

Revolutionary Perspectives 10

Quarterly Magazine of the Communist Workers' Organisation

Bürger, Arbeiter, Parteigenossen!

Der Militärputsch ist da! Die Balthum-Landsknechte, die sich vor der befohlenen Auflösung fürchten, haben den Versuch unternommen, die Republik zu besetzen und eine diktatorische Regierung zu bilden
mit Lüttwisch und Kapp an der Spitze!

Bürger der Republik, Arbeiter und Genossen!
Wir haben die Revolution nicht gemacht, um uns heute wieder einem blutigen Landsknecht-Regiment zu unterwerfen. — Wir pakieren nicht mit den Balthum-Verbrechern!

Deutsche Bürger, Arbeiter, Genossen!
Die Arbeit eines ganzen Jahres soll in Erinnerung geschlagen, eure schwer erkaufte Freiheit vernichtet werden, darum sind die schärfsten Abwehrmittel geboten. Kein Betrieb darf laufen, solange die Militärdiktatur der Ludendorffe herrscht! Deshalb

Legt die Arbeit nieder! Streikt!
Schneidet dieser reaktionären Clique die Luft ab!
Kämpft mit jedem Mittel um die Erhaltung der Republik! Laßt allen Zwist beiseite! Es gibt nur dieses eine Mittel gegen die Rückkehr Wilhelms II.
Lahmlegung des gesamten Wirtschaftslebens!
Keine Hand darf sich mehr rühren! Kein Proletariat darf der Militärdiktatur helfen!

Generalstreik auf der ganzen Linie.

Proletariat vereinigt Euch! Nieder mit der Gegenrevolution!

Die sozialdemokratischen Mitglieder der Reichsregierung
Eberl, Bauer, Noske, Schlicke, Schmidt, David, Müller
Der Parteivorstand der S. P. D.
Otto Wels.

**The Akers McNulty Strike
Student Struggle**

150 Years of Class Struggle

The KAPD and National Bolshevism

In the Firing Line

The Global Imperialist Struggle and the Gulf

The Great Game

**Revolutionary Perspectives
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NB The email and www addresses were **both** wrong in the last *Workers' Voice*. Our email address is: cwo@londonmail.com; and the website is: <http://www.geocities.com/~italianleft>

The **Front Cover** shows a *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* poster issued at the time of the Kapp *putsch*.

It reads:

**Citizens, Workers, Party Com-
rades!**

There has been a military putsch! The Baltic mercenaries, worried that their units will be ordered to be dissolved, have tried to overthrow the Republic and set up a dictatorial government

led by Lüttwitz and Kapp.

Citizens of the Republic, Workers and Comrades!

we didn't make the revolution in order to bow down once more to a

bloody mercenary regiment.

We will **not** negotiate with the Baltic criminals.

**German Citizens, Workers, Com-
rades!**

The work of the whole year is to be ruined, your dearly bought **freedom is to be annihilated;**

therefore the sharpest preventative measures are demanded. No company must be allowed to function, so long as the military dictatorship of the Ludendorffs rules. Therefore,

Stop work! Strike!

Suffocate this reactionary clique!

Fight with every means to preserve the Republic! Forget our differences! There is only one way to prevent the return of Wilhelm II

Cripple the whole of economic life!

Not a hand should move! No proletarian should help the military dictatorship!

— General Strike all along the line! —

Proletarians unite! Down with the counter-revolution!

**The Social-Democratic members of the Gov-
ernment,**

Ebert, Bauer, Noske, Schlicke, Schmidt, David, Müller

**The SPD Party Chairman,
Otto Wels**

Akers McNulty Strike Shows Whose Side Unions Are On

The February strike in the Akers McNulty shipyard in South Shields show exactly who the unions represent. The shipyard is part of a huge multinational oil company. Engineering workers there refused to accept a pay deal of 8.6% which had been agreed between the unions and the management. As soon as they rejected the unions' offer, the GMB union told workers it would refuse to help them if they decided to take any action. Akers McNulty then stepped in with their part of the threat telling workers if they didn't accept the unions' deal and turn up for work as normal all 625 would be sacked.

At first the workers refused to be browbeaten. The unions then did everything possible to get them back; they told them they were being unreasonable, that their action (of refusing to be bullied back to work) was illegal (and that they would give them no financial support (after all, you can't expect to pay into a union all your working life and then get something back when you need it! Union dues are for the pensions funds and wages of the bureaucrats). They even added the threat that there is no legal right for striking workers in Britain to keep their jobs (which happens to be true). To the horror of the unions the sacked workers not only ignored all this but even managed to get the electricians in the yard out in their support.

The GMB were now forced to step up the pressure. They organised a mass meeting (a sure sign of their desperation), telling workers that the pay deal was

Ackers McNulty Strike

fair, that they would not win, that their actions were illegal and that they would be isolated. This time the meeting went the unions' way and the workers voted to accept the original offer and go back. As usual the unions then put their propaganda machine into operation and claimed this as a victory for the workers, since Akers McNulty had been good enough to take them back. The workers, the GMB hacks insisted had thus avoided the fate of other workers like the Magnet workers and Liverpool dockers. What they did not say was that part of the problem for Magnet workers and the Liverpool dockers was that they were stitched up by their "own" unions.

The multinationals are very much aware that the unions are invaluable to them, and know just how necessary they are in controlling workers. They value the union machine as a whole, not just its leaders. As the Managing Director of Akers McNulty said, the GMB has been invaluable in successfully policing any disruption and defending the rights of the multinationals. As he put it

We have never had a strike before and that was a great selling point when approaching customers. I'd like to pay tribute to the GMB who have helped us handle the situation.

This is a view echoed by John Monks, General Secretary of the TUC. Writing in the employers' paper the *Financial Times* he maintained that

As the realities of the globalised economy sink in the emphasis is on the added

Ackers McNulty/Students

value a committed and loyal staff can bring a company.

He then went on to cite the practices of Blue Circle cement. This is the company where workers last year signed away any future pay rises (i.e. agreed to pay cuts) in return for no sackings for two years! No wonder Monks concluded his article with a no-strike statement

Employees [he means workers — CWO] and their unions know that with the right to employ staff goes the responsibility to work for the good of the enterprise in partnership.

At the present time of massive job insecurity the unions don't even have to pretend to be militant. What we are seeing currently is the unions acting as preservers of the system in which they have stake. This is the true colours of the trades union in the period of capitalism in which we

live. When more widespread and simultaneous working class struggle does rise again (as it inevitably will) the unions will once again put on a militant face in order not to lose control of the workers. Workers will increasingly be faced with a whole series of tactics learned by the unions over the years to sabotage any kind of action.

Some workers still cannot see how organisations like the unions have become so integrated into the capitalist system. After all, they argue, we built these organisations in the last century to defend ourselves. But capitalism has changed. In the last century capitalism was still expanding (it was "progressive" as revolutionaries at the time said). Since 1914 that expansion has only been at the cost of millions of lives in an infernal round of world wars punctuated by small

boom periods. Today capitalism is in deep crisis and it has spent that last 25 years getting the working class to accept greater austerity and unemployment in a failed effort to make capitalism expand once again. So far we have had nothing but stagnation but this has not been the fault of the unions. They have been transformed from agencies of the state in the 1970's into consultative agencies to multinationals. The Ackers McNulty strike gave us a brief glimpse of the reality of where the unions stand. Those workers at Ackers McNulty who fought outside union control show a glimmer of consciousness exists in parts of the working class that the unions are just as much a class enemy as the multinationals. All future battles will be won or lost depending on how well workers can put this realisation into action.

No! to Tuition Fees No! to Ending of Maintenance Grants

continued from page 4

let will have harder lives than their parents. Welfare payments and health care will continue to be cut. Real wages will fall and exploitation will increase. Millions will remain unemployed. Millions will remain homeless. This society has no long term future for us. The only way it can solve its falling profits is through world war — just as it has done twice before this century. The only way forward for mankind it through communism — a society which produces for human needs not profit. This is the only real alternative to the hardship and war which lie

ahead. This real alternative has nothing to do with the capitalist systems which existed in Russia and elsewhere. These systems were systems of state capitalism and were fundamentally the same as the system here. The people in power today still feed us the lie that Russia was communist. This is to make us think there is no alternative to this society. This shows they still fear communism.

The only way to prepare for a better society is to begin to fight this society. Students should not accept charges for tuition or cuts in maintenance grants. A pro-

gramme of strikes and occupations should be initiated. Loans should not be repaid. Students should link their battle with that of striking workers and unemployed to form a single front against the bosses and their government.

**NO TO TUITION FEES
NO TO CUTS IN
MAINTENANCE
GRANTS
YES TO FREE
EDUCATION FOR
ALL**

Attacks on Students

We reproduce below a leaflet which was given out by CWO student sympathisers in Universities and Colleges in London and Surrey. The leaflet was written in response to the government's plans to charge students £1000 annually for tuition and to abolish maintenance grants. The NUS called a demonstration for 4th March but then cancelled it at the last moment and instead called on students to simply boycott classes. By this means the NUS fragmented the protest and prevented it from achieving a national focus. The anger which students feel about these new attacks by the government is indicated by the fact that an estimated 2 million students stayed away from colleges and universities on the day of the aborted demonstration. The hardships which students are already suffering as a result of the previous government's attacks on them are expressed in figures such as the following:

- 1 in 3 students work part time in order to pay for their education;
- 1 in 5 students drop out of higher education because they cannot afford to continue;
- 50% of students leave higher education with debts over £5000 to repay.

Forcing students to pay for tuition and ending maintenance grants will make these hardships much worse. Already there is a significant fall in applications for universities; 20,000 less places have been applied for this year than in 1997. As the leaflet states, these measures will exclude many working class stu-

Student Struggle

dents from higher education by these measures.

The NUS is quite incapable of mounting any real opposition to these attacks, which it says are "mistakes" or "badly thought out policies" when they are actually part of a coherent strategy for cutting state spending. The NUS childishly looks to Labour to rescue students which, of course, continues the policies of the previous government, not just in education but everywhere else. This is not because it is making "mistakes" or has "bad advice". It is simply because these are the policies capitalism everywhere needs to combat its crisis of falling profits. Every year governments have to pay out more and more of the income they get from taxes in interest payments on their debts. That's why every party accepts there must be cuts in state spending. If you are a capitalist party, trying to make the system work, you have no choice: it is the logic of the system itself. And there is no argument that Labour is a capitalist party. Its whole framework is that the present system can be made to work.

In areas such as education this means rationalisation, restructuring and cuts. Education is to be rationalised to produce students who are better trained to meet capitalism's needs. Courses which are not immediately relevant to this come under the axe while industry is to be given a say in drawing up new ones. Curricula, testing, exams etc. are to be standardised throughout the country and work experience in industry becomes compulsory. Restructuring is leading to colleges and schools being amalga-

Student Struggle

mated, courses 'streamlined' and 'superfluous' teachers being given the sack. All this is equivalent to the restructuring which has taken place in industry itself. However, instead of producing material commodities more cheaply and more efficiently, these measures are designed to produce a human commodity — skilled labour power — more cheaply and more efficiently.

It is estimated that the government's present proposals for tuition fees and ending of maintenance grants could raise £400 to £500 million annually. This is basically a form of taxation on students. Taxation before work has even started, which will be used to reduce government spending. The NUS's attempts to advise the government of alternative schemes or better ways of paying back the loans, (e.g. through reducing national insurance contributions), are no solution at all. They show clearly that

the NUS accepts the government's cost-cutting starting point and fundamentally accepts that education, like the universal right to health and a basic standard of life, is no longer something that should be freely available to anyone. Indeed the NUS admitted to the last government that the grant system was 'unviable'.

All over Europe and the so-called advanced capitalist world, the state welfare systems that were set up after the 2nd World War in response to working class demands for change (and to ward off any attempt at by workers to change things for themselves) are under the axe. Capitalism can no longer afford it and the working class — i.e. the majority of the population — are supposed to just accept this. The NUS basically **does** accept this so any protest it organises can never be a serious one, as the events of the 4th March show. Any real fight will have to take

place outside of and against the NUS.

The only way to launch an effective resistance is to totally reject all cuts, not just in education but wherever working people's living standards are being attacked. Obviously students as a body are not going to identify with the interests of the working class but our task is to demonstrate the link between what is going on in education and the wider world: that it is not this or that policy which is 'unviable' but the capitalist system itself which is in deeper and deeper crisis. In the long run the only viable alternative will be to overthrow this system which cannot even maintain the welfare infrastructures of 50 years ago. This message is particularly apt for working class students facing mounting debt and impoverishment.

NO! TO TUITION FEES NO! TO ENDING OF MAINTENANCE GRANTS

Within months of winning the election "New" Labour relaunched the Tories' attack on students. They propose to abolish free tuition for students and to end maintenance grants. This will mean those of us who do go to university next September will leave owing £8 to £12 thousand pounds. Many of us will not be able to afford it. The result of these charges will be to exclude most working class students from higher education. Education for them will just be train-
Revolutionary Perspectives 4

ing for wage slavery. Higher education will be for the upper classes only. This attack on students is part of a larger onslaught on the working class. The unemployed are being forced off benefit into jobs at third world wages, public sector workers are suffering wage cuts and increased exploitation. Single mothers and disabled people are having benefits slashed. All this is exactly the same, if not worse, than under the Tories.

The truth is, there is no real difference between Labour and the Tories. Both of them are anti-working class and capitalist to the core.

Capitalism is in crisis because it cannot generate enough profit. Our living standards are being reduced in an effort to increase profits. In the long run these efforts will fail because capitalism's problems cannot be solved. Most of those reading this leaf-

continued on page 2

One Hundred and Fifty Years of Class Struggle

The Communist Manifesto Today

This article is being written on March 13th, 1998. This is exactly a century and half since the fall of the Austrian Chancellor Metternich. He symbolised the sway of reaction over Europe which followed the revolution in France in 1789 and the subsequent twenty three years of revolutionary then Napoleonic wars. The revolution unleashed the bourgeois forces of nationalism and liberalism which Metternich and the monarchs of the Holy Alliance were determined to stamp out. For almost half a century the forces of reaction held back the floodtide of revolt but the irresistible growth of capitalism and an urban capitalist class (the bourgeoisie) eventually burst the dam of counter-revolution. In 1848 there were revolutions in fifteen European capitals stretching from Paris to Palermo. And even in London (despite the usual propaganda about the “passivity” of the British working class from recent bourgeois hacks¹) revolution was narrowly averted in the great Chartist demonstration of that year.

Almost unnoticed a pamphlet had been written a few weeks earlier. The original draft was by Frederick Engels but it was given final form by Karl Marx. It too spoke of revolution but the one it looked to was the future revolution of the proletariat. This explains why it has not only endured but also why it has had such influence. Today the bourgeoisie are reprinting *The Communist Manifesto* with introductions from an academic “Marxist”, the repentant ex-Stalinist

Class Struggle

Eric Hobsbawm. His preface is just the latest in a series of attacks by ex-Stalinists turned “democrats” against the very revolutionary heart of Marxism. It is nothing new. This has been going on since the workers’ own actions first gave evidence that they had their own class interests. Ironically the first event to show this came only a few months after the *Manifesto* was published. The French Second Republic had come into existence with the support of the working class. In order to keep the workers quiet “national workshops” had been set up in February. But by June the bourgeoisie felt strong enough to close the workshops and move the unemployed out of Paris. It was a provocation (as is almost every episode of the class struggle) and the workers put up barricades which were only destroyed by the army under General Cavaignac.

20,000 workers were killed — a river of blood between bourgeoisie and proletariat which violently demonstrated the validity of *The Communist Manifesto*’s central premise.

The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles.

Whilst in modern society

Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

Marx had not invented this struggle². He could see it before his eyes (as did Engels in his *Condition of the English Working Class* of 1844). *The Communist Manifesto* merely defined its fu-

Class Struggle

ture. Denying that future are people like Hobsbawm and Martin Jacques (ex-editor of the CPGB's journal *Marxism Today*). In a remarkably well co-ordinated message (to the extent of using identical words) Hobsbawm in print, and Jacques on Radio 4's Today programme in the same week, both announced that Marx was right in his economic analysis of capitalism (in their vulgarised interpretation he anticipated "globalisation" — but they don't say how). Whilst, of course, he got it wrong about the working class. Jacques stated that Marx "got it wrong about the agent of social change" (but did not enlighten us as to the alternative) whilst Hobsbawm wrote

If at the end of the millennium we must be struck by the acuteness of the manifesto's vision of a massively globalised capitalism, the failure of another of its forecasts is equally striking. It is now evident that the bourgeoisie has not produced "above all the ranks of its own gravediggers" in the proletariat. "Its fall and the victory of the proletariat" have not proved "equally inevitable".

This reactionary and historically stupid observation is typical of the ex-Stalinist (and, in many cases, ex-Trotskyist) who see the old Labour movement as the embodiment of the working class organised for itself. Its de-

mise they equate with the demise of the class struggle. In fact the opposite is the case. Not only is the proletariat as a class to be found on a global level (some-



The original cover of the German version of *The Communist Manifesto*

thing that did not happen in Marx's day) but the capitalist system is more and more proletarianising those areas of work previously considered "professional", "white-collar" etc. The working class — those who have no means of surviving except by selling their labour power, i.e. working for a wage — is currently being re-shaped and is in retreat but it can no more go away than can the fact of exploitation.

What has gone is a "Labour movement" which operated for capitalism. The unions were created by the working class to defend themselves but now they are integrated into capitalist management and its state everywhere. Before they died Marx and Engels criticised the Social Democratic Parties of the nineteenth century as "reformist". After their deaths the slide into

accommodation with capitalism continued and despite the efforts of their left-wing (Lenin, Luxemburg, Pannekoek, Gorter, Bordiga etc.) they virtually all went over to imperialism in 1914 and voted war credits for their governments. The Russian Revolution briefly offered us the new revolutionary Communist International but even before Lenin died this too had gone back to many social democratic policies (and was seeking alliance with the selfsame Social Democrats who had murdered workers in the post war revolutionary wave in Europe). Stalinism was the logical outcome of this failure. And even Trotsky's opposition to Stalinism failed to raise a real revolutionary alternative ending in the entryism of the 1935 French turn. Trying to capture the leaderships of the trades' unions and social democratic parties did little to demonstrate how integrated into modern state capitalist monopoly these organs were. That is one of the tasks of today's revolutionaries.

Today we have to rebuild a revolutionary movement, to help reconstitute the class as a class for itself. This is in the first instance a programmatic task but it has to be linked to the actual daily struggle of the working class as a whole. We do not need a new Communist Manifesto since its central tenets hold good (especially as modified by Marx and Engels in their post-Paris Commune introduction). The destruction of the State, the abolition of frontiers, of commodities and money, and of classes. The creation of a society of freely associated producers on a global scale remains the goal of today's communist as it was in the past.

And despite all its bluster the capitalist class around the world are still uneasy about the working class. This is why it spends so much time trying to rewrite history to prove that capitalism is the only system possible. We have just had a torrent of lies about the Russian Revolution which tried to prove that workers cannot make a real revolution of their own³. Now we are getting "academic Marxists" telling us that although Marxism is still valid as an analysis of the economic workings of capitalism, Marx was wrong about the revolutionary potential of the working class. But Marxism is the science of the proletariat. Separated from the actions of living human beings it is simply just another "interesting theory". And that is precisely the aim of the modern democrats. Today our starting point is not just what the working class is at present but what it has to become. Today we have to recognise that the old country by country approach is antiquated (as the First World War proved). The working class is international and is the only international force capable of resisting capitalist monopoly in its global phase. Humanity has no better or indeed other hope. Hobsbawm, partially still recognises this but as an 81 year old repentant Stalinist, can only put it in an entirely negative way. After correctly stating that

...contrary to widespread assumptions, it is not a determinist document. The graves [of capitalism] have to be dug by human action.

He then goes on to focus on the phrase that Marx uses to describe

what the historical outcome of the class struggle could be *either the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or the common ruin of the contending classes.*

For Hobsbawm this is remarkable because it shows that Marx understood that "failure" was possible. However this should be turned upside down and posed in a revolutionary way. If the working class does not end the exploitation, famine and wars of imperialist capitalism then humanity has no future. Marx looked at all of human history and could see what humanity had already achieved in the ten millennia since the last Ice Age. Capitalism, like all class societies before it is not destined to exist for ever. Whether or not it will be replaced by a higher way of existing will rest on our understanding of all the painful lessons of this century but the issue

of the destruction of capitalism has not gone away. We still have a world to win⁴.

Notes

1 Such as Richard Boston's article "In the Year of Revolt" in *The Guardian*, 28.2.98.

2 See "23 pages that shook the world" in *The Guardian* 28.2.98.

3 See "Beyond Confusionism" in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 9 and "The October Revolution and the Working Class Today" in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 8.

4 This article is not intended as a defence of *The Communist Manifesto*. This we did in "Is *The Communist Manifesto* Relevant Today" in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 2.

Prometeo 14

Theoretical review of the Partito Comunista Internazionale

Sulla diminuzione dell'orario di lavoro

La finanziarizzazione

Messico, Chiapas e zapatismo

La riforma — smantellamento dello stato sociale

Il capitale distrugge il domani dell'umanità: gli operai bambini

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The Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands

The Kapp Putsch¹

In March 1920 the German right attempted to seize power and install a military dictatorship. The preparations for this *putsch* had been financed by leading banks and credit institutions, including the *ostpreussische Generallandschaft*, whose boss was Gustav Kapp of the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (German National People's Party), who was also a landowner and on the board of the *Deutsche Bank*. Kapp was the leader of the *Nationale Vereinigung* (the National Union), the body behind the *putsch*, which also included the generals Ludendorff and Lüttwitz. Lüttwitz, who had been appointed one of the highest officers by the republic, had already issued in September 1919 the "preparatory order for the suppression of large-scale unrest" which demanded the "most unreserved use of force".

On 13th March the *putsch* was unleashed on Berlin. Kapp named himself *Reichkanzler*, and the government fled to Stuttgart. The SPD issued a call to "citizens, workers, party comrades" for a general strike. Although the signatories to this appeal, Ebert, Bauer, Noske, Schlicke, Schmidt, David, Müller and Wels all had workers' blood on their hands, the correct response to it was without doubt to answer it and then go beyond it. The reaction of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (*Spartakusbund*) (Communist Party of Germany (Spartacus League) — KPD(S)) was, to say the least, ambiguous. Its Central Committee issued a

leaflet *against* the general strike and calling on workers to lay down arms. The German working class ignored this, especially in the Ruhr. Here they formed a Red Army of 10,000 armed men. The KPD(S), under pressure from the Comintern reversed its position.

The existence of the Ruhr and other Red Armies, and an effective general strike, led to the collapse of the *putsch*. The SPD then demanded the disbanding of the Ruhr Red Army, which refused to hand over its arms, demanded that a council republic be declared and that the counterrevolutionaries be smashed. However, in the "Bielefeld Agreement", in return for a promise not to use the *Freikorps* against revolutionaries, the workers eventually handed over their arms. Two delegates from the KPD(S) were involved in the discussions for the "Bielefeld Agreement", and approved it. The KPD (*Opposition*) (KPD(O)) opposed the disarming of the class, issuing warnings which were soon to be shown to be well-founded. The SPD held to its promise: first it absorbed the *Freikorps* into the regular army and then used *that* against the revolutionaries. The army marched into the Ruhr and unleashed white terror against the mostly unarmed workers. In the words of an ex-member of the *Freikorps*, a new member of the army:

Yesterday morning... I joined my company, and at 1 p.m. we made our first attack. If I described everything that happened, you would say I was lying. There was no quarter given. We even shot

the wounded. The excitement is magnificent, almost unbelievable. Our battalion lost two. The Reds lost 200



Wolfgang Kapp: defender of civilisation against communism

or 300. Everyone we captured was smashed by our rifle butts and then shot. ... we shot two Red Cross nurses because they were carrying pistols. We shot these scandalous creatures with joy, and how they cried and pleaded to be spared. To no avail! Who was caught with a weapon was our enemy and must believe it. We were much more humane when we fought the French.²

The working class are the class enemies of the SPD. Compare this treatment with the fact that, of the 705 putschists accused of crimes, 1(!) served his full sentence.

The Founding Congress of the KAPD³

The rôle of the KPD(S) in the Kapp putsch provided a great impetus towards the Berlin KPD(O)'s call for the founding Congress of a new party. This Congress was held in Berlin on 4th and 5th April 1920. The delegates present, from Hamburg,

Perleberg, Wittenberge, Zwickau, Laubegast, Dresden, Tangermünde, Wilhelmshaven, Hanover, Gotha, Essen, Elberfeld-Barmen, Stendal, Spandau and Berlin represented 38,000⁴ former members of the KPD(S). The strongest areas of the KPD(O) were Berlin, Hamburg and Dresden, and these areas had members on the presidium.

This Congress dealt with four main areas: the contemporary political situation, the Third International, parliamentarism and the trades' unions. The delegates unanimously declared themselves to be on the terrain of the International and demanded the expulsion of the KPD(S) on the grounds that its reformism put it outside of the International's political area. They also chose Jan Appel from Hamburg and Franz Jung from Berlin to report to the International in Moscow, in response to the invitation of the Executive Committee of the International.

The Congress unanimously called for the trades' unions to be abandoned and called for the construction of the Party to be carried out in the closest possible contact with the *Allgemeine Arbeiter-Union*⁵ (AAU), whose founding Congress was being held at the same time as the founding Congress of the KAPD. However, as we shall see, the KAPD found unanimity difficult to come by with regard to the nature of this contact.

The Congress also unanimously came out against participation in parliamentary elections.

The name of the central organ of the KAPD was chosen to be

the *Kommunistische Arbeiterzeitung* (Communist Workers' Paper), which was to appear at least twice a week. Despite the clear guidelines the founding Congress laid down for the activity and principles of the KAPD, its validity was questioned over the coming months. Major local party organisations, such as that of the Rhineland-Westphalia, had not been represented in the April Congress, and it was described as being formed by a "completely accidental collection of delegates". As a result of this diminution of the importance of the first Congress of the KAPD, the second Congress came to be described as the real founding Congress, the first *regular* Congress.

The August Congress⁶

This Congress was held in the Berlin Weißensee restaurant, *Zum Prälaten*, from 1st to 4th August 1920. Seventy people participated, of whom 43 were full, voting, delegates, 13 delegates with speaking rights and the remainder guests. The full delegates represented about 40,000 members⁷. The first topic to be debated was nation and class struggle, which dealt with the national bolshevism of the leading members of the Hamburg organisation, Heinrich Laufenberg and Fritz Wolffheim. Arthur Goldstein made the introductory speech and Laufenberg replied.

Goldstein's presentation revealed quite clearly that the national bolshevist tendency was a bourgeois tendency, a refuse product of the bourgeois world, as he put it.

He began by saying that the Berliners had defended the

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Laufenberg/Wolffheim group in the struggle with the KPD(S) when Laufenberg and Wolffstein had been slandered (although the KPD(S) must have had to put a lot of effort into finding unpleasant *untruths*), and had even gone too far in this defence.

But the Hamburg tendency's position with regard to the Treaty of Versailles had made their politics obvious. Goldstein praised them for immediately rejecting this Treaty, but pointed out that the most important thing to say about it was *how* it was to be overthrown. The national bolshevists' solution was contained in the title of one of their texts: *Revolutionary people's war or counter-revolutionary civil war?* and not surprisingly they opted for the former. They posited a "revolutionary" people's war, with the German proletariat and bourgeoisie fighting against the *Entente* bourgeoisie. In doing this, they often quoted the example of Russia. But Goldstein stressed:

But one should not forget that Russia, while it was carrying out its war against the Entente, was also carrying out an internal civil war, and there was no thought of engaging Brussiloff [an old Tsarist general] before the bourgeoisie was finished as a class by that civil war.

Goldstein returned to this point later, refuting the thinking behind it:

Just imagine the situation clearly. The proletariat has arrived in power in Germany, and the German proletariat is faced by the necessity to defend its

achievements against Entente capital. In this situation the German bourgeoisie is supposed to be ready to struggle for the proletarian dictatorship against Entente capital. What would be the political significance of such a war by the German proletariat against Entente capital? What would be the political goal of such a war, which the Hamburg comrades do, after all, describe as class struggle? It could not, if it was interpreted as class struggle, be satisfied with defending communism in Germany. Rather, it would have to pursue the great aim of overthrowing capitalism in the Entente countries. Otherwise, it would indeed be a war with only purely negative aims. If this revolutionary war is given this meaning, it must also have a positive goal, and this goal must be to carry communism into the Entente countries as well. If the Hamburg section proceeded from this framework, one would have to expect the German bourgeoisie to allow itself to be recruited for the complete annihilation of world capital after it itself had been overthrown and German capitalism extinguished. To expect that it would allow itself to be used to complete the establishment of world communism? Wishing for something like that from the German bourgeoisie is not on. One should not consider one's enemy to be so stupid

that it works for its own suicide.

But the Hamburg tendency went further:

I said that this so-called revolutionary people's war has emerged as the central point of the Hamburg section's politics, this people's war which might be considered after the seizure of proletarian power. Anyone who is inclined to make any concessions to the Hamburg section on this point might well be taught a lesson by their last article, in which they are no longer satisfied with propagandising the so-called revolutionary people's war after the seizure of power, but go onto propaganda for a national uprising even in the present situation, openly making the party of the counterrevolution their own.

A question that arises is: was the Hamburg tendency an originally healthy proletarian current in the process of degeneration? Although Goldstein does not put the question in these terms, his presentation answers it nevertheless:

...I'd like to examine the basis from which the Hamburg position vis-à-vis revolutionary people's war and revolutionary civil war follows. Actually, here I must return to what was written in Hamburg during the war. It is unpleasant for me to do this, and I wouldn't do it, if it were not for the Hamburg tendency itself referring to its wartime position. The Hamburg tendency call the Spartakusbund's policy of

inviting soldiers to leave the front "stabbing the front in the back". Here they criticise the Spartakusbund's main virtue, that it at least attempted to break the neck of that counter-revolutionary instrument, the German army.... One should not give a Paul Levi⁸ the hero's rôle. Levi was just Rosa's apprentice. Although the attacks always mention Levi, he is not, I believe, the real target, but Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who made precisely this policy of the Spartakusbund, the necessary destruction of the imperialist army, their own. And Goldstein's conclusion with regard to the basis for the Hamburg position?

In the text "Communism against Spartacism", it is openly admitted that in Hamburg the nation is elevated to the starting point of politics, that therefore the concept of the nation is considered the most important, that it should be the measure for the politics of the German and international proletariat.

Goldstein finished by presenting *Theses on Nation and Class Struggle*, which we reproduce here as an appendix by way of underlining the contradiction between his strand of communist politics and the bourgeois Hamburg direction.

Much of Laufenberg's reply was taken up by attempts to justify the Hamburg position by reference to the Russians. As well as confusing an alliance with the bourgeoisie with the use of specialists of bourgeois origin, he

also pointed out that the Bolsheviks (especially Radek) were moving towards national bolshevism. He spoke as if this was a result of the principles of Bolshevism, rather than of the pressure of the desperate situation in Russia. Nevertheless, it is worth quoting part of what he said, as this will give a fuller picture of their politics.

The first quote reveals a connection with councilist ideas:

With the start of the proletarian revolution the party ceases to be a useful tool in proletarian class struggle. The party is a form of the bourgeois epoch. It is the basis of bourgeois democracy and bourgeois parliament. Parliament works by means of parties. The party is fitted to exercise power, to participate in the domination of the state.

From the moment when the bourgeois period is surpassed, when the proletarian revolution is placed on the agenda, the party is no longer a useful tool for the working class. For as long as the bourgeois state stands unshaken, for as long as it is inconceivable to overrun it, then the working class has no choice but to

use parties to exercise its political influence. When it is a question of the overthrow of this capitalist order, when the proletariat proceeds to set up the proletarian state, when the political situation is such that the proletariat nears its goals, then the party ceases to be a usable instrument for the proletariat in the class struggle. As soon as the proletariat enters a revolutionary situation, the party is finished.

As if the primary rôle of the class party, the organisation of class consciousness, finishes as soon as class consciousness becomes the most vital necessity!

But, alongside this councilism, there existed, in the same individuals, a desire to support the bourgeois state in times of war. Laufenberg, far from denying his tendency's attack on the Spartakusbund from a bourgeois perspective, confirmed it:

We wrote in a text which appeared in 1915, in the

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pamphlet Democracy and Organisation: "Not in so far as the social economy serves for the exploitation by a minority, but, on the contrary, in so far as it serves to keep the whole of society alive, there grows up for the proletariat a natural interest in its preservation. The proletariat must therefore prevent unitary economic areas from being torn apart, and prevent more highly developed economies from being dominated by less developed ones. It must prevent the right of nations to self-determination, which it grants to all nations, from being injured in its own nation. A result of this is the military submission of the proletariat to the existing leadership of the Army, in case of wars which threaten the economy in its function of keeping society alive."

Not surprisingly, this propaganda for the capitulation of the proletariat to the interests of the bourgeoisie was interrupted by angry shouts of "Listen!". Laufenberg then went on to argue that this military submission did not involve a political submission, and, indeed, made the political independence of the proletariat more vital. This is like arguing that, if you cut off your right leg, your left leg becomes all the more important in running.

Delegate J. from Hamburg first denied that the whole of the Hamburg section agreed with Laufenberg and Wolffheim, and then shed light on the Hamburg leadership's conduct during the Kapp putsch:

... While our comrades in the Ruhr were waiting for help, the slogan "lay down your guns" was issued. The whole of the Hamburg proletariat waited for instructions, and they were told: "lay down your guns" [Wolffheim interrupts here with the allegation that Berlin did the same, which is denied by Karl Schröder]. If, at that time, we had pointed to the necessity of having guns to throw down that would have been better.

So, the Laufenberg/Wolffheim group was even on the wrong side of the divide which separated the *Spartakusbund* and *Opposition* wings of the KPD over their response to the Kapp putsch!

For Marxists, the most significant feature of the Laufenberg/Wolffheim tendency is the way it brought bourgeois politics into the heart of the proletariat. But, contributions from the floor also made it clear that this tendency espoused the most barbaric degeneration of bourgeois ideology.

Delegate D. from Kiel finished his intervention thus:

Laufenberg has said that, even in a classless society, the interest of the German proletariat lies in maintaining Germany as the industrial heart of Europe. He continued, we represent the interests of the German proletariat against the representatives of the Jewish proletariat. Once again, differences between proletarians. The working class applauds these two comrades because they are

still making communist propaganda too, and that is the most dangerous thing about their work.

How did the KAPD go about separating this "dangerous" tendency from its party? It passed the following resolution, by 36 votes to 6:

The Congress of the KAPD declares that it cannot agree with the nationalist teaching of Laufenberg and Wolffheim. The workers organised in the KAPD recognise themselves without reservation as international socialists and, as such, reject all propaganda for the revival of nationalist thought in the ranks of the working class.

If comrades Laufenberg and Wolffheim continue to propagate their nationalist tendency, they place themselves outside the ranks of the international socialists.

And it is here that the real absurdity begins. Laufenberg and Wolffheim demanded that the Congress explicitly expel them. But this demand was answered by delegate M. from Leipzig:

I am the author of the resolution. If today the Congress has expressed its desire to have nothing to do with nationalist tendencies, then it is the moral[!] duty of comrades Laufenberg and Wolffheim to cut loose from us. In this way we are distinguished from other parties[!], where comrades are excluded: we say that we leave it to the comrades' feelings of honour to cause them to depart. Then they

say we haven't the courage to declare them excluded. Now the comrades should declare that they have no more business with us.

It seems from elsewhere in the debate over the expulsion of the Laufenberg/Wolffheim tendency that the Congress did not have the formal right to expel the tendency, and that there would have been distaste over abrogating the Party constitution in a way similar to the KPD(S)'s expulsion of the Opposition in Heidelberg. These facts reinforced the moral arguments for not expelling the national bolsheviks, but, if constitutional and moral arguments overrode the need to be free of bourgeois tendencies, this points to a fundamental misunderstanding of what a proletarian party is *for*. The primary reason for its existence is not to provide a forum for debate for dissidents of various political hues, but to act as an organising centre for proletarian class consciousness. Its internal debate must be seen as a valuable tool for fulfilling that rôle and bourgeois tendencies have no part in that debate. The KAPD initially allowed the Heidelberg expulsion to define its political area, and to conceal the class differences within the former KPD(O). The tragedy is that, although the majority of the best elements of the KPD were expelled, so were some of the worst.

(to be continued)
EDL

Notes

- 1 General historical material gleaned from the website <http://www.nadir.org>, which, however, glosses over the conduct of the KPD(S) during the episode. A corrective is supplied by Bernhard Reichenbach, *Towards a history of the German Communist Workers' Party (KAPD)*, Grundberg Archiv für Geschichte des Sozialismus XIII (1928).
- 2 Written 2nd April 1920 and quoted in Wolfgang Ruge, *Weimar — Republik auf Zeit*.
- 3 Source: Clemens Klockner, *Protokoll des 1. ordentlichen Parteitages der Kommunistischen Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands vom*

- 1. bis 4. August 1920 in Berlin* (Protocols of the first regular Congress of the KAPD), introduction.
- 4 But police estimates put this number at 30,000.
- 5 The *Unionen* were founded *against* the trades' unions (in German, *Gewerkschaften*) as political and economic workers' organisations, in reaction to the obviously counter-revolutionary rôle played by the trades' unions.
- 6 Source: *Protokoll des 1. ordentlichen Parteitages der Kommunistischen Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands vom 1. bis 4. August 1920 in Berlin*.
- 7 The police estimate gives a total slightly less than this, but also gives

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Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands

an insight into the geographical distribution of the Party:

area	membership
Berlin	12,000
Rheinland-Westphalia	5500
North (including Hamburg)	3000
Altona	952
Central Germany	3000
East Saxony	2000
Occupied zone	2000
Zwickau (Saxony)	2000
East Prussia	1500
Saxony-Anhalt	1400
Lower Saxony	1200
Pommerania	1100
Frankfurt-am-Main	1000
Thuringia	1000
Spandau-Osthavelland	1000
Total	38,652

The more detailed figure for Altona is probably given by the source because their mandate was questioned both on numerical grounds and because the Hamburg majority argued that this section opposed to them properly belonged to the North section and should have no independent delegation. As the Hamburg tendency constituted the majority of North, they constituted at least 5% of the KAPD.

8 Levi was the right-wing leader of the KPD(S) at the time of the Congress.

Appendix: Theses on Nation and Class Struggle

1. The feudal epoch was characterised by the absence of a unitary state entity organised in the framework of the nation, which was identical with the lack of a corresponding national ideology. (The oligarchy of princes in Germany, Italy, France, England, etc.).

2. With the development of the capitalist mode of production, the necessity for large unitary economic areas grew greater and greater. The struggles of the English and French bourgeoisie in the 17th and 18th centuries ended with the establishment of unitary self-contained national states, in which the bourgeoisie took over the lawgiving and administrative rôles. The bourgeoisie as the ruling state power developed from within itself the concepts of national unity and freedom. Thus, ideologically considered, the nation is a product of the bourgeois world, born from the economic and po-

litical interests of the capitalist social structure.

3. What is the relationship to this of the proletariat engaged in the struggle for its economic liberation from the slavery of capitalism? In those countries where the bourgeoisie is on the verge of establishing the national unitary state in the interest of the full development of the capitalist mode of production, the proletariat will fight alongside the bourgeoisie against the ruling feudalism, but, at the same time, it must sharply stress its own special political and economic aims. This epoch was closed for Germany and the whole of Western Europe in 1871. From this point on, there began the period of full capitalist development, which had already taken on the form of *imperialism* by the turn of the century.

4. In the stage of history where capitalism arrives at its completed development, the *class contradictions* between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat naturally make themselves felt to a *sharpened degree*. In this stage, there are no longer any common interests between exploiter and exploited. The proletariat of all countries more and more forms a common battle-front against capitalism's community of interests.

5. This is true in the highest degree for the present epoch, where, within the world revolutionary development, the *existence of the Russian Soviet Republic* brings about the common action of the whole of world capital against the victorious Russian proletariat. In this historical situation, there grows up the duty for the German proletariat, together with the proletariat of all countries, to exercise all of its powers in the struggle against world capital *on the international level*. The struggle against world capital will [only] truly be fought by the most unreserved class struggle against the German capitalist class, as the hand servants of *Entente* capital. The total overthrow of the German capitalist class is the *precondition for a successful confrontation* with *Entente* capital. For this reason, all attempts aimed engaging the German proletariat in a community of struggle with the bourgeoisie in the form of a national uprising against the *Entente* count as counter-revolutionary. All attempts aimed at

renouncing the unavoidable civil war after the victory of the proletarian revolution in favour of a so-called revolutionary people's war against the *Entente* must also be considered counter-revolutionary. The first task of the victorious proletariat is *to hold down its own bourgeoisie*. Any struggle against *Entente* capital that becomes necessary would mean a simultaneous struggle against the German bourgeoisie bound to the *Entente* by common interests. Every kind of *national bolshevism* must therefore be eradicated from a revolutionary party. Endeavours of a national bolshevist character have no place in the KAPD. The KAPD claims as its own the *sharpest ideas of class struggle* in the interests of the German and international proletariat's revolution. The organisation of the International does not consist in a *federation of nations* but, on the contrary, in the international unity of the *proletariat's class organisations* for the single purpose of the *construction of a communist world*.

In the Firing Line

Introduction

We are printing here a translation of an account which was sent to our Italian comrades *Battaglia Comunista*. The author is unknown to us but his story is moving and tragic. It also epitomises the history of the working class in the last twenty or so years. The style of writing is poignant and ironic so we hope we have retained something of its force in our translation.

The story of the workers at the shaft-making shop of Breda Forge

Sesto San Giovanni, on the northern outskirts of Milan is a town divided between production and a future as a *technocity* with development agencies, conversion plans, workers' traditions, art schools, disappearing factories and museums which close down. The Falk steel works still belong to Falk, but they are no longer in use. Breda belonged to Iri,* and now belongs to no-one. Pirelli has been transferred and Marelli almost liquidated. Sesto had a deadly turnover: thirty thousand workers every ten years, in a town of one hundred thousand inhabitants. The local Register of births, marriages and deaths must resemble a battlefield. When they write that it was a workers' centre they should consider this. Those who now live in Sesto were probably not there thirty years ago. The memory one has of it is not of any person, but of the warehouses, the residential restructuring plans which have now been imposed, and retired people in their gardens who cannot be conned.

In the Firing Line

We are publishing it, not just because it demonstrates the horrors of capitalist exploitation but also because the author gives "unwitting testimony" to support our criticisms of trades unions and the left political parties as integrated into the system today. The account is in two parts. That in italics gives the author's personal history whilst the normal script deals with the general situation at the time.

Twenty years ago, the local municipal junta filled the street corners with huge posters in white, red and green with phrases from the Italian constitution written on them. Now they want to do the same in memoriam to the large factories, and to put up signs: "Here were the steel works", "In this square was the entrance for the blue overalls going to the assembly lines", and "Here is the workshop where thirty out of thirty workers joined the partisan action squads". Outside they want to build an urban museum — like they did in certain mountain towns of the Appenines — to restore the honour of the armed forces and lay to rest the fighters of the only World War which did not have a peace treaty and which resulted in poorly distributed wealth and deaths by the thousand. This is Italy in the year of our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Ninety Seven.

Having finished my course, I was put to work on that enormous machine, at least three metres by four metres in size, where we welded the shafts. I felt happy; after four years I had finally entered a real factory, as a welder. I had long gloves and an apron.

In the Firing Line

They sent down the shaft to preheat the joint, a labourer arranged them under the machine, then they were closed and welded. To allow us to work in such temperatures and amongst the sparks there were asbestos covers which we put over the piece being worked. After every one or two hundred shafts, the cover was burnt and reduced to powder and it had to be changed. Four of us worked on that machine, now the other three are dead. I am the only one still alive. We welded shafts at Breda Forge, shielding our eyes and hands with asbestos. There was my work mate from Bergamo, I remember him very well, he used to come half an hour early to light the fire and open the roof to get rid of the smoke cloud from the previous day's welding. There was powder everywhere. There they used a method called spark welding. The two pieces were heated up and then joined together with a very powerful current. Sometimes fragments fell in the barrel for collecting oil and the machinery was set on fire. And then we had to go down and put out the flames with little extinguishers. That kept us for an hour to an hour and half and then we set to work again. I worked on this machine from '74 to '83 — ten years. They gave us half a litre of milk per day if we started to cough or to vomit. Sometimes the unions made us stop, but there was no resistance; they did not tell me they defended the workers, no-one defended me or my fellow workers. The USSL also came,

the preventative medical service for the workplace. They made reports indicating point by point everything that was wrong, and we had so much documentation on that slaughter-house. The boss was concerned about the work, that it was dangerous, even deadly there did not bother him. Crippa Giovanni died, then Franco Camporeale, then Megna. All told, within five or six years more than ten died. From a workshop of 26 people, 19 have died, and four of us are fighting to survive. Anyone who has seen Sesto San Giovanni remembers the red on the roofs near the foundry which is opened at night to clean the workshops; and the Falk village, consisting of workers' houses bought with a fifth of their wages. One remembers the underground line which no longer existed and the throngs of people walking to the boundary of Milan to reach the city. And also the years of crisis, the North Park schools, with the collections for the children of the unemployed, the libraries in every quarter, and the slightly stupid pride of not being Cinisello or Bresso but the "Stalingrad of Italy". There was the Campari residence, with the villa and beautiful garden surrounded by cement walls with pieces of glass so they could not be climbed over, and a monument of name plates for the partisans killed by the fascists; the Villa Ghirlanda, seat of the Anpi and the municipal palace designed by Bottoni (but no-one knows that) and photographed for architects' manuals. Those going from Brianza to Milan pass through Sesto, but rarely

stop as there is little to do in the evening. There are no big shops competing with each other, or discos or restaurants better than those in the big city and no one famous has been born in Sesto. I am not asking for anything. I only ask for justice, for myself and the relatives of my work mates. Obviously, after the deaths, they shut down that section. When the Americans brought the machine, it was Gobbo, one of my bosses who is now sick, very sick in fact, who asked them to sell it. Their answer was to get rid of him. Obviously they did him a favour. They were concerned about getting the job done, that the workers died was not a great loss for them. I have a malignant lymphoma. I don't know who I should thank for it. I have had various operations but I want to stay alive with this tumour, at all cost. I have seen my work mates die, and others are still dying. The latest one, Morano, died two weeks ago. Besides the asbestos — now asbestos causes fear — there was also burnt oil, molten and powdered chrome and nickel in that place. We say it was asbestos, but it was the job that killed us. Then, as if to complete the story, Breda Forge, which became Breda Energy, put me on sick pay. However, the private individual who bought Breda, approached me directly and took me on as a caretaker, as I still had to finish my 35 years of employment in order to receive a pension.

Ezio Partesana

To be continued

From Internationalist
Notes

Imperialist Games in The Gulf

Recent imperialist chest beating over Iraq has left the U.S. state in an unusual position of actually having to face organized opposition from the imperialist powers of France, Russia, and China. Although the news media in the U.S. played down such opposition, there was for the first time a solid front against U.S. imperialist interests in the Persian Gulf. Long term objectives of the U.S. state still include maintaining a permanent military presence in the Gulf. With the closing of U.S. military bases in the Philippines, Panama, and Germany also closed the era when U.S. foreign policy focused on Germany, South-East Asia and Central America. Despite claims from the left in the U.S. that a few hecklers managed to score some sort of victory against American military aggression, the problem of the U.S. military presence in the Gulf cannot end with this confrontation, on the contrary it will merely become more violent the more U.S. state objectives are thwarted by other powers who have interests in the region.

First, it is necessary to summarize the important events as they have occurred in the Gulf during this latest threat of war, paying particular attention to the intervention of other imperialist powers in the region. As far back as January, the Russian and Chinese governments urged the U.N. to certify that Iraq had ended its nuclear weapons program, against the wishes of the United States.¹ By February second, Russia, France, and Turkey agreed to press forward in an attempt to end the conflict before it started.² On February

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second Russian President Boris Yeltsin intervened in an attempt to break another deal to allow access to U.S. weapons inspectors access to eight of the so-called Presidential palace sites, a deal which was rebuffed by the U.S. government bent on demonstrating its military muscle.³ By February 4, the U.S. government was desperately looking for allies. Aside from the government of the U.K., the only countries that supported the U.S. were Kenya, Sweden, Slovenia, Portugal, and Gabon, none of which have any say on the U.N. Security Council and whose governments were most likely seeking support from Washington.⁴

What was particularly notable was the fact that opposition to the U.S. state was more unified than at any time since before the fall of the Soviet Union. Russia's president Yeltsin who in a provocative statement said, "By his actions, Clinton might run into a world war," was not completely off base in his comments.⁵ It is exactly this kind of action that can ultimately lead to a world war. However, the powers opposed to the latest intervention in the Gulf aren't motivated by any humanitarian interest any more than Washington is. Russia has done business in Iraq for a long time and has a major interest in oil pipelines that are going from Russia's oil producing regions to the Gulf. France as well has interests in the region, and benefits at home from the appearance of opposing Washington's imperialist interests.

At home the U.S. government itself faced serious divisions over

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the question of military action in Iraq. Clearly there was no consensus among the ruling class in Washington over the nature of military action. This was not out of some pacifist concern but from disagreement over whether to bomb, invade, or simply crush Iraq with a cold war type campaign complete with a "Radio Free Iraq" and a well funded insurgency to oust the Ba'ath party from power.⁶

Another notable feature of these events was that the Iraqi government also took measures against any potential insurgency in Iraq like the one that occurred after the end of the Gulf War.⁷ Secretary General of the U.N. Koffi Annan undercut the U.S. war drive by offering Iraq a deal to sell over twice the oil from some 2.1 billion dollars to 5.2 billion dollars of oil.⁸ Congressional leaders, both Democrat and Republican, urged the overthrow of the Iraqi government as the ultimate objective of any military action on the Gulf, thus leaving the U.S. in an awkward position of having to either overthrow the Ba'ath regime or give in to pressure from other Imperialist powers.⁹ At the same time it became apparent that the Chinese government would not support the U.S. action in the Gulf.¹⁰ In Clinton's official justification for military action on the Seventeenth of February included such favorite themes as biological-warfare scare tactics, God, Country, and Democracy.¹¹ This marked the start of the governments concerted drive to sell workers on military action. It was unusual in that it was surprisingly ineffective, and received more opposition than the

Clinton administration thought it would receive. The U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Bill Richardson was heckled by protesters at the University of Minnesota and had to cut short his speech right after Albright was heckled in Ohio.¹² Ironically the state propaganda mill countered with a half-hearted attempt at raising the scare of chemical warfare terrorism by issuing military bio-hazard suits to various government institutions around the country. By this time the French government came forward with criticism of U.S. policy and with Russia and China formed a more official, permanent opposition to U.S. foreign policy that will continue to be an important factor in the future. The inability of Europe to unite around a unified foreign policy clearly puts the U.S. at an advantage, for the present period imperialist opposition to the U.S. will coalesce around France, Russia, and China.

The costs of the U.S. military presence in the Gulf for the latest military buildup are already over 600 million dollars and probably closer to a billion dollars or more.¹³ The Iraqi government has declared February 23 a holiday, yet further conflict is inevitable as the U.S. government will not tolerate any imperialist opposition to its' own imperialist interests. That a unified imperialist bloc against the U.S. has finally come together is the first difference between this latest diplomatic conflict and the Gulf War. This means that the U.S. will have a harder time trying to bend the imperialist powers of the world to its own ambitions.

Any imperialist peace can only lead to more war unless the working class can find a way to overthrow the capitalist warlords once and for all. **ASm**

Notes

- 1 APnews. Russia, China Urge Inspection Halt. APonline. Jan 22, 1998.
- 2 NYTimes. Russia, France, and Turkey Try to End Standoff. Feb 2, 1998.
- 3 APnews. Iraq May Allow Access to U.N. Feb 4, 1998.
- 4 APnews. U.S. Ambassador Seeks Support on Iraq. Feb 4, 1998.
- 5 APnews. Yeltsin: Clinton Risks World War. Feb 4, 1998.
- 6 APnews. Republicans question Goals on Iraq. Feb 9, 1998.
- 7 APnews. Iraq Readies Strategy if Attacked. Feb 10, 1998.
- 8 APnews. Annan Proposes Oil Talks with Iraq. Feb 12, 1998.
- 9 Schmitt, Eric. Saddam's Ouster Urged, But Other Options Are Considered. NYTimes. Feb 17, 1998.
- 10 APnews. Chinese Official Denies Iraq Pledge. Feb 17, 1998.
- 11 APnews. Text of Clinton's Statement on Iraq. Feb 17, 1998.
- 12 APnews. Protesters Jeer U.N. Ambassador In Minnesota. Feb 20, 1998.
- 13 APnews. Iraq Deployment Costs Top \$600 million.

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The Gulf Crisis
**Another
Episode in
the Global
Imperialist
Struggle**

The narrowly averted armed attack on Iraq by the US and British states in February was just a brief episode in the new chapter of world imperialist policy. The whole of the Middle East and Central Asia is increasingly fraught with tensions which are becoming more and more interconnected. The recent Gulf Crisis only underlined this fact.

It was the original Gulf War of 1990-1 which led to George Bush's announcement that we were living in a "New World Order". Let us recall the portentous tones of Bush's message.

The US is called to lead the world out of the darkness and chaos of dictatorship towards the promise of better days.

What prompted Bush to sound so uncharacteristically visionary was the unique circumstance where the USA, for the first time since the Congo crisis of 1960, was able to use the United Nations to dragoon its allies (which in 1991 also included the Yeltsin regime in Russia) into a concerted attack to remove Iraqi troops from Kuwait. No sooner had this attack begun than the vision began to get a bit blurred. In the first place the attack did not end either "chaos" or "dictatorship". Saddam Hussein was kept in power by the US's refusal to push on to Baghdad and the subsequent failure of the Allies to prevent the Iraqi regime's helicopter gunships from massacring those involved in the rebellion in Southern Iraq. The reasons for this are complex. Bush had managed to remove Iraq from Kuwait (where the Sabah dictatorship was restored with

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brutal consequences for the Kuwaiti Palestinians) without the loss of many American lives. To press on to Baghdad would have brought heavier American casualties. As the US public had been prepared largely for a high tech war this might have taken some explaining. Second the Saudi regime (another dictatorship whose legitimacy was not questioned by its "democratic" defenders), feared that the Iraqi rising was a prelude to other risings (of a fundamentalist character) in the Middle East.

They called on Bush to halt the offensive and let the Iraqi regime deal with the rebels as they saw fit. The argument they made was that some generals in Iraq would overthrow Saddam anyway and this would be a less uncertain outcome than a popular uprising which would have probably been supported by Iran. And as the Saudis were funding much of the war which was largely fought from their territory they had a big influence in the decision to halt.

Saddam — A Creation of the West

We have to remember too that Saddam Hussein was a US creation. When he seized power in 1979 he murdered about 60 pro-Syrian leaders of the Ba'ath party. As Syria was, at the time, an ally of the USSR this meant that the USA (and specifically the CIA) thought they could do business with Saddam. At that point the US was just recovering from the humiliation of the Iranian hostage crisis and US companies had lost fortunes when the Islamic Republic was set up in Tehran. The CIA now offered weapons and logistical

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cover (use of information from spy satellites) in return for a declaration of war by Saddam on Iran. The idea was that Iraq's attack would be successful against an Iran, deprived of its main army officers (who had fled or were killed on the fall of the Shah).

This turned out to be the exact opposite of what happened. Far from leading to the collapse of the Islamic Republic it only strengthened Khomeini's grip in Iran. During the next decade the war became a World War I-type stalemate. A desperate Iraq started to use poison gas from ingredients supplied by European chemical firms in 1984. The West said nothing, but then Saddam "our son of a bitch" and in any case the deaths of Iranian teenage conscripts did not really count. Nor was there help for the Kurds of Halabja who were gassed and bombed by Saddam's troops in 1988. Only when Saddam mistook US intentions for a carte blanche to invade Kuwait did he become the "new Hitler".

Splits in the Imperialist Front

Whilst the current crisis has been averted for the time being it has not gone away. Saddam has gained in that the alliance put together in 1990-1 has been well and truly destroyed. Not only are Arab states distancing themselves from an arrogant US policy but the US, as our American comrades have written in the article preceding this, has become increasingly isolated. This is not surprising since the material interests of the various imperialisms are so diverse. In

the first place most of the European states have firms which have contracts with Iraq. These contracts become valid as soon as sanctions end. The US is furious at this. The US attitude is summed up in the view of an unnamed US official who denounced the French oil company, CF Total's deal to build an oil pipeline in Iran in the following terms

We make sacrifices in an effort to tackle the problem that threatens the security of us all, only to see our allies making profits out of what we have voluntarily given up (in The Independent 20.8.96)

The same French company also has a deal ready with Iraq. The US has done everything possible to block any attempt to end sanctions on Iraq. Furthermore it is no accident that the only material support that the US received in the Gulf this time was from the British and their Commonwealth (i.e. Canada and Australia). This is not surprising. Both Britain and the US have their own oil (and the seven most influential oil companies in the world are US or British owned). Currently the world oil price at \$14 a barrel is the lowest since the current capitalist cycle of accumula-

tion came to an end in 1971-3. For the non-oil countries of Europe this is a lucky break (it is a consequence of the real stagnation of the world economy) but Britain and the US would gain a competitive edge from higher prices since they are protected by being able to meet a substantial part their own oil needs. If Iraqi sanctions ended and Iraqi oil came onto the market oil prices would plummet and the US would lose further ground. US policy over the last six years has been expressly to prevent such a circumstance.

At the same time, as we have written elsewhere, many of the US's former allies are chafing at

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the bit. They are no longer faced with the need to close ranks against the USSR. The Cold War being over the French, who have been so isolated by the US in Africa (see *The Struggle for Central Africa* in RP6) are now seeking new allies. In the Gulf Crisis they have found them in the shape of Russia and China. This also underlines how far the Europeans are from any concerted political unity. Whilst the moves to unite economically are going slowly ahead the fact that Britain, which currently holds the presidency of the EC, should announce its support for military action in Iraq without consulting its European partners gives an indication of the desperate manoeuvres go-

ing on amongst the larger world powers. Currently the US wields so much power that it has the possibility of splitting its rivals by supporting one here and another there (as it did in Bosnia where it aligned with the Germans against the British and French). We are therefore still in a highly unpredictable period of shifting alliances. The only certainty is that these shifting rivalries spell misery for the populations wherever imperialist interference is at its most intense.

These shifting alliances also affect the lesser states. Whilst US policy in the Middle East has been reduced to relying on the axis of Israel and Turkey, Saddam has gained enormously from the current crisis in that he has broken the isolation of Iraq.

The failure of the US to do anything about the Netanyahu government's extension of Zionist settlements in the West Bank has made all the US's allies extremely nervous about the continued US military presence in their territories. Saudi Arabia's

King Fahd even refused to meet Madeleine Albright when she toured the Gulf during February (but he did meet ex-President Rafsanjani of Iran a couple of weeks later). We have to remember that the bombing of the US base at Dhahran in Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War in 1991 was by a group opposed to the Saud family dictatorship and its US alliance. Even Egypt, which supplied troops in the Gulf War, came out against the use of force against Iraq as did most of the other Arab states.

Syria, for long the bitterest opponent of the Saddam regime has recently been involved in talks with Baghdad. Amongst the completely dispossessed of the Arab lands there is no doubt that Saddam is seen as a hero of the anti-imperialist struggle (the fact

that he stands for a lesser imperialism is unimportant to those who have been the victims of Western imperialism for half a century). Currently all the Gulf States (with the exception of Kuwait and the small sheikhdoms) would prefer to get the



US fleet out of the Gulf. This the US has expressly stated it will not do as long as sanctions against Iraq remain in force. And it is the US and Britain which alone are maintaining that sanctions should continue without any time limit. Indeed as Zbigniew Brzezinski, the one time policy adviser to President Carter stated, the policy of "dual containment" (of Iran and Iraq) has been highly successful in isolating two powers in the Middle East. The problem for the US is that these are the USA and Israel! Not only has the failure of the US to do anything about Israel worried Arab states but European states have also shown that they have little interest in the "dual containment" policy by their policies of signing agreements with both Iran and Iraq.

Global Imperialist Struggle

As we stated in our previous issue *Pax Americana frays at the edges* in the Middle East.

The Disunited Nations

The final feature of the struggle in the Gulf is the role of the United Nations. Incurable idealists who believe that capitalism can be humane and civilised are applauding the recent deal with Saddam as hard as the UN staff who clapped Kofi Annan when he returned from Baghdad. Whilst Mr. Annan is undoubtedly a clever fellow he is also a US appointee. He was their chosen replacement for Boutros Ghali because it was felt that he would be less sympathetic to the interests of lesser states. Annan understands the rules of the "New World Order". When Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq was trying to make as much propaganda as possible from the deal, Annan publicly praised the "firmness" of the US and Britain in achieving the settlement. He did not tell us at the time that the actual agreement had been drafted beforehand by the British Foreign Office (and that Madeleine Albright had been consulted all along the line). Clearly the US and Britain did not expect Saddam to sign it (and he would not have if the French and Russians had not told him there was no other option). But even this virtuoso performance was not good enough for the US ruling class. It has been denounced as a sell-out by Trent Lott, the Republican majority leader in Congress, and Annan had to cancel a visit to Congress (where he hoped to get the US to pay the billions of dollars in back dues that it owes the UN).

The United Nations remains a cat's-paw of the US. When it carries out US policy it looks as though it is meaningful but when it does not then it is ineffectual. This was fully confirmed on the Sunday night of Annan's Baghdad weekend. When it became clear that a deal was going to be signed Albright put out a statement that threw off the UN mask. If a deal was signed then France, China and Russia would block any further resolutions to attack Iraq (as they subsequently did). Albright simply stated that, whatever the UN Security Council accepted, the US would ignore any deal against its interests and attack anyway.

Opposing War

Reactionaries in Britain and the USA are comparing Annan's deal with Iraq with the Munich agreement of 1938 which let Hitler ultimately get Czechoslovakia. This is a stupid comparison since the situation is totally different (Germany was a major imperialism threatening invasion. Today the only real threats of invasion are against Iraq) but it is all part of the demonisation campaign to justify the next US atrocity. Already new manoeuvres have been taking place to step up the pressure for military action. Butler, the head of the weapons inspection team has said that the Iraqis are still hiding chemical weapons (given US spy satellites it is difficult to see how) and the new court to deal with war criminals (arising originally from the horrors of Bosnia) is being urged to try Saddam Hussein. All this underlines what we said at the beginning — the current situation is a pause rather

than a settlement. In any case there has been no such thing as peace anywhere under the "New World Order". Bosnia, Palestine, Ulster, Afghanistan etc. etc. are all the most murderous "peace processes" known to history. Here we come up against the difference between communists and pacifists. Pacifists are opposed to war on the grounds that it represents the evil in humanity which we must stamp out. This is an idealist quasi-religious view of the issue. War is not unique to capitalism but the causes of its imperialist wars are. The bourgeois liberal who comes up with this or that empirical objection to the whole concept of imperialism should surely have their mouths shut by the current situation. Imperialism is neither a moral concept nor something dreamed up by Marxists in the abstract simply to berate the system.

It is the system. In no other epoch of history has rape, death and destruction been visited on wholly innocent populations by forces which are so remote and abstract from their daily lives. Because the motives of imperialism are complex it does not mean that it does not exist. The current wars demonstrate as surely as the falling object demonstrates the operation of the law of gravity that imperialism exists. Why else would we take as a commonplace that the US should station a fleet of over 100 ships, an airforce of over 3000 planes and troops over 35,000 men and women in an area which is so far from US territory? Imperialism is capitalism in its global epoch and it affects all of us.

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Imperialism's New Great Game

The New Great Game

In the last century, when the British Empire was at its height, Britain and Russia vied with each other for control and influence in central Asia. Today a new version of this Great Game has been triggered by the collapse of the USSR. In the area round the Caspian Sea 'Soviet Republics' have been transformed into impoverished 'newly independent states'. This has not only brought a rush of Western companies eager to get their hands on the rich oil and gas deposits in the region but is making Washington re-think its global political and military strategies. In the past Russia's monopoly over the oil and gas pipelines was a key factor in its hold over the entire bloc. Essential energy supplies came from thousands of miles away in the eastern Empire to supply first the republics in the Caucasus then Russia itself, through to Ukraine and satellite states like Romania. Today new oil and gas pipelines are in the offing. From Moscow to Ashkhabad controversy reigns as to where they should be sited. In terms of Washington's strategy to keep control of the planet these new oil and gas routes are of crucial strategic importance. Significantly it is the White House which decides whether or not a particular route is acceptable. This, despite the fact that oil and gas companies from all over the world, including the EU and China, are getting more and more economically involved. Of course, as Madeleine Albright has made quite clear over Iraq, whatever oil or gas route is chosen it will be decided with US "national interests" in mind. This is not to say that local obstacles will not come in the way of the US satisfying a particular 'national interest'. Furthermore, in a game where the lesser players are constantly shifting their positions and where the US sometimes miscalculates the consequences of its own moves, what the White House decides is in the national interest one week can become the opposite the next. When the USSR fell apart the first response of the US was to encourage the 'newly independent states' to be free of dependence on Russia. One of the constants in Washington's strategy is that Moscow should not succeed in fully reconfiguring the old Union in the shape of the 'Commonwealth of Independent States' [CIS]. An obvious start for the Caspian states was to build pipelines which by-pass Russian territory and linked to the new oil and gas fields being opened up by Western companies. As the former US Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger has made clear, preventing Moscow dominating the Caspian area would be an even bigger victory for Washington than NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe. However, there can be no simple single-pronged strategy for the world's only remaining superpower. As well as seeing that Moscow's influence is reduced as much as possible, US strategists also aim to limit the influence of Iran — part of the policy of 'dual containment' of Iran and Iraq. [See accompanying article.] It is obvious from a glance at a map of the region that the easiest alternative to the old Cold War pipeline routes would be to go directly through Iran, at least for the states on the eastern

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shores of the Caspian. In a previous issue we explained how Washington preferred to back the Taliban Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan as a means of stabilising that country so that gas from Turkmenistan, for example, need not be routed through Iran and could instead be brought through to Pakistan and India. At any rate that was US strategy a few months ago. In practice US encouragement of the Taliban (who have been supplied US weapons from Pakistan) has only created more instability for the US companies operating in the region. (Washington isn't the least bit concerned about the horrors being inflicted on the Afghan population.) Furthermore, India (which wants to use the gas for making fertiliser) objects to the prospect of relying on a pipeline that passes through the territory of its next door rival, Pa-

kistan. In short, the US preferred option is proving a very distant possibility. In the meantime the lesser players in the Game have not been idle...

Iran Sees Chance to Break its Isolation

Whether the US likes it or not, the economic imperatives of imperialism mean that if Washington can't physically come up with alternative oil and gas routes then the states and companies operating in the region will find a way of their own for getting that valuable commodity, energy, to market. In fact Washington has been forced to modify the terms of its Iran-Libya Sanctions Act which originally outlawed any investment in either of these countries, not just for US companies but for all the members of the World Trade Organisation [WTO]. In reality European

companies were increasingly ignoring the Act altogether so last year Washington stipulated that there should be a ceiling on the amount any company could invest in a single project in Iran or Libya. This is an attempt to stop them developing more economic and political clout locally and to limit their significance as energy suppliers to the West. Even so, the US has had to stomach the fact that Iran in particular can no longer be completely contained. Washington has been obliged to settle for the construction of a variety of alternative energy routes so that neither Russia nor Iran will be of key importance. Whilst Turkey, currently enjoying a close relationship with the US, is now the preferred option the pipelines there still remain to be built. Meanwhile, earlier this year in the western Karakum desert, the opening of a gas pipeline linking Turkmenistan and Iran was the occasion for the first foreign trip of the new Iranian president, Mohammed Khatami. The 200 km pipeline was financed by Tehran. For Turkmenistan, with the world's fourth largest gas deposits as well as substantial oil reserves, this has reduced its dependence on Russia. Previously Turkmenistan's only pipeline went through Russia with the gas often switched off to try and force payments from cash-strapped states of the old USSR. This, and other evidence of closer links with Iran such as the construction of railway lines that potentially connect Iranian railways to the whole of central Asia via Turkmenistan, has not pleased the Americans. In the words of "a senior western dip-

Caspian oil export routes



lomat" discreetly reported by the *Financial Times*, "Turkmenistan shouldn't trade dependence on Russia for dependence on Iran". The US is worried, but about Iran breaking its isolation, not the threat to Turkmen independence. As it is, the powers-that-be in Ashkhabad have apparently lost their initial fears of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism from Iran (which the US used in the early days to try and promote closer links between Turkmenistan and Turkey). The Turkmen government has granted rights to Shell to build a gas pipeline from eastern Turkmenistan through northern Iran to Turkey. At the same time numerous other projects are being considered.

Several foreign companies, including Siemens of Germany, have begun preliminary work on a possible oil export pipeline to refineries in heavily populated northern Iran, which is separated from the southern Iranian oil fields on the Gulf by formidable mountain ranges.

Last November Bizhan Zangeneh, Iran's oil minister, said the Islamic Republic could eventually absorb as much as 2.5m barrels per day of Caspian crude, which would be swapped for Iranian oil at Gulf export terminals.

But most foreign companies have set their sights lower. Monument Oil and Gas, the UK company that is re-developing Turkmenistan's Nebit Dag oil field, believe a 225,000 b/d line between Turkmenistan's western oil

fields and Iran could be built for about \$800m, a relatively modest sum in oil industry terms.

Off the shores of Iran itself Total of France, Gazprom of Russia and Petronas of Malaysia are already engaged in a \$2bn investment to extract gas from Iranian waters. While there have been calls in Congress for sanctions to be applied against these companies, the administration in the White House has been more pragmatic about what it knows it can do little to change. In fact the net effect of US sanctions against Iran is that US companies are losing out to their competitors who are more and more openly doing deals with Iran. This is partly the reason for the hesitant thawing of relations between the US and Iran, a process which began even before Khatami came to power. Khatami himself represents a growing section of the Iranian ruling class which recognises that it will sooner or later have to come to a political rapprochement with the US. When he took the incredible step of appearing on CNN television in January to call for a dialogue with the US it seemed that the scene was set for just such a rapprochement. The US in turn responded positively, with Sandy Berger, Clinton's national security adviser acknowledging the "positive development" and stating, "We would like to have a better relationship with Iran." That may still be the case but any idea Clinton's security advisers may have had about grooming Iran as a future ally in the Middle East has been put on indefinite hold now that the US military is en-

sconced in the Gulf. [See article on the situation in the Middle East in this issue.] US 'heavy handedness' in the Gulf has had the effect of accelerating Iran's re-establishment of relations with its rivals in the region. In the Caspian zone the effect on the US has been to accelerate the building of pipelines which bypass Iran, especially as Washington is now loathe to see even more oil being channelled to the Gulf. As well as promoting the building of costly under water pipelines between the Turkmen coast and Baku — the Azerbaijan capital on the other side of the Caspian Sea — the US has stepped up its support for the extension of the route west across Azerbaijan, through Georgia and then south through Turkey to the Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. The whole project will cost several billion dollars. It also requires that Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan resolve their dispute over demarcation in the Caspian and political stability in Georgia where there is suspicion that Russia has been behind several attempts on the life of President Shevardnadze.

Azerbaijan's Strategic Role

Given Washington's aim of keeping Iran on the sidelines and channeling energy routes through Turkey, Azerbaijan is strategically important to the US. On top of the oil reserves in Azerbaijan itself, Baku will remain a crucial terminal for oil and gas coming from the east and north, whether or not the projected underwater pipelines are built across the Caspian. At the time of the USSR's collapse the only pipe-

The New Great Game

line route from Baku was to Russia via Grozny in Chechnya. Russia is now building an alternative route to avoid Chechnya terminating at the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. However by the end of March another alternative route had come into being with the opening of a pipeline through the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, to the Black Sea at Supsa. The White House has approved both of them. If Washington's Turkish option materialises it will mean a further pipeline from Baku. If it does not it will give Tehran a chance to negotiate its option of a pipeline from Baku which would split to go west to Turkey and the Mediterranean coast and east to Tehran and the Gulf. At the end of the twentieth century Baku is experiencing an oil boom reminiscent of the end of last century when Britain and Turkey were rivals for influence in Azerbaijan. A measure of the strategic importance of Baku to US imperialism is the number of US 'political advisers' and 'consultants' attached to American oil companies in Azerbaijan. A measure of global capital's interest in Azerbaijan is the fact that 55 UK companies alone have opened up shop there.

As for Azerbaijan itself, its president Heydar Aliyev, with a political career going back to the days of Brezhnev and ruler in Azerbaijan since a 1993 coup ousted the pro-Turkish incumbent, has become well known amongst the rival imperialists for his "oil diplomacy". He has used the oil card to neutralise US support for Armenia and thereby take the first step in regaining Nagorno Karabakh. (There is an

influential Armenian American lobby in Washington and US aid to Armenia per capita is second only to the aid it gives Israel.) The Freedom Support Act, dating from 1992, which bans any direct aid by the US to the Azerbaijan government (because of its blockade against Armenia) has been overridden by the material imperative of oil. The US government cannot afford to let the small matter of Armenia's territorial ambitions get in the way of controlling the pipelines from Baku. Aliyev for his part is wary of falling completely into the pocket of the US. Although he has willingly accepted plans for pipelines to be routed through Turkey he has been careful to keep his options open. Despite the initial distancing from Moscow and their rift over Nagorno Karabakh (Russia is arming Armenia) Azerbaijan has not cut its links with Russia and both states have the same aim of undermining Turkish influence in the Caucasus. On the other hand the government in Baku does not share US antipathy towards Iran which in fact is Azerbaijan's biggest trading partner.

Russia: Down But Not Out of the Game

The new market economy Russia is no longer a military superpower on a par with the US. However, Russia is still a capitalist state with its own imperialist interests which it is trying desperately to promote in the Caucasus and beyond. Even though Russia has to kowtow to the US — notably over Chechnya where it had to patch up a semblance of a peace settlement in order to get Washington's go-ahead for construc-

tion of the pipeline from Baku to Novorossiysk — it is busy restructuring the various substantial oil and gas companies that have emerged from the old state behemoth. These new commercial enterprises are the economic arm of Russian imperialism and are increasingly playing the modern imperialist game of joint ventures with foreign firms. (The latest oil company to emerge from recent mergers in Russia is Yuksi, the world's third largest oil company, according to *The Financial Times*.) These relative newcomers are operating in the context of Russia's wider strategy of reacquiring a stake in as much as possible of the energy supplies in the area where once it had a complete monopoly and in so doing undermining Turkish inroads into the Caucasus. It is a strategy which does not exclude Russian firm co-operating with companies from abroad, even from the US, but also from Europe, Iran or possibly China (which is busy signing lucrative energy deals in Kazakhstan.)

The New Great Game

The new Great Game involves a complex kaleidoscope of shifting alliances and economic deals. In line with its role as the world's only 'superpower' the US has taken on the self-appointed task of overseeing political and economic activity in the Caucasus and Caspian region. This does not mean that capitalism has gone beyond imperialism and reached some sort of Kautskyian supra-imperialist equilibrium where a general imperialist conflagration is no longer on the historical agenda. If at the moment

there is no concerted challenge to US hegemony this is because in historical terms it is still relatively early days after the collapse of the Russian bloc. To be sure Russia will not be in a position to mount such a challenge on its own, nor will any other state for that matter. However, this does not discount the future emergence of imperialist blocs ready to challenge US hegemony. In Central Asia we have already seen how European companies are increasingly ignoring the US rules of the game and doing business with Iran. Politically we have only to look at the US military initiative in the Gulf to see how unreliable Washington's Cold War allies are nowadays. It is significant too that the more Turkey acts as the unquestioning ally of the US the more the EU doesn't want to know about Turkey's entry into the European club.

What is for sure is that the US interest in the ex-USSR is imperialist — i.e. it is has nothing to do with promoting 'democracy' or 'human rights' but is all about conserving and extending economic and political power. When it comes to prospective new oil pipelines through Afghanistan all the outrage at the terrorism and 'lack of respect for human rights' that have supposedly obliged the US to outlaw the Iranian state and its Islamic fundamentalism is revealed as so much hypocritical garbage. — Suddenly it's OK for US companies to do business with the fundamentalists while Washington quietly gives the go-ahead to the Taliban.

For the bulk of the populations in the former 'Soviet Republics'

political independence has not meant anything but the bloodshed and misery of the local wars that have erupted in the inter-necine fight between the local political gangsters. The working class in the energy-rich states that are currently being wooed by the whole of the West live in appalling conditions. In Turkmenistan for example there is a shortage of basic food staples and amenities while malnutrition is widespread — with underweight babies being 12 times higher than in Russia. Meanwhile, in amongst the squalor of the Turkmen capital the local political elite has elected to have a palatial government building erected. In Azerbaijan. Aliyev we are told rules

by combining an iron hand with promises of prosperity. But he will have to wait until output reaches its peak in 10-15 years' time before the effects of the oil revenues will be felt. Will it be possible to contain popular expectations of a better future for so long when a third of the workforce is unemployed and the monthly wage is no more than \$30?

Like everywhere else, the working class in the 'newly independent states' are being told to wait for the crumbs that will eventually come from the capitalist cake. But the re-cycled ex-Soviet ruling class has no intention of making sacrifices. They are benefiting from privatisation 'windfalls', oil and gas revenues, black market scams just as in the old days they had their select shops and pleasure haunts. No, the Great Game is a game for imperialists and all the players,

large or small, are part of capitalism's imperialist set-up. It is not the job of revolutionaries to urge that workers support this or that particular state because it is losing out in the imperialist Game. Our job is to urge workers everywhere to pursue their own interests until capitalist states everywhere are overthrown.

Another Episode...

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Moral imperatives do not destroy it. Imperialism's power is based on its accumulation of the surplus value of the world's working class. It could not exist if we did not deliver up to them the wealth we produce and which they deploy, not only to further exploit us but also to murder us for the sake of national competition. Today the working class has been forced onto the back foot as it faces up to the consequences of the capitalist crisis. This crisis has destroyed jobs and communities

Our Basic Positions

and now we are told the working class is a thing of the past. This is nonsense. The majority of the population has no alternative but to sell its labour power i.e. work for a wage. We have to recognise our own collective existence as class; we have to build new political organs to defend ourselves and fight for a new world. We have to do this because the international working class is the only force which is capable of bringing the current barbaric insanity to an end. Communism did not fail in the USSR. The USSR was not communist but a particular form of state capitalist exploitation which was as imperialist in its global relations as any of the

great powers today are. But the lie about the USSR's supposed communism is on par with the lie that imperialism does not cause the current carnage around the globe. It is all designed to make us believe that the present system is the best there is. Once we see through these lies on a mass scale we will be on course to mount a struggle to do something about the drift to barbarism. The issue has not changed from the same question posed in *The Communist Manifesto* 150 years ago. Either "the common ruin of the contending classes" (i.e. barbarism) or working class victory (socialism). This is a struggle of world historical importance which we must not lose.

1. We aim to become part of the future world working class party which will guide the class struggle towards the establishment of a stateless, classless, moneyless society without exploitation, national frontiers or standing armies and in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all (Marx): Communism.

2. Such a society will need a revolutionary state for its introduction. This state will be run by workers' councils, consisting of instantly recallable delegates from every section of the working class. Their rule is called the dictatorship of the proletariat because it cannot exist without the forcible overthrow and keeping down of the capitalist class worldwide.

3. The first stage in this is the political organisation of class-conscious workers and their eventual union into an interna-

tional political party for the promotion of world revolution.

4. The Russian October Revolution of 1917 remains a brilliant inspiration for us. It showed that workers could overthrow the capitalist class. Only the isolation and decimation of the Russian working class destroyed their revolutionary vision of 1917. What was set up in Russia in the 1920's and after was not communism but centrally planned state capitalism. There have as yet been no communist societies anywhere in the world.

5. The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party was founded by the heirs of the Italian Left who tried to fight the political degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern in the 1920's. We are continuing the task which the Russian Revolution promised but failed to achieve — the freeing of the workers of the world and the establishment of communism. Join us!

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