New Worker Supporters' Group, on Thursday 15th May in room five of Friends' House in central Manchester, we will be investigating the capitalist state machine and the necessity of its revolutionary overthrow by the modern proletariat (working class).

In uniting theory and practice we will also look at how the anti-worker, anti-union legislation in Britain, first introduced by the Tories in 1980, was not repealed by Labour when it came into power in 1997. The unions and the workers have been shackled.

We will be discussing the need to build a national shop stewards movement, build the communist movement and scrap the anti-union laws.

Yours fraternally, Mervyn Drage, Secretary, Greater Manchester New Worker Supporters' Group.

Dear Comrades

The Middle East Road Map has been exposed as a dead-end road and a tragic hoax.

In the early 90's Yasser Arafat and Yitsak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords, which outlined a two-stage solution based on the 1967 borders. The Palestinians signed the document in good faith and assumed that within three years they would have their own state, with their own airstrip and their own stretch of coast.

The European Union would help rebuild their economy and the free world would prosper and bring an end to violence.

As a major concession Yasser Arafat gave over half of what is now Israel, but was to be the Palestinian homeland, to the Israelis. Now it is obvious that the accords were a delaying tactic to allow Israel to build yet more settlements on occupied territory and make it impossible for a viable Palestinian state to emerge.

In 2000 the Israelis said: "Give us a moderate Palestinian leader and we will agree to a two state solution with secure borders." Mahmoud Abbas emerged as the moderate leader. George Bush announced the road map as a sop to Blair, to persuade him to join the "coalition of the willing" in his illegal war with Iraq.

After more delays, George Bush invited Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert to the White House, where they agreed yet again to progress the road map. The firm conditions were an end to a building of settlements by the Israelis, and for the Palestinians to stop the armed struggle against

Israel. As usual it was yet another hoax. In the last three months the Israelis have planned to build 1,000 new homes on the existing settlements within the West Bank. They constructed 75 new checkpoints since Bush announced the peace process. There has been a 75 per cent increase in Palestinian house demolition by the Israelis.

Nearly 1,000 Palestinians have been killed or injured since the road map was announced. The whole scandalous fraud has made Abbas look impotent. Condoleeza Rice has come crawling to Olmert begging for progress. What crumbs has she been given? One in 18 of the 75 new check points are to be closed and some of the half-starved Palestinians are being allowed to do menial work within Israel including building settlements.

Is there an answer to the problem - Yes. If the US stopped giving two-thirds of their foreign aid money to Israel, and if Britain and Europe stopped giving Israel preferential trade treatment; if the British Government and European Union supported a total boycott of Israeli goods as we did against the Apartheid regime in South Africa, then peace with justice might be achieved in the Middle East.

Ray Davies Caerphilly.

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NCP Lit. PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. (cheques to New Worker)

New Worker Supporters' Groups...

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• Socialism in one state
• Stalin and the British Road to Socialism
• The Soviet "command" economy
tutors: Andy Brooks, Neil Harris, Alex Kempshall and Dolly Shaer

£10 for the weekend, £5 for one day

NCP Party Centre, London.

Starts at 10am Saturday.

Comrades outside London need to register in advance as places are limited. 020 7223 4052.

SATURDAY 12 APRIL

Celebration in memory of Kim Il Sung

Speakers include: Andy Brooks NCP, Chris Coleman RCPB(ML) and a representative from the DPRK embassy. 3pm, Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU

Diary

SATURDAY 12 April

Celebration in memory of Kim Il Sung. Speakers include: Andy Brooks NCP, Chris Coleman RCPB(ML) and a representative from the DPRK embassy. 3pm, Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU.

TUESDAY 22 April

Barnet Trade Council launch meeting. 7pm, Cttee room 2, Hendon Town Hall, The Burroughs, London NW4.

TUESDAY 22 April

Afghanistan: Britains other war. Talk & discussion with Prof Mohammed Arif. 7.30pm, Green Room, Woodhatch Centre, off Hornbean Rd, Reigate, Surrey. Redhill & Reigate STWC 01737 248487.

SATURDAY 26 April

Use Your Vote on 1st May. BBQ. 2pm, West London TU Club, 33/35 High St, Acton W3 6ND.

SUNDAY 27 April

Love Music Hate Racism carnival. 12 noon, Victoria Park, London E3. Unite, PCS, Love Music Hate Racism. 020 7801 2781.

MONDAY 28 April

International Workers Memorial Day. March, assemble 10.30, Holland St, London SE1.

MONDAY 28 April

12.30pm, the Colchester Labour Representation Committee, which includes New Communist Party, Labour Party members and Unison's North East Essex

Mental Health branch, will be supporting workers Memorial Day outside the Memorial Plaque and tree, speakers from the trade union and labour movement, all welcome. Details from Mike Fletcher, c/o NCP Party Centre.

WEDNESDAY 30 April

Hope not Hate 2008. Carling Academy Brixton, Stockwell Rd, London SW9. £20/£16. www.hopenothate.org.uk

THURSDAY 1 May

London May Day march & rally. Assemble 12 noon, Clerkenwell Green, rally at Trafalgar Square.

SATURDAY 3 May

Recital for Peace. John Williams, guitar. 7.30pm, St James's Church, 197 Piccadilly, London W1. MANA 020 8455 1030. £15/£10.

SATURDAY 10 May

Free Palestine national demo. Assemble 1pm, Temple tube - rally in Trafalgar Square. PSC, BMI & PFIB.

THURSDAY 15 May

Public meeting: State & Revolution. Speaker Peter Hendy, NCP CC. 7.30pm, Room 5, Friends Meeting House, Mount St, Manchester. Greater Manchester New Worker Supporters Group.

SATURDAY 31 May

No third Runway. Demo at Heathrow, assemble 12 noon. www.campaigncc.org

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/

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# Tibet: a strong sense of déjà vu

by Rob Gowland

**“OPEN REVOLT” screamed the front page headline of the Sydney Morning Herald last Monday. The story, of course, was about China. The capitalist media were uniform in their assessment of the situation: The people of Tibet were in revolt and were heroically “defying China’s iron fist”.**

Disappointingly for some right-wing media and governments, the Beijing Olympic Games do not appear to be at risk of either cancellation or a boycott. Nevertheless, clearly the capitalist media have taken on the job of organising all the disruption they possibly can.

And these “spontaneous” riots are definitely organised. Even the *Sydney Morning Herald* acknowledged, perhaps without meaning to, that the Tibetans throwing rocks at the windows of government buildings, hurling petrol bombs or simply beating up Chinese civilians in the street, had been organised — “through the telephone grapevine, through Voice of America radio broadcasts in local dialects [they don’t miss a trick, do they] as well as ... satellite television”.

The whole episode carried a heavy sense of déjà vu. We have seen this kind of operation before, more than once. In fact, the US in particular, has become highly adept at organising it.

We first encountered it, in its full-blown form, in Hungary in 1956. Remember the prominent way Ra-

dio Free Europe and the Voice of America were involved in that whole exercise? Remember too how the “freedom fighters” there captured all those local radio stations with such ease, testifying to the scope and popularity of the “uprising”?

Only later did we find out that the “radio stations” that had been “liberated” by the rebels were not real radio stations at all, but portable transmitters flown in from West Germany (like so many of the “freedom fighters” themselves) to give phoney reports of the capture of towns by rebel forces that in fact did not exist.

They were in fact part of what we now know are called “black ops”, unacknowledged intelligence agency operations designed to sow confusion and destabilise governments the US wants to remove.

Twelve years later we saw the procedure in operation again in Czechoslovakia, then in 1989 it was replayed with Gorbachev’s help in the USSR itself. The people of the USSR actually voted in a referendum not to dissolve the USSR, but Gorby, that great democrat, did so anyway. He ushered in not just the breaking-up of the Soviet Union, but the looting by eager entrepreneurs of the vast assets of its State economy (Gorby gave himself the former Lenin Institute in Moscow, but to his chagrin was later not allowed to keep it).

In that same period of counter-revolutionary assaults, Berliners were goaded by Radio Free Europe and the Voice of



• A pro China demo – a scene you rarely see in the capitalist media.

America (again) to seize the “luxurious” hunting lodges owned by Party and government leaders in the GDR. In the event, the actual lodges proved to be a disappointment, being perfectly ordinary and not at all luxurious. But they had served their purpose for the organisers of the destabilisation of the GDR.

We know enough about these destabilising ops now to recognise many of the techniques — and the huge investment in money and manpower they represent.

It is not enough, obviously, to simply report on the radio that “Party leaders are lolling about in luxury while you have to struggle for basic necessities”. There

must also be a well-organised team on the ground, to stimulate and if necessary lead street protests. Well trained — very well trained — agents provocateurs are a must if these tactics are to work.

We saw it in action in Yugoslavia, when groups of disciplined young strong-arm boys led the crowds in the disruption that caused the overthrow of the socialist government of Slobodan Milosevic and the Socialist Party of Serbia.

The US Army maintains at least two complete military units whose sole job is to conduct hostile operations on the territory of countries the US is not at war with.

Destabilisation, “black (in other words false) propaganda”, currency raids, interference in trade via lies about “product safety”, are all part of imperialism’s modern day arsenal. Religion, of course, is a favourite weapon, much used in recent times.

Less obvious is the carefully orchestrated use of the global mass media, less obvious because of the collusion of the media magnates themselves in the process. Their own class interest predisposes them to allow their particular media to actively co-operate in imperialism’s little game.

Of course, nothing so crude as telling their journalists to “say such and such”.

They hire journalists who aren’t going to think independently, or who think along a right wing track already; journalists who can be trusted to say the right thing politically. It saves time in the long run.

And so we have the universal portrayal of the Tibetan question as one of Chinese conquest, Chinese tyranny, and saintly Tibetan monks led by the Dalai Lama in defending their country.

But don’t forget, under the Dalai Lama Tibet was partly a feudal and partly slave society. Being a monk was the only way a Tibetan could get any kind of education.

When the UN Conference on Women took place in Beijing a few years ago, the media made much of the protests organised by Tibetan women against China outside the conference. Although the media downplayed the counter-demonstration by pro-Chinese Tibetan women at the Conference, they could not completely hide it. So they dropped the subject.

In all the news coverage of the latest protests, not one Tibetan supporter of China has been interviewed (so far, at any rate). Every anti-Chinese Tibetan “refugee” has been able to talk to the world’s media, however.

That, too, is part of the way these things are organised. And in this case, organised is the operative word.

*The Guardian*  
*Australian communist weekly*

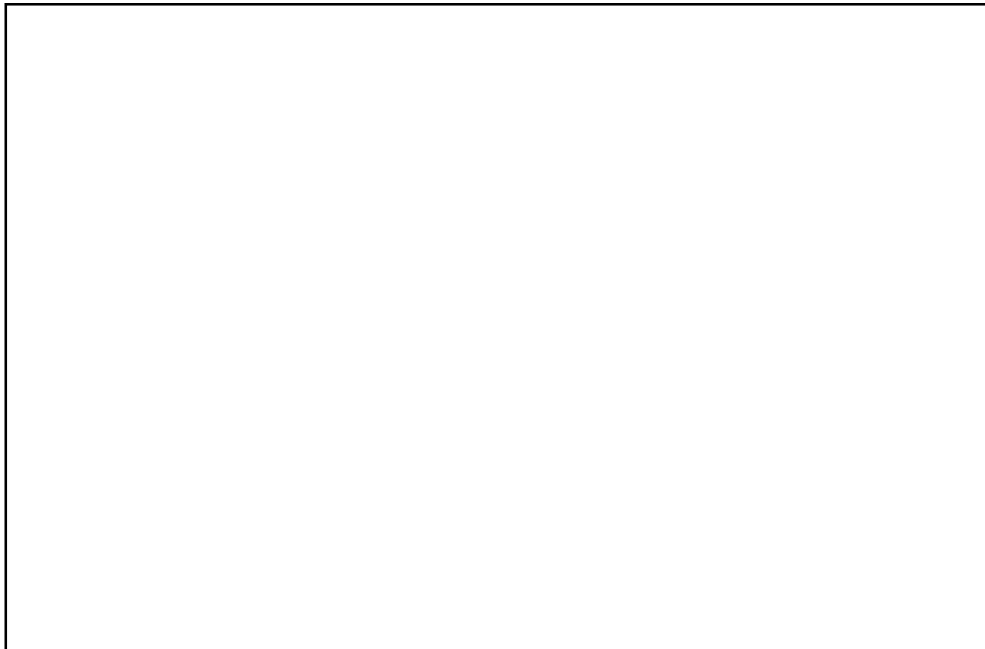
## 40 years since the murder of Martin Luther King

**FORTY years have passed since the murder of the heroic martyr Martin Luther King. On 4<sup>th</sup> April 1968, the Nobel Peace Prize winner was in Memphis, Tennessee, to take part in a big demonstration against racist discrimination. The murderer James Earl Ray shot and killed him in the motel where he was staying. Martin Luther King was only 39-years-old.**

His death filled all progressive humanity with sadness. Trade unions, social organisations, political parties, governments of socialist countries, progressive countries and independent states expressed their sadness and their indigna-

tion for his murder. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) with press releases, declarations and other means protested against this killing. Many militant trade unions organised protests in front of US Embassies in their respective countries.

Today, 40 years later, the US Congress organized an event to honour his memory. Events also took place in many American cities as well as in other countries of the world. When Martin Luther King was alive, the US government accused him of being an “extremist” and charges were pressed against him. The mass media controlled by the state slandered him. The basic accusation was that he was fighting for “radical social changes”. Now they honour him as a devout



• King giving his famous *I have a dream* speech.

man and a “pastor”. Today statistics show the continuing serious discriminations against

the Afro-Americans in the United States. Prisons are full of people of colour; hundreds of people of

colour are assassinated and lose their lives in the big cities of the United States. Immigrants who

are people of colour in the United States are under heavy attack. They are treated as third-class citizens by the public services. Unemployment, poverty, sickness and death are privileges of black people.

For the WFTU as well as for all progressive people the best way to pay tribute to the hero Martin Luther King is to continue fighting for a world without discriminations and without exploitation.

Honour to Martin Luther King.

**The Secretariat,  
World Federation  
of Trade Unions,  
Athens,  
4.4.2008**

# THE NEW WORKER

International News

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## The Dalai Lama's lies

**CHINA DENOUNCED** the Dalai Lama who has proved with his own acts that his bragging about "peace" and "non-violence" is nothing but lies.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu made these remarks at a regular press conference on Tuesday afternoon in Beijing when asked to comment on the Dalai Lama's claim in his recent statement that he sticks to his "middle way" approach and does not seek "Tibet independence".

Jiang said the Dalai Lama is the head representative of the serf system which integrates religion with politics in old Tibet. This serf system, which harbours no democracy, freedom or human rights in any form, was the darkest system of slavery in human history, Jiang said, adding that only the serf owners could enjoy special privileges under such a system.

The "middle way" approach that the Dalai Lama is pursuing for is aimed at restoring his own "paradise in the past", which would throw millions of liberated serfs back into a dark cage, Jiang said.

"Such a 'middle way', who can accept it?" said Jiang.

On the Dalai Lama's claim that he is unconnected with the riots in Lhasa, Jiang said that the Dalai Lama has always relied on telling lies, noting that it does not matter much about what he said, only what he did. One thing that



• The Dalai Lama talks to Bush – now what could they have in common?

the Dalai Lama has done recently is to instigate and orchestrate the violence in Lhasa, Jiang said.

The Dalai Lama's own acts have proved "peace" and "non-violence" are all lies to deceive people, she said.

Jiang also added that the

central government's policy toward the Dalai Lama is consistent and the central government has been patiently keeping contact with the Dalai Lama side.

"Our door to conduct dialogue with the Dalai Lama was open in the past and is still

open now", Jiang said. "We are still willing to contact and consult with him", Jiang said but only if the Dalai Lama changed his mind, stopped separatist activities, violence and sabotaging the Beijing Olympic Games, *Xinhua news agency*

## Bertie Ahern resigns mid donations scandal

**BERTIE AHERN** dramatically announced on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April that he is to resign as Taoiseach [prime minister] and Fianna Fáil leader on 6<sup>th</sup> May.

The announcement follows damaging publicity about Ahern's financial affairs at the Mahon Tribunal. Insisting that he has never taken a corrupt payment, Ahern said he was resigning in the best interests of the country, and was tired of headlines about "my life, my lifestyle, my finances".

Ahern will leave office within days of addressing the US Houses of Congress and a visit to Ireland by the Japanese prime minister. His departure now paves the way for current Finance Minister Brian Cowen to become Taoiseach. It is unlikely there will be any other candidate and it is expected the real battle will be for the position of Tánaiste [deputy premier]. Shortly after 9am on Wednesday journalists were told Ahern would make an important announcement at Government Buildings in Dublin.

At about 10.50am the Taoiseach told the assembled media: "The important work of the government and party is

now being overshadowed by issues relating to me at the Tribunal of Inquiry into certain planning matters and payments.

"The constant barrage of commentary on tribunal related matters has and I believe will continue to dominate the political agenda at an important point for our country," he said.

Surrounded by members of his cabinet, Ahern detailed achievements in his political career and thanked supporters. Over three decades, Bertie Ahern was elected ten times to the Dáil for the Dublin North Central constituency. In November 1994 he was elected Fianna Fáil leader and first became Taoiseach in 1997. He is the only Taoiseach since 1944 to win three consecutive elections.

Commenting on Ahern's announcement Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams said: "On a personal level and as we celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, I want to wish Bertie Ahern and his family well for the future.

"I worked closely with him through the Peace Process for almost a decade-and-a-half, while he was opposition

leader and then as Taoiseach. While I was critical at times of the role of the Irish Government I wish to acknowledge the important contribution Mr Ahern made.

"However, as the Taoiseach acknowledged this morning, politics was becoming increasingly dominated by his personal affairs rather than the issues which are impacting on peoples lives, such as the Lisbon Treaty and the state of the public services."

welcomed

Meanwhile Sinn Féin's Dáil leader Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin TD stated: "I welcome this morning's announcement by Bertie Ahern of his intention to step down as Taoiseach early next month. His position as leader of the Government has become untenable and his announcement to step down is the right decision. The glaring contradictions in his evidence which had been exposed at the Mahon Tribunal have made his position as leader of this government unsustainable.

"However I also welcome his announcement in the context of his government's complete failure to deliver an eq-

uitable and efficient and truly reformed public health service. For some time now I have made repeated calls on the Taoiseach to resign primarily because of the disastrous state of our health services.

"That said, it must be acknowledged that Bertie Ahern's contribution to the development of the Irish Peace Process was significant. He built on the work of his predecessor Albert Reynolds and played a key role in the negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement. The developing all-Ireland political process will require renewed energy and a more vigorous approach from Bertie Ahern's successor.

"The stepping down of Bertie Ahern offers a fresh opportunity for a new direction in Government policy. That should include the delivery of a truly equitable health service, the prioritisation of education and other public services and abandoning the privatisation agenda. The departure of Mary Harney along with Bertie Ahern would help but we will not hold our breaths."

*Sinn Féin news*

## UN man stands by 'nazi' Israel comparison

**PROFESSOR Richard Falk**, recently named as the UN's Special Rapporteur on human rights in Palestine, has stood by comments likening Israel's treatment of Palestinians to the treatment of Jewish people in Nazi Germany.

Professor Falk made the remarks last summer, when he said he did not think it was "an irresponsible overstatement to associate the treatment of Palestinians with the criminal Nazi record of collective atrocity."

Speaking to the BBC on Tuesday, the Jewish-American international law expert said he would not take back the comments, as he believed that up to now Israel had been successful in avoiding the criticism that it was due, adding that he understood that it was a provocative thing to say, but at the time he had wanted to shake the American public from its torpor.

On 28<sup>th</sup> March this year, The UN Human Rights Council chose a number of new special rapporteurs on issues ranging from modern day sla-

very to indigenous rights. Professor Falk's naming met with sharp criticism from Israel, whose representative to the Human Rights Council, Itzhak Levanon, said the mandate of the special rapporteur post was hopelessly unbalanced. He added that Professor Falk's "views could not possibly be considered independent, impartial or objective".

The Palestinian representative to the Council Mohammad Abu-Koash said it was "ironic that Israel, which claimed to be representing Jews everywhere, was campaigning against a Jewish professor who had been nominated for the post of Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

The Palestinian representative added that as an international law expert, Professor Falk was highly qualified for the post, concluding that if Israel was concerned about human rights it would have ended its prolonged occupation.

*Radio Havana Cuba*

## Communist youth meet in Prague

**THE COMMUNIST Youth Union (KSM) of the Czech Republic held its 8<sup>th</sup> Congress on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March in Prague, meeting under the slogan, "Communists in the front line in the struggle for the rights of the majority of the youth, for peace and socialism!"**

The congress was held only a few days after the Municipal Court of Prague supported the Ministry of the Interior in its reactionary decision to dissolve the organisation of the young communists. The Congress of the KSM denounced the anti-communist and anti-democratic attacks of the state power against the young communists and has appealed to all the democratic forces to resist these attacks.

The congress also discussed the activities of the young communists against a plan to construct a US military base in Czech Republic. The KSM has denounced this plan from the very beginning

and was the first organisation to initiate a public campaign against the base's possible construction, which included demonstrations, petitions, debates, meetings and cultural activities. The KSM says it intends to organise further activities in the struggle against the military base.

The KSM has also protested at the right-wing government's proposal to introduce fees for university studies. At the congress the KSM declared defence of the right for free education one of the group's priorities.

*Solidnet*

• In a fraternal message to the KSM Congress the NCP said: "Our Party, along with many others across the world, has condemned the banning orders intended to stifle the communist voice through legal fraud. We are confident that, one way or another, you will be able to keep up the fight for peace and socialism whatever happens".





