

Socialist Worker

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IRAQ IS BECOMING BUSH'S



VIETNAM

DESPITE the public face the Bush Administration is beginning to panic.

Paul Bremer the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority was rushed back to Washington recently as the White House reacted to growing worries that Iraq was becoming a Vietnam like quagmire.

With thousands of Iraqis now dead, over 400 American casualties, growing and seemingly co-

ordinated Iraqi resistance—pressure is mounting in the US for a clear ‘exit strategy’ to be drawn up.

Example

There is talk from Bush of ‘free elections’ before 2005. But we only have to look at the example of Afghanistan to see that this is just more lies.

Over 30 years ago against all odds the heroic resistance the Viet-

namese people brought the world’s greatest superpower to its knees and the idea that the US could be defeated became a source of inspiration to millions of people.

Now the Iraqi resistance grows by the day with daily attacks on both US and UK forces.

The resistance on the home front grows apace as well.

Over 300,000 people marched on the streets of London in opposition to Bush in the largest ever weekday

protest in Britain.

The American President visiting “his great friend” was unable to move outside a £5 million wall of steel while huge numbers of protestors ringed the centre of London.

Movement

These protests show that the anti-war movement that was so strong on February 15th continues to have mass support.

The Irish Anti-War Movement has called a protest for December 6th at Shannon Airport to highlight the Irish governments very own contribution to the bloody war in Iraq.

While Bush comes under pressure at home and abroad for his murderous war this is a perfect time for Irish people to expose our own FF/PD government’s rotten link to this conflict.

■ Now turn to pages 6 and 7.

US Troops out of Shannon

Mad Dog Moves

MAD dog Michael McDowell who is one of the chief leaders of this cutback government has moved to plush new offices on St Stephen's Green.

The PD Minister for Injustice has found time out from his busy schedule of attacking refugees, asylum seekers, and composing plans to privatise sections of the prison service to make a move to his new office.

As everyone knows moving can be one of the most stressful periods of a person's life but this must be eased somewhat by the multi-million euro surroundings that McDowell is now working from.

The new office previously belonged to Smurfit's private Paribas banking empire and it is regarded as one of the city centres most salubrious buildings.

May Day is Palestine Day

PRO-PALESTINE NGOs from eleven European countries met before the opening of the European Social Forum to decide on a common platform.

They met under the auspices of the Brussels-based ECCP (European Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on Palestine), and were joined by numerous Palestinian and Israeli delegates.

All agreed to the suggestion by Raymond Deane (Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign) that 1 May 2004 in Dublin should be regarded as a focal point for a pan-European campaign against the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement with Israel.

Throughout the three days of the ESF, Palestinian and Israeli delegates stressed their opposition to this Agreement; they emphasised the importance of a co-ordinated campaign against the Apartheid Wall, invited activists to visit Palestine during the months of December and April, and approved 20 March as a global day of action against occupation.

FF-PD health spending a sick joke

IRELAND'S per capita spending on health has not yet exceeded the EU average according to figures from the OECD.

These figures contradict FF/PD bogus claims that their spending on health was the third high-

est in the EU. In fact the Irish government's spending on health is just 69 percent of the EU average.

The OECD now ranks Ireland's per capita public health spending as 11th of the 15 EU member states. The new Hanly Report (see report on page 10) will also see accident and

emergency departments in local hospitals shut down and concentrated in a small number of regional hospitals, often many miles from where people need attention.

Proof positive that Michael Martin's health strategy is nothing but a sick joke!

CENSORSHIP AT THE 'PAPER OF RECORD'

A COLUMN written by Irish Times journalist John Walters on the subject of the huge pay-off to former editor Conor Brady was censored last month.

The self-appointed 'paper of record' gagged and then sacked one of its own jour-

nalists who only attempted to express some of the anger of his fellow workers at the huge money given to the paper's executives.

The article mentioned a collective payment of €3.28m made to 11 executive directors.

The company had lost €2.8 during the same period and hundreds of jobs were

slashed.

NUJ journalists on D'Olier Street were particularly unhappy with the £100,000 a year paid to former editor Conor Brady for him just not to work for any other publication.

Brady presided over the economic meltdown at the paper two years ago when jobs were slashed.

RABBITTE APES BLAIR

ACCORDING to Phoenix Pat Rabbite is already planning to create his very own 'New' Labour type party here in Ireland.

In recent speeches Rabbite has been turning on the Tony Blair like rhetoric and ditching much of his old left wing beliefs.

In July at the Cobh Chamber of Commerce he said that the Labour Party had to "stop fighting old ideological battles". Later in the summer he told a meeting in Waterford that there was no such thing as class in society.

"We are all now citizens, consumers, workers and capitalists," he said.

It looks like the Labour Party under Rabbite continues to be a dead end for real socialists.



Blair and Rabbite: Ditching left-wing talk

Afghanistan descends further into the abyss

EVEN George W. Bush's supporters have come to the conclusion that the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated so badly since the USA invaded two years ago that they are questioning the whole strategy.

Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* was an enthusiastic supporter of the invasion of Afghanistan.

He reports in the *International Herald Tribune* that since the Taliban were replaced by US forces and their puppet President, Hamid Karzai, the production of opium poppies has increased more than 19-



Afghanistan: Back in the grip of the warlords

fold.

The Taliban had banned the growing of the poppies from which heroin is made.

The number of tonnes produced illegally under the Taliban was as low as 185 tonnes.

Now under the US occupiers this figure has soared to 3,600 tonnes. This accounts for about 75

percent of the world supply of heroin according to US government analysts.

We are told by the apologists for war that the big success of the US occupation is the reinstatement of the education system.

But Kristoff found that nearly all the schools have closed in the towns that he visited. Consequently, the numbers of children attending school has plummeted.

Even the humanitarian effort is being scaled back as NGOs pull out due to the deteriorating security situation.

The lack of security means that the Taliban is returning and reasserting its control. Kristoff concludes that if Afghanistan is a White House model for Iraq, then God help us!

Coca-Cola threatens to sue Socialist Worker!

MULTINATIONAL nasty, Coca-Cola has threatened to sue student societies in Trinity College campaigning for a boycott of Coca-Cola products.

Currently Socialist Worker Student Society, Labour Youth and others are organising a dynamic campaign.

When the corporate giant heard of plans for a referendum in Trinity to decide on the issue, it met with the Senior Dean and declared that it would sue any society involved in the campaign.

Similar to how corporate interests dictate to governments, the Senior Dean, and through him the Central Societies Committee, have decreed that if societies do not end the campaign they risk disbandment.

Recently a Boycott Coke referendum in UCD was successful. The ballot had to be rerun due to pressure from Coke, Ogra Fianna Fail and SIPTU, but 56 percent of students still voted to keep the ban.

The TCD societies have distributed leaflets concerning undisputed reports that Coca-Cola bottling plant managers in Colombia have allowed and even encouraged paramilitary death squads to murder, torture and kidnap Colombian trade unionists in an effort to crush their union.

The campaign is asking students and staff to boycott Coca-Cola until the company stops killing and to sign a petition calling for a referendum to take place.

TRINITY VICTORY OVER BNP!

THE possibility of the BNP's youth organiser being given a platform in Ireland courtesy of the Philosophical Society of Trinity College collapsed after the threat of a huge protest led college authorities to refuse to bear the costs of the meeting.

The campaign against the invitation was successful in gathering support not just from the left, but obtained endorsement from members of staff—both academic and non-academic.

Six senior professors were among those who signed an open letter that

appealed to the Philosophical Society to withdraw their invitation and urged members of college to protest should the meeting go ahead.

Crucial support was also gathered from members of college security staff who did not want to be put in the invidious position of having to forge a path through a demonstration for a BNP member.

It was clear from a well-attended public meeting in TCD of those concerned at the invitation that the protest on the night was going to be massive.

That it was the potential scale of the protest that hung

over the college's decision not to allow its premises be used for the meeting was made clear when the Junior Dean spoke to a debate on free speech in the aftermath of the cancellation.

Organisers of the campaign were delighted with the result.

They said that it was precisely in the interests of keeping Ireland free from the kind of intimidation and infringement of basic human rights associated with the growth of parties like the BNP that it was important not to allow them the credibility of an invitation to TCD.

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editorial

TWO DECADES ON AND FF IS STILL LOOKING AFTER THE RICH AND ATTACKING WORKERS!

Cut Back Charlie II

IN 1982 former Fianna Fail leader Charlie Haughey called on the country to 'tighten its belts' because of difficult economic circumstances.

Many years later we found out that while workers had to endure savage social welfare, health and education cut-backs Haughey and his rich cronies lived in the lap of luxury.

Most of them—including the Taoiseach himself—paid little in the way of tax while those PAYE workers suffering the cutbacks had no choice but to pay.

In 2003 we have the same name, the same party and the same old story. This time FF Minister for Finance Charlie 'Cut-Back' McCreedy has attacked workers and those reliant on social welfare with sweeping cut-backs.

When announcing his Book of Estimates McCreedy made it clear that we were entering a slower economic period and everyone would have to have 'lower their expectations'.

That is unless you're a rich stud farmer or a major livestock owner from Co. Kildare!

While McCreedy took his knife to the social welfare, health and education budget he was quick to defend his obscene funding of the Equestrian Event Centre at Punchestown.

Keeping on side with his rich friends in his North Kildare constituency McCreedy approved the funding of nearly €15 million for the centre.

Those who use and frequent the centre are part of the rich 'horsey set' that McCreedy has been at pains to look after since he became Minister in 1997.

After all the funding it turns out that the centre is actually too small for international show jumping competitions!

But while McCreedy continues to look after the rich if you are a single parent who works in a low income job relying on rent allowance to get you by, heartless McCreedy has made sure that you will have an extremely tough Christmas period.

The Book of Estimates means that the half-rate payment allowance to a lone parent who takes up employment and earns

just over €293 per week is to be stopped.

This is just one of 16 major cuts in social welfare that will be introduced by this vicious right wing government.

Other cuts that will hit working class people include

- The back to education allowance will be severely curtailed. From now on people must be on welfare for at least 15 months to be eligible rather than the present 6 months.

- Exchequer funding for the Status of People with Disabilities has been slashed by 19 percent following a major cut of 44 percent in last year's Estimates.

- Changes to supplementary rent allowance mean that people will not be able to get help with their rent for six months.

This will particularly affect young lone parents who may live for three or four years with their parents after the birth of their child, but by their mid 20s may want a place of their own.

Resort

Presently they have little chance of getting local authority housing and usually resort to renting, with the help of a rent supplement.

- Threshold, the housing organisation, has estimated that 60,000

households will be driven into poverty by the cuts in the Rent Allowance and social welfare cuts.

- Creche supplement for child-care will be discontinued.

- Earnings threshold for Disability and Unemployment Benefit will go up.

- Duration for Unemployment Benefit payments reduced.

- Dietary Supplement to be phased out.

When FF Ministers try to say that their party has moved on from the 'bad old days' of Haughey, Burke and Lawlor, we should say 'Same old FF same old story!'



■ McCreedy: Thinking of cuts

US war planes out of Shannon!

THE government is trying to cover up how Ireland is involved in supporting the US occupation of Iraq. But the truth has started to seep out.

In response to a recent Dail question, they have admitted that 10,000 US soldiers used Shannon airport in September. This is about the average for the past number of months.

Shannon airport is a civilian airport and most passengers are not aware they are using a location that is slowly being turned into a US army base.

According to Irish law no foreign soldiers are allowed to arrive in this country carrying weapons. The government tries to get around this by claiming that they have requested US soldiers not to carry guns.

But they never check to see if their request has been carried out.

In January the Observer newspaper revealed a very different story. One airport worker was quoted as



■ Flashback: Part of last February's monster demonstration in Dublin

saying, 'Several of the transport planes using the airport carry only weaponry. But the troops arriving in Ireland are fully armed.'

Another commented that 'Aer Rianta and the police have introduced a policy of turning a blind eye to what is happening here. I have seen guns and weapons.

There isn't a great effort to hide them'.

Resort

Foreign Minister Brian Cowan was later forced to acknowledge the truth of these statements when he stated that US troops could carry 'personal weapons'. But he went on to excuse this by

claiming they did not have ammunition and that the weapons were kept in the hold of planes.

This is rank hypocrisy—a supposedly neutral country is being used to ferry US troops with 'personal weapons' to enforce a brutal and bloody occupation.

The US has been in Iraq for just eight months—but already it is starting to look like Vietnam. A recent CIA report has conceded that 'we are going to lose the situation unless there is a rapid and dramatic change of course'.

The same report noted that 'the resistance is broad, strong and getting stronger... there are thousands in the resistance—not just a core of Ba'athists. They are in their thousands and growing every day. Not all those people are actually firing, but they are providing support, shelter and all that'.

Now is the time to turn up the pressure on the Irish government to halt its collusion on the US war effort.

The Irish Anti-War Movement has called for a day of civil disobedience at the airport on December 6th.

■ Bus leaves Virgin Megasore Dublin at 9am Ticket €10 Phone 087-9755013 for details.



Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy. To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based much greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth. Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government. Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction' We want to see an Irish workers republic where all workers gain. Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party. This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc. We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

Join the Socialists!

To join the Socialist Workers Party or for more information: Fill in the form and Send to:

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comment

Eamonn McCann

The cold hand of poverty destroys lives

ANYBODY my age in Northern Ireland will know somebody who has died from poverty.

Poverty won't have been put down as cause of death. Family and neighbours asked what she or he died from will refer to a bad heart or a stroke or lung problems or whatever.

But the bottom line will have been that poverty sickens the existence of huge numbers in our society, and every year brings thousands of lives to an unnecessary premature end.

Stress is among the most common causes of health problems, and to live in poverty is to live in stress.

As St. Vincent de Paul's "Combating Poverty" report, published this week, puts it: "Health issues (are) inseparable from the living conditions experienced by respondents as the pressure of lack of finance and the consequences inevitably led to chronic stress."

The strength of the report, compiled by Professor Gerry McAleavy and his team at the University of Ulster, lies in its first-hand accounts of the human reality behind the statistics usually deployed to measure economic well-being, or ill-being.

"You would think it would only be stress during the day but I go to bed and lie there worrying so it is a constant stress, you don't have a night's sleep. I do shout at the kids when I am stressed and it is not their fault, they are only asking what other kids are wanting."

"I put myself into debt with HP and that, so especially at Christmas, I wouldn't sleep well. How am I going to juggle and pay this. I asked for extra help with the rent, I was very stressed, a bit of overeating, tearful and emotional."

Poverty directly, devastatingly affects education, too. We know that in our shamefully divided system, only eight percent of grammar school students come from the poorer half of the community.

Privilege

Defenders of privilege airily discuss the extent to which this can be explained by the different emphases families put on the importance of schooling. Sadly, they sigh—or perhaps it's a sniff of distaste—poor parents don't put the same premium on academic attainment as the middle-classes do.

This is the direct opposite of the truth. McAleavy's research confirms that parents in poverty tend desperately to wish for their children to shine at school, seeing a lack of education as a reason for their own situation, a higher level of education the key to their children escaping the same deprivation. It's lack of resources, not lack of resolve, which holds poor children back.

School attendance requires expenditure. Only the poor really notice this.

"My big worry would be school uniforms when you are buying two of each. I had a new school bag to buy and that would stress you out as you are trying to get this or that and another. I had to borrow money off a friend to get the two uniforms. So I am worried about paying that back now"

"I used to get a grant for school uniform...(Now) they won't give a grant because they say it is not compulsory but it is. I buy something similar if I can"

It's commonly said that school uniforms minimise differences. But uniforms usually cost more than generic garments. So the poor are hit the harder for wanting their children not to stick out.

The answer is more money. An end to low pay. Grants not loans. A significant rise in lone parents' allowance. The range of measures needed is obvious.

Emphasis on "community" downgrades problems of poverty. The poor are lumped in with the better-off on their own "side." This hides the extent to which "the upwards redistribution of wealth" within communities has locked the poor into permanent unemployment, low pay, bad health and exclusion from education. "Community" makes poverty politically invisible.

■ Copies of "Combating Poverty" are available from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 196-200, Antrim Road, Belfast BT15.

ShopElectric exposes privatisation fraud

THE sudden closure of ShopElectric in mid November exposed the fraud of privatisation.

The shops were part of the old Electricity Board.

They were taken out of the public sector in the 1990s when a management group bought them out.

This group then sold the shops on to a three-partner consortium—a combination of Viridian and the 3i group, with the Armstrong family as the biggest share-

holder.

This group in turn flogged them off last June to Northern Retail.

Now they're gone, leaving customers and workers in the lurch.

People who paid deposits on anything from

cookers to computers in the weeks before the shops closed still do not know if their money has been lost.

Rumours

All kinds of rumours abound that money paid off

phone, gas or electricity bills in the days before the closure has gone into a black hole.

How much money was siphoned out of ShopElectric in these deals into the pockets of private individuals?

Why hasn't this information been made public? Why haven't the main parties made an issue of this?

The answer is, of course, is that they all support privatisation and don't want to highlight the real effects of it.

Whose partner?

SOCIALIST Environmental Alliance candidate in the Assembly elections, Eamonn McCann, has won a real victory for the rights of all unmarried couples, but particularly gay and lesbian couples.

When submitting his nomination papers, his attention was drawn to the Guide for Candidates and Agents and specifically to section 11 dealing with the count which states that the people entitled to attend the count include "the candidates and their husbands and wives".

Eamonn told *Socialist Worker* "When I mentioned to the electoral office in Derry that I assumed that the paragraph had been casually worded and that there would be no problem about my partner, Goretti Horgan, accompanying me to the count, I was told that "husbands and wives" meant what it said, and that Ms. Horgan would have to

be appointed a counting agent or qualify under some other heading: otherwise, she'd be excluded from the count.

Eamonn made a formal complaint to the Chief Electoral Officer under equality legislation.

In the course of this, he asked if he has in place a system to monitor his admission policy to the count and ensure that all heterosexual candidates are, in fact, married to their partners?

Status

The Equality Commission assured Eamonn and Goretti that they should not be discriminated against on the grounds of marital status and that it would support them if the formal complaint did not get them a result.

After a week during which the electoral people said they would be strictly interpreting the rules, the formal complaint did the trick.

On the Saturday before



■ Eamonn McCann campaigning for the Socialist Environmental Alliance

the election, Eamonn received a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer which said: "I am content that the term "wives and husbands", as it appears in

the legislation, should be interpreted more liberally nowadays and, in light of your representations, have given instructions to Deputy Returning Officers

that candidates may be accompanied at the count by their common law wife or husband, or other significant partner, including same sex partners".

Ireland of the unequals

THE TOP quarter of earners in the North have 56 percent of income. The bottom quarter have six percent.

This doesn't show the true extent of the gap. It includes only earnings.

The super-rich get their real wealth from property and profits, while those on the bottom aren't earners at all.

Here is the most glaring example of inequality in our society.

But the four main Northern parties can argue about equality for hours without giving it a mention.

How can we understand anti-social behaviour, drugs problems, crime, violence, etc. without taking this into account?

Privatisation

There are aspects of this beyond the Assembly's remit. Benefit levels, for example, are decided at Westminster.

But there are specific things Assembly politicians could do—for a

start, stop all privatisation and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes, and stop promoting Northern Ireland as a low-wage economy.

The Invest NI website tells potential investors that the North offers "employment costs that are up to 32 percent lower than in the US and 25 percent lower than the EU average..."

This makes a virtue of poverty wages.

A party seriously against poverty would refuse to operate this perspective in government.

At the lower end of

the pay scale—particularly for women—public sector workers are better-paid and more secure than in the private sector.

Any party serious about equality would declare that it won't sit in an Executive which proceeds any further down the privatisation road.

Opposition

Yet in the course of a UTV debate before the elections, continued support for PFI and PPPs was one of only two issues on which politicians from all four Executive parties were able to

agree.

The other was their opposition to abortion being available here on the NHS.

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It seems "An Ireland of Equals" does not apply to the working class.

Thousands debate the future of Anti-Capitalist Movement

by **DAVE LORDAN**

THE second European Social Forum (ESF) was a great success.

In four huge complexes situated around Paris fifty thousand left wing delegates took part in hundreds of seminars and workshops.

On the Saturday after the end of the ESF up to a hundred thousand marched against war and privatisation through the streets of Paris.

This was France's biggest march so far against the Bush and Blair war of terror.

There were delegations from every country in Europe, including 10,000 from Italy and 2,500 from Germany. Many more came from around the world.

Around seventy travelled from Ireland including socialists, environmental activists, republicans, community activists and Palestinian Solidarity campaigners.

While there we joined in the debates on a huge range of issues from the resistance to US imperialism to gay rights, from the fight to defend public services to the struggle against racism and the far right.

The meetings took place against a background of growing radicalisation in France. Last spring and summer millions of public servants and other workers struck against government plans to deregulate public services and cut back on pensions and other benefits.

Over 300,000 had showed up the previous month in Larzac to welcome the release of radical farmers' union leader Jose Bove from prison.

Just the week before polls had showed that up to 30 per cent of French voters will consider voting for a united slate of far left candidates in next year's regional and European elections.

Radicalisation

The week after the ESF students and lecturers went on strike in eight French universities. Because of this radicalisation on the streets the right wing of the movement failed miserably in their attempt to control the ESF.

This year's forum was organised by ATTAC, a tax reform group whose leadership is closely tied to the upper levels of the Trade Union Bureaucracy and the French Socialist Party, equivalent to the Irish Labour Party.

They stuffed the top tables

★ *100,000 March in Paris against Iraq War*



■ Tens of thousands of protestors pour onto the streets in Paris at the ESF

of all the seminars with moderates who made long-winded speeches arguing that the movement should tone down its radicalism and work to reform existing institutions like the UN and the EU.

They argued that the ESF should become nothing more than a lobby group to put pressure on the political establishment.

But the thousands on the floor of the meetings were consistently to the left of the handful sitting at the top table. Speaker after speaker won loud applause when they argued that the strength of our movement lay in our ability to mobilise millions across the globe by grassroots activity

Day of action against privatisation

THE Paris assembly also showed the movement's determination to fight neo-liberal policies where governments have ravaged public services and forced through privatisation.

It was proposed that 9 May should be a day of protest against such policies.

This is when the European Union's constitution is due to be ratified. The assembly confirmed that the next European Social Forum will be held in London next year

from below.

Many insisted that we needed to scrap altogether current political structures and to build new forms of democracy in which everyone can participate in making decisions about how we run our workplaces and communities.

Anti-War

The war, the anti-war movement and the occupation of Iraq were central to the discussions at the ESF.

At meeting after meeting speakers from the platform or the floor reminded the audience how the ESF had initiated the call for the day of action on 15 February.

That day became the greatest day of global protest against war in history.

During the opening session over 3,000 people crammed

And she pointed to the hypocrisy of great powers, alone or in combination, claiming to bring liberation:

"There is no such thing as humanitarian intervention when it is brought through bombs and depleted uranium."

She also drew the connection between war and the drive for profit that was to become a major theme of many discussions at the forum.

"If our movement against the war can be harnessed to this wider movement for social change," she concluded, "then a world free of imperialism and exploitation becomes a real possibility."

Optimistic

Other speakers from the platform built on that optimistic note. Rosa Canadell from the anti-war movement in Spain said, "We are witnessing the rebirth of grassroots organisation."

"These movements are the only thing that can fight the system."

"We must oppose the occupation and open up new fronts against the system locally."

"There is something else. We need to move from protests towards proposing alternatives and political strategies."

Voices from the ESF

"The atmosphere here is really incredible. The march has given me a sense of the size of the movement and its diversity. It's so multicultural, children, older people, much more inclusive than I thought."

★ *Liz, social worker Belfast*

"It's encouraging to see so many people active and passionate."

★ *Donna Youth Worker Bluebell*

"I'm here because I don't agree with Bush, because I think third world debt should be dropped. Capitalism just doesn't work for the majority of people."

★ *Peter, Gay activist Dublin*

"It's great to see so many people come out fighting for their rights and not backing down. I hope Ireland can get as strong as this."

★ *Mags, Community worker, Ballyfermot.*

"I'm particularly interested in supporting the struggle of the people of Palestine and came here to educate myself so that I can organise meetings and debates back in Ireland. Basically I came to get a sense of the movement and to learn so I can go about building the resistance back in Ireland."

★ *Kate and Aiblin, Students, UCG*

Panos Garganas from the anti-war movement in Greece called on the audience to "Look to the successes of the past."

"Eighty five years ago the First World War came to an end after workers and soldiers in Germany rose up and overthrew their government in a revolution."

"At the centre of the struggle was Rosa Luxemburg. She was a socialist who had analysed how capitalism leads to war."

There was loud applause when he argued that building up Europe as a military counterweight to the US would mean greater instability and more threats of war rather than fewer.

There were disagreements at some meetings over whether the UN could play a positive role and be much better than US intervention.

Some speakers called for a UN peacekeeping force in Iraq but at a meeting of over 1,000 people George Galloway MP was loudly applauded when he argued the UN is not a solution to the chaos in Iraq.

Anti war campaigners agreed to support a call from the US movement for a world day of protests against the occupation of Iraq on 20 March next.

French Government's Racist Law

THE MASS anti-war movement across Europe has in many countries brought large numbers of, particularly young, Muslims onto the streets. A few Muslims from France were at the forum.

There was a sharp debate over whether young Muslim women in France should have the right to wear headscarves at school. The Tory government in France is set to pass a law banning the scarf.

While socialists were clear about defending the right of Muslim women to dress as they please, most of those from France did not take such a stand.

The discussion still has some way to go, and is urgent as the French government sees the issue as a way of dividing the movement

Iraq: No democracy in sight

by AOIFE BRESLIN

FACED with mounting US casualties in Iraq, a Vietnam-style quagmire hovering over the 2004 elections and a massive anti-welcome in London, Bush has now announced that he means to hand Iraq back to the Iraqis.

His so-called 'forward strategy for freedom' calls for the Iraqi army and security forces to be placed under civilian control by the end of February next year.

It further calls for the establishment of a sovereign provisional government based on regional assemblies by the end of June 2004.

Finally the strategy aims to have elections to a national assembly and a new Iraqi constitution by the end of 2005.

This latest blueprint from Bush's team reeks of familiarity.

Free elections were promised for Afghanistan and have yet to materialise. In reality, this is just an attempt to legitimise the occupation.

Privatisation

There is no mention of ending the privatisation of Iraq or a withdrawal of occupation forces.

Indeed, the plan goes so far as to presume that US forces will remain 'at the invitation of the new government'.

Regional assemblies are to be selected by the current Interim Governing Council (vetted by the US) and Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority will dissolve in name only.

Post-2005 Iraq may be officially headed by Iraqi exiles, but behind the scenes all the key decisions on oil and other resources, will continue to be made by the US.

Despite the rhetoric Bush's latest blueprint will deliver neither freedom nor democracy for Iraq.

The plan itself however, marks a major change of tack for the US administration.

Only recently there were considering disbanding the Iraqi Interim Governing Council.

But the recent spate of attacks on US soldiers and

the growing resistance movement in Iraq have forced even the most conservative amongst the Bush administration to take a different approach.

Even neo-conservative think-tank Project for a New American Century recognises the crisis facing Bush.

In its *Weekly Standard* magazine Project gurus Robert Kagan and William Kristol write:

'It is an illusion that this mess can be handed off to someone else and we can go about our business.

'The choices are stark: Either the US does what it takes to succeed in Iraq, or we lose in Iraq. If we lose we will not leave behind blue helmets, but radicalism and chaos, a haven for terrorists, and a perception of American weakness and lack of resolve in the Middle East and reckless blundering around the world.

'That is the abyss we may be staring into if we do not shift course now.'

Vietnam

In Vietnam, against all odds the heroic resistance of a peasant people brought the world's greatest superpower to its knees and the idea that the US could be defeated became a source of inspiration to millions of people.

Since then US leaders are haunted by what they call the 'Vietnam Syndrome'.

A fear of sending thousands of American soldiers into a bloody and unpopular war that has no obvious 'exit strategy'.

Iraq is quickly becoming that war with the number of US soldiers killed rising by the day and discontent on the increase in the homeland.

The Bush administration is starting to get worried.

The Vietnam War cost Lyndon B Johnson his second Presidential term. More significantly it inspired millions to take to the streets demanding civil rights and social justice.

Even the Project gurus know this could be the beginning of the end for George W.

London comes to a halt to tell Bush to go home

THERE ARE 300,000 on this demonstration. Three quarters of central London has been brought to a standstill.

That announcement from Lindsey German, convenor of the Stop the War Coalition, brought whoops and cheers from the packed rally in Trafalgar Square.

Thousands poured into the capital from all over Britain, from Aberdeen in northern Scotland to Plymouth in the south, and joined hundreds of thousands more Londoners.

They marched alongside post workers, tube workers, firefighters, health workers and council workers chanting "George Bush-terrorist", "George Bush, Uncle Sam—Iraq will be your Vietnam", "George Bush, we know you—your daddy was a killer too."

The response from people passing on the streets was the warmest that has greeted any anti-war demo.

The festive but determined marchers reached Trafalgar Square to find some 8,000 people already there waiting for them.

This demo did not shrink as night fell. While some left to get coaches home, thousands of others came out after work.

Trafalgar Square was heaving when, at around 5.30pm, the climax of the demo came.

A massive statue of George Bush was toppled, to the jubila-



■ 300,000 protestors brought London to a halt

tion of the vast crowd watching. They had shown the movement has extraordinary life, energy and huge numbers. And for

one day the streets were theirs. School students told *Socialist Worker*, "We've been wanting to send a message to Bush for

some time. The war in Iraq is not over—there are still lots of deaths. The Iraqis need their own government. We're not here

to bunk off. We're standing up for what we believe in." The previous day over 2,000 demonstrators attended the

alternative state procession organised by the Stop the War Coalition.

A horse-drawn carriage with a fake Bush and fake queen led the procession, which included cyclists, taxi drivers and a giant pink tank that blew bubbles.

Jackie Turner explained to *Socialist Worker* why she was demonstrating: "I'm here because I'm against US foreign policy.

"I deplore the way that the US goes into countries and pillages them, stealing their assets. Our movement is starting to build global relationships to protest against what is happening."

Colin Powell was forced to cancel a planned speech at the University of London in the face of student protests and college occupation.

One student, Daniel from Imperial College said, "This demonstration will show the world that there are people taking to the streets against Bush.

"I don't like anything about Bush. I don't like the fear he has created through war, his tax cuts for the rich, his opposition to abortion or attacks on gays."

Bushra from University College London added, "Today people are resisting occupation in Iraq. We wanted to send them a message that we are against Bush and Blair. That's why we wanted to occupy our college."

VOICES OF OPPOSITION

"My husband was drafted in November 2002. He was taken to Fort Campbell in Kentucky and kept there for three months of retraining before his draft even started. He was told he would be in Iraq for 179 days. Now he has been told he will be there for 508. He wants to come home. So many of the US soldiers want to come home. I think the war has everything to do with corporate and oil interests. I am proud to be on the demo today. I hope it will have an impact in the US."

JARI SHEESE, member of Military Families Speak Out

"I AM marching to show Bush and Blair that we are against them and what they have done. I am against the occupation of Iraq, and we are also marching in solidarity with the Palestinian people. We have to show Blair and Bush that people don't want the kind of world they want."

MOHAMMED, school student from north London

"WE HAVE built our anti-war group from the bottom up. It has involved all sorts of people, including people new to any kind of politics and protest. We had 150 of us come down today by bus. Many more came down independently."

JIM, member of the Unison union, Leicester

ANGER ON THE FRONT LINE

THERE IS growing anger in the US as the death toll of soldiers in Iraq rises. Already more have been killed since Bush declared victory on 1 May than during the war itself.

A US group, Bring Them Home Now, is made up of military families, veterans, those on active service, and reservists.

It says it was "galvanised to action by Bush's inane and reckless challenge to the armed Iraqis resisting occupation to 'bring 'em on'."

It aims to mobilise people to demand an end to the occupation in Iraq and the immediate return of US troops.

Some of the letters posted on its website are printed here.

To: Bringthemhome From: A very angry spouse, New York Date: 6 November 2003 'The day is ending and I check one more time before I go to sleep to make sure nothing new has emerged about another soldier getting killed.

I have made my bed on the couch and made sure the vol-

ume is up on the computer, just in case my husband logs on to tell me he made it through another day of uncertainty in Baghdad.

The next morning I wake up to my husband alerting my messenger to see if I can hear him. He tells me about his day and what to expect the next day and how nervous he is.

Mr president, do I get to speak to my husband the next day? You don't know the pain that myself and thousands of other military families feel on a daily basis. Our brave men and women are over there in Iraq fighting for a purpose that is non-existent.

Leave the Iraqi people alone. If they want us gone, then why stay?'

To: Bringthemhome From: Military wife Date: 3 November 2003 'I am a wife of an army reservist who is serving in Baghdad.

Although my husband is a lieutenant in a support unit I fear for his life on a daily basis. My husband left home

in February after eight years of inactive service to the military.

We never expected to get a call to go to war. He has not had formal military training. Before he left I never even seen him near a gun as we don't believe in armed weapons in the home.

I sometimes wake in the middle of the night to read the headlines so I feel secure waking in the morning that he is OK.

To: Bringthemhome From: Jeffrey L Myers, Florida Date: 29 September 2003 'I just recently returned from Iraq. When we landed in Ramstein, Germany, there was no one to greet us or welcome us back.

There were soldiers that lived up to six hours away. These soldiers had to ride in a taxi back to their unit. A friend of mine spent almost \$250 just on the ride home. That's how much the army cares.

To: Bringthemhome From: Thomas Jelf Date: 26 October 2003 'I lost many friends during the Vietnam War and have opposed this "invasion" of Iraq since its insidious beginnings.

We currently have a young friend, a specialist named Dustin, in the 82nd Airborne, who was deployed to Iraq in August. He is only 21 and joined the army as a means of obtaining a college education. He has called us twice from Iraq. I am so troubled

I have soldiers I had to leave down in Iraq—that was the hardest for me. Most of them are just young kids unaware of what really goes on in the government and military.

I had to do CPR on a soldier that didn't have identification on him but had a wedding ring. That haunted me for nights on end.

Our goal in Iraq has been destroyed—it is non-existent. We need to bring the soldiers home.'

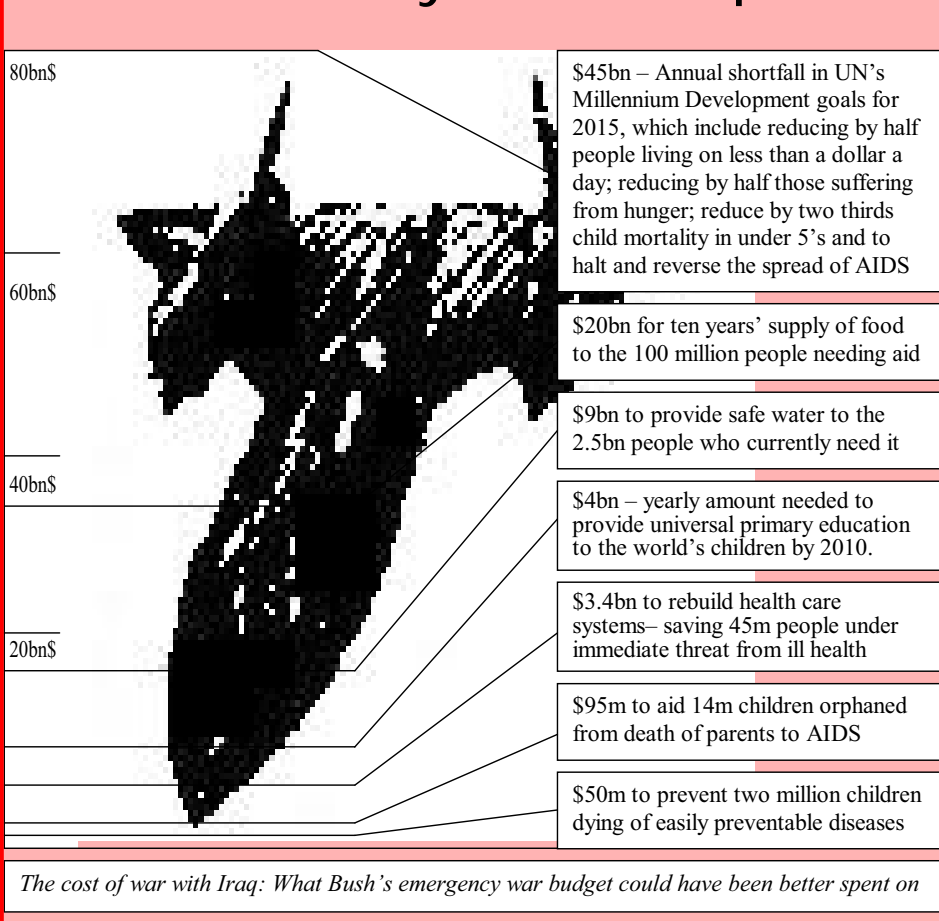
To: Bringthemhome From: Thomas Jelf Date: 26 October 2003

'A friend of mine who is a nurse and a reservist was called up to go to Iraq. She was in Baghdad on patrol when a bomb exploded and she was hit by shrapnel.

She is now in Washington undergoing exploratory eye surgery on her left eye. It is mostly likely she will be blind in that eye.

War is blood. War is death. We should never go into one under false pretences and blundering.' Visit the website: www.bringthemhome.org

What the money could be spent on



\$45bn – Annual shortfall in UN's Millennium Development goals for 2015, which include reducing by half people living on less than a dollar a day; reducing by half those suffering from hunger; reduce by two thirds child mortality in under 5's and to halt and reverse the spread of AIDS

\$20bn for ten years' supply of food to the 100 million people needing aid

\$9bn to provide safe water to the 2.5bn people who currently need it

\$4bn – yearly amount needed to provide universal primary education to the world's children by 2010.

\$3.4bn to rebuild health care systems— saving 45m people under immediate threat from ill health

\$95m to aid 14m children orphaned from death of parents to AIDS

\$50m to prevent two million children dying of easily preventable diseases

The cost of war with Iraq: What Bush's emergency war budget could have been better spent on

JFK: A true Precedent of a President

By PAT STACK

"DADDY, do you think Nixon did it?"

Everybody old enough can apparently remember where he or she was when John F Kennedy got shot. But few, I suspect, can remember exactly what they said on hearing the news.

Thanks to my father, my utterings as a young child went down in family folklore. I can still remember the event, which happened 40 years ago this week.

I can still remember the Irish newsreader on RTE breaking down in tears as he reported it. I can still remember a nation going into shocked mourning.

The election of JFK is the earliest political memory of my life.

Kennedy, of Irish Catholic stock, descendant of those who fled famine and poverty, up against the evil Pro, Nixon.

Our boy was young, good looking and articulate, with a beautiful wife and children, and his glamorous "Camelot" entourage.

Baddies

Their boy was a shifty, sweaty, ugly guy who, like all TV and movie baddies of the time, had stubble and eyes that averted the camera's gaze.

What's more, our boy won! OK, so maybe a Catholic couldn't be king or queen of England (or marry them) or prime minister of Northern Ireland, but we now had one of our own as the president of the US.

With his death we lost our man, and "a generation", we are told, "lost its innocence".

How ironic, then, that the anniversary of the death of this "most popular of presidents" should take place against a background of huge, angry protests against the visit of one of the most repulsive and hated of US presidents.

And yet behind the tan smiles, pretty wife and liberal

image lies a truth that nobody would have dared contemplate at the time.

For this was a president who oversaw the acceleration of the arms race, and took the world to the brink of nuclear war during the Cuban missile crisis.

Prior to that he had supported a bunch of right wing Cuban fanatics in an attempt to restore a corrupt and reactionary regime in Cuba in the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

Assassinate He had approved of plots to assassinate Cuba's leader Castro (ironic, in a "chickens coming home to roost" sort of way.)

Although he has never been the president identified with the horror that was Vietnam (Johnson and Nixon have always taken that rap), he was the one who started the whole process in earnest.

Credentials

Even his great liberal credentials in tackling segregation in the Southern US states do not bear close inspection.

Although he did clash with Southern state governors, he repeatedly sought compromise, and allowed the FBI to spy on civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

Finally, as for the good Catholic boy image, apparently his sexual appetite would make Bill Clinton look like Cliff Richard.

This last aspect of his life may have cost him dear.

It has occurred to me that this man, who was the first and only Catholic president, should be prime material for canonisation.

Given the predilection for the nasty but dotty ground kisser in the Vatican to create saints every other day, surely Saint JFK should be a formality.

I suspect the reason he is not is not the nukes and plots thing—rather the sex thing.

Which when you think of it is a shame. After all, given the assortment of self flagellators, fanatics, fantasists and fascists who've gained the John Paul nod into sainthood, surely there should be room for one fornicator.

St John of Comealot might be apt!

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Greece November 1973



■ Three decades ago a revolt toppled Greek generals

Uprising that brought down a dictatorship

by **LEANDROS BOLARIS**

THE EARLY 1970s were years of mass social and political upheavals round the world. Great movements were on the march everywhere, or almost everywhere.

Greece seemed to be an exception, along with Spain and Portugal. A military dictatorship ruled Greece. Fascist regimes ran Spain and Portugal.

Then suddenly between 1973 and 1975 a crisis engulfed these repressive regimes. In the space of two years an eruption of mass movements swept away the fascists and the colonels.

It all started with the Polytechnic uprising 30 years ago in Athens in November 1973.

In 1967 a military junta overthrew the government in Greece and established a brutal regime of oppression.

Lyndon B Johnson, then US president, fighting an escalating war in Vietnam, found some time to send letters full of praise to Colonel Papadopoulos, the strongman of the regime.

Papadopoulos was the head of the military intelligence service and a longtime friend of the US. Most European governments remained silent.

The bosses welcomed the coup. Police agents took over the unions. Strikes were forbidden. Terror was the order of the day. Using these methods the colonels were able to keep wages low and guarantee rising profits.

For six long years nothing seemed to move. The 1967 coup was a heavy and demoralising defeat for the left and the

rising workers' and youth movement of the early 1960s.

In early 1973 there were signs that this gloomy period was near its end.

The first sparks came from the universities. Greek students were not immune to the wind of revolt that was blowing in every country of the world. It was much easier to discuss and exchange ideas inside the universities.

The Polytechnic uprising started as one more student protest. It was 15 November 1973 when a student demonstration some 500 strong entered the Polytechnic School in the heart of Athens.

Protesting

The students were protesting against the rigging of student elections by the regime and against police brutality.

For a few crucial hours the regime hesitated to unleash the police and its thugs against the students. That was enough time for the anger to explode. In less than 24 hours what started as a student protest became a general uprising against the regime.

Thousands of university students joined the occupation. Numbers gave them strength. The slogans they were chanting became more and more political and radical—"Down with the dictatorship", "US out", "General strike", "Smash capital" and "People, time for revolution".

They set up a "free radio station", a "people's clinic" for those wounded in the struggle, and a "people's canteen" to feed the protesters. Groups of students outside of the buildings were distributing leaflets to the crowds going home after work. The news of the occupation spread like wildfire in the working class districts and at schools. By noon next day thousands of workers and young people were there.

School students came in by the hundreds and then by the thousands. Building workers came in carrying a banner saying "People's power" and joined the occupation.

Small farmers from nearby came too.

They were angry against their land being taken from them for the benefit of a rich shipowner.

Bus drivers slowed down to allow the students to pass leaflets to the passengers and write graffiti. Early in the evening 300,000 people had taken over Athens city centre.

It was an open revolt. A workers' assembly issued a call for joint students' and workers' committees.

These were to go to the factories and building sites to organise a general political strike "for the overthrow of the US-inspired dictatorship and its pillars—local and foreign multinational companies".

The police were unable to smash the revolt. Instead of encircling the Polytechnic the cops found themselves surrounded by angry crowds.

Thousands of demonstrators tried to storm several public buildings, like the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Public Order.

The colonels panicked. In the early months of the same year they had made plans for a controlled "liberalisation" of the regime, a rotten compromise with most of the old politicians.

Traditional left leaderships had put their hopes in the "liberalisation process". The angry students and workers thought otherwise.

For decades the dominant force on the left had been the Communist Party. But in 1968 the party had split into two wings partly as a consequence of the 1967 defeat. Its crisis created the space for groups of a new radical left to emerge, mainly at the universities.

Spontaneous

The militants of these groups played a crucial role in the uprising.

Their argument inside the occupied Polytechnic was simple—maintain the occupation and escalate it to a full revolt against the junta.

The occupation had been a spontaneous action. But without the arguments

of the revolutionaries the forces of the old left would have destroyed the spirit of the revolt.

The old left argued in favour of a "coordinated retreat". When they lost this argument in the students' assemblies they tried to issue a call for a "government of national unity" with conservative politicians. They lost this argument too.

The colonels decided to answer the challenge of the uprising the only way they knew how—with brute force. In the late hours of 16 November tanks, armoured vehicles and elite army units started to move towards the city centre.

The police and their agents started to fire live ammunition at the demonstrators.

The workers and the students did not abandon the streets and their brothers and sisters inside the Polytechnic. They tried to stop the tanks with barricades and counter-attacks.

But that was impossible. A tank smashed through the central gate of the Polytechnic School at 3am on Saturday 17 November.

The military regime murdered dozens of students and workers inside the Polytechnic. The massacre continued through the night on the surrounding streets. Hundreds more were wounded. The uprising was quelled but the regime itself was mortally wounded.

The junta managed to survive for another eight months. The Polytechnic uprising was the beginning of its end.

Sections of the ruling class saw that to continue to support the colonels might lead to other confrontations like the Polytechnic-confrontations that the military might not win.

The military regime tried to resist these pressures by organising a coup to overthrow the government of Cyprus in July 1974 and win Cyprus for Greece.

The coup attempt provoked the Turkish military invasion of Cyprus.

The colonels thought that a "small victorious war" would build up their prestige and break their isolation.

But when they declared a general

mobilisation for war their regime came crashing down.

Thousands of reservists went to the barracks but the officers did not dare to distribute any weapons to them.

They were afraid that the young workers and students in uniform would turn the guns against them. No one wanted to die in a war for the prestige of the butchers of the Polytechnic.

That was the end of the junta. People took to the streets and a group of generals decided to hand over to a government of old politicians.

Mass Radicalisation

That was not the end of the movement. In the following months an eruption of mass radicalisation took place.

A wave of strikes swept workplaces as workers demanded trade union freedoms and wage rises. Factory workers went on strike, often clashing with the police outside the factory gates.

Mass anti-imperialist demos shook the country.

Hundreds of thousands joined the trade unions and created socialist parties and organisations.

There was a massive shift to the left in people's ideas and attitudes.

Regimes and governments that seem powerful can collapse under the blows of mass movements of workers and students. That is one of the main lessons of the Polytechnic uprising.

The power to change society and our lives lies in the collective action on the streets and in the workplaces.

Thirty years later the Polytechnic uprising still inspires a new generation of anti-capitalist and anti-war activists.

■ **Leandros Bolaris** is a journalist on Workers' Solidarity, Socialist Worker's sister paper in Greece, and the author of a book on the Greek Resistance, *The Lost Revolution*.

media

Murdoch keeps it in the family

by DAVID LYNCH

AN event took place in the world of international media last month that shed much light on the intrinsic workings of capitalism.

Rupert Murdoch the 72-year-old reactionary media baron who owns much of the right wing press in Britain, Australia, South Africa, Sky News in Britain and Fox News in the US, stepped down as CEO of BSkyB.

The Australian multi-millionaire is famous for his newspapers and other media outlets expressing his well-known right wing views. For many years his principal reactionary rag *The Sun* supported the Tories in Britain and led the attacks on single mothers, asylum seekers and trade unionists.

The Murdoch press has also been quick to attack socialism by arguing that the market economy was a meritocracy where those with ability could always rise to the top, no matter what their background.

But it seems that this is not the case in Murdoch's very own BSkyB Empire where his 30-year-old spoilt brat son James replaced Rupert Murdoch in the CEO job.

It was very much a case of 'keeping it in the family' and even a minority of shareholders rebelled against this blatant nepotism.

"I really have a problem with the internal affairs of one of the largest companies in the world being discussed over breakfast," said one angry shareholder.

But in the end Murdoch had enough support to hand over his powerful dynasty to his Ivy League educated son who did not even enter the world of media until the age of 27.

James is expected to be very much 'Daddy's Boy'. Carrying on his father's conservative political agenda and fervent support for the Bush Administration and its war in Iraq.

In his farewell speech Murdoch spoke lovingly about the 'objective and truthful' nature of his papers and TV companies. However in a series of interviews after the AGM he was much more honest about the connection between his own rotten politics and those expressed by his papers.

Without even pretending that his British papers had any independent editorial policies Murdoch threatened Tony Blair that *The Sun* could start supporting the Tories.

"We'll have to see how the Tory front bench looks, [if] it looked like a viable alternative government, which it hasn't so far."

But Murdoch also praised Blair for his invasion of Iraq.

"And we will not quickly forget the courage of Tony Blair in the international sphere in the last several months, so we may be torn in our decision. So let's wait and see."

Rarely has a media mogul been so honest about his own political bias.

Murdoch has basically threatened Blair that if he enters the euro or if he heeds the call of a majority of Labour Party members and pulls out of Iraq, the Murdoch press will switch its support to the Conservatives.

Prior to the General Elections in 1997 Tony Blair and New Labour attempted to love bomb *The Sun* in an effort to win that paper's support for Labour. In doing so Blair adopted many of the vicious policies that had made the Tory government so unpopular.

In the end *The Sun* famously declared that 'The Sun Backed Blair' although even Murdoch could not come around to saying that he backed Labour.

More recently Murdoch's Fox News Corporation in the US has become a by-word for the most strident pro-war and pro-George Bush coverage even within a media that was broadly supportive of the Iraq war.

The coronation of James Murdoch as CEO of BSkyB means that nothing much will change within the Murdoch Corporation. While his father has apparently stepped out of the limelight, the reactionary agenda that marked Rupert Murdoch's media will continue under his son's guidance.

The only way the left has of counteracting his power is by fighting it on every possible front. Not by bending over backwards and trying to accommodate the Murdoch agenda as Blair did in 1997.

book

A Children's Tale in Palestine

by KATE HARTNOLL

A LITTLE Piece of Ground is the new book by Elizabeth Laird, a children's writer with a difference.

Her previous children's novels include *Kiss of Dust* an exciting and intelligent fictional account of the experience of the oppressed Kurdish people. It won the Children's Book Award a few years ago.

A Little Piece of Ground also deals with the experience of an oppressed people: it is set in Ramallah, Palestine.

It tells the story of Karim, a twelve-year-old boy, his friends, and their efforts to turn a piece of wasteland into a football pitch.

However this simple story is charged by its setting against the background of the Israeli occupation.

This background is one of constant fear, casual violence and two week long curfews during which no one is allowed to leave their homes.

Elizabeth Laird has lived in the Middle East and knows it very well.

What comes across most strongly in her



■ Ramallah, ruined by Israeli attacks

book is the constant atmosphere of fear and oppression among ordinary Palestinians who do not have anything to do with the intifada at all.

At the start of the book, Karim writes a list of things he wants to be in his life. Like most ordinary twelve-year-old boys, he wants to be a champion football player and inventor of the

best computer game ever.

He also wants to be "Not shot in the back and stuck in a wheelchair for the rest of my life like that boy who used to go to our school".

The violence of the Israeli occupation is shown to be systematic and ever-present, not just isolated incidents of "revenge" as the Israeli

government likes to present it.

All Karim wants is an ordinary life—but this is shown to be impossible under the Israeli, or any other, occupation.

Laird also takes care to show the individual Israeli soldiers as human beings.

They are very young, afraid, and caught in a cycle of propaganda and violence.

However, she does not excuse their actions. Elizabeth Laird's skill lies in her ability to combine a good adventure story with politics in a way that is interesting and accessible.

This is a book for young adults who like football, like computer games and are beginning to be interested in the outside world.

film

The effect of war in pictures

by DAVID LYNCH

YOU have until Sunday 30 November to catch a very interesting exhibition at IMMA.

'Hidden' by the northern photographer Paul Seawright comprises 12 large format photographs, created in response to his recent travels in Afghanistan.

In June 2002, Seawright was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum, London, to travel to Afghanistan to investigate landscapes that had been contaminated with exploded mines and to create works in response to his experience.

His work is an excellent chronicle of a land brutalised by years of war and more recently the US led invasion.

His photographs are sparse and understated,



■ Seawright's picture of a trench with bombs in Afghanistan

ed, silent and depopulated, more concerned with the underlying causes of war than with the visible scars left behind.

Paul Seawright's visit to Afghanistan was made possible with assistance from Landmine Action, the HALO Trust and the United

Nations.

■ 'Hidden' Exhibition by Paul Seawright in Irish Museum of Modern Art.

HANLY REPORT WILL MEAN A&E CUTBACKS

'Hospital cuts will kill!'

By **KEVIN WINGFIELD**

ROAD accident victims and those who suffer heart attacks are likely to die as Accident and Emergency departments in local hospitals face swingeing cuts.

This follows the government's plans to implement the Hanly Report.

The key proposal in the report is to shut down accident and emergency departments in local hospitals and concentrate them in a small number of regional hospitals, often many miles from where people need attention.

Twenty thousand people demonstrated in November in Ennis against plans to shut the hospital's Accident and Emergency Department. And protest meetings gathered angry residents in Nenagh.

Now plans have been announced to co-ordinate a national campaign to oppose

the Hanly report's plans to concentrate A&E departments in a number of regional hospitals.

Such was the anger that Defence Minister Smith and a number of other Fianna Fail deputies broke ranks and came out against Hanly's provisions.

The Hanly report was claimed to be necessary to comply with an EU directive cutting hospital doctors working hours from the current 78 hours a week to a more reasonable 48 hours.

Reduction

The government plans to implement the plan in the Mid West and Eastern regions and then the rest of the country.

A&E Depts at Ennis and Nenagh will be shut down and all emergencies taken to Limerick.

In the Eastern region Loughlinstown's A&E will go as will St Michaels and cover will be concentrated in St. Vincents.

Dr Juliet Bressan, a GP,

told Socialist Worker, "This will mean a massive reduction in the healthcare provision for people in Ireland.

"If you close the local hospitals' A&E Departments, you make the overcrowding and queues in the big hospitals even worse.

"It's like taking away six

bus stops and making everyone queue at one—it makes the delays worse.

"It's really all about cutting back on health spending.

"The main effect is that in rural Ireland you are much more likely to die. If you have to travel 90 miles rather than ten to get emergency

care you have 80 more miles of sickness when something can go wrong.

Delay

"Children have a lot of accidents—burns, broken limbs, etc. A GP can't take an X Ray or treat a serious burn.

A child probably needs five or six X Rays before they're grown up. But if the hospital is hours away this will be a real issue. The longer you delay in treating burns the worse the outcome.

"Any illness that requires resuscitation—cot deaths, diabetic comas, drownings,

heart attacks—and these complaints are getting more common—any delay can be and often is fatal.

"In some parts of the country life expectancy will go down."

Irish hospitals are facing a worsening crisis. Dublin hospitals recently appealed for people not to go to casualty because they were snowed under.

There is a shortfall of 3,000 acute beds nationwide. This will be set to worsen with the downgrading and closure of local hospitals. Last year the government promised 709 new hospital beds. They provided less than half that number.

In some parts of the country up to one third of emergency calls for ambulances cannot be met within 20 minutes.

With longer journeys along bad rural roads to collect accident and emergency victims and take them to hospitals great distances away, more people will die before being attended to.

Paying more to wait longer

LOW PAID workers face increasing difficulties as hospital charges are set to increase to €45 for a visit to an A&E department, and €45 per night in hospital.

Refunds on prescribed drugs is also cut in the estimates, patients must now find €8 a month before they qualify.

About 30 percent of the population cannot afford VHI and do not qualify for a medical card under General

Medical Services scheme. In fact the proportion of the population covered by the medical card continues to fall and is now below 30 percent.

But Health Minister Michael Martin has refused to increase the number eligible for the scheme, despite a promise in the Programme for Government.

The government claims it is providing €700 million in increases to the health budget next year.

But most of this will be used to pay the overdue benchmarking awards to hospital workers.

Inflation

With medical inflation running at over 7% what is left will not stop the crisis getting worse.

Even civil service mandarin Michael Kelly at the Department of Health indicated that the health budget would need to rise by €900 million just to "stand still". Effectively health

provision will decline by €200 million therefore.

Over the past ten years tax on corporation profits have been slashed from over 40 percent to just 12.5 percent. If the rich and big business were made to pay their share there would be plenty to fund a decent health service.

Instead working class families will suffer worse health care and life-threatening delays to feed the profits of the millionaires.

Marxism 2003

Anti-capitalist weekend conference
28, 29, 30 November
Trinity College Dublin

MARXISM 03 is one of the foremost events for discussion and debate on the Irish left. It brings together speakers from the Irish and international movements against war and neo-liberalism.

INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS include **MIKE DAVIS**, US author of *City of Quartz*; **ALEX CALLINICOS**, Professor of Politics at York,

PLUS socialist speakers from the Middle East and Africa.

IRISH SPEAKERS include **EAMONN McCANN**, **IVANA BACIK**, **PATRICIA MCKENNA**, **RICHARD BOYD BARRETT**, **RONIT LENTIN** (CAMPAIGN AGAINST DEPORTATIONS) **ANDY STOREY** and many more...

Tickets €20 waged, €10 unwaged Phone 01-872 2682

Or send a cheque or postal order to Marxism 03 c/o P.O. Box 1648, Dublin 8

Timetable

FRIDAY 6.30-7.45 pm

- ★ Does the movement need political parties?—Rory Hearne
- ★ Strumpet City: James Connolly and 1913 lockout—David Lynch

FRIDAY 8.00-9.30 pm

- ★ Rally: Another World is possible: The New Resistance to Global Capital and War—Middle East socialist, Alex Callinicos, Brid Smith, Mike Davis

SATURDAY 10.00-11.15 am

- ★ The politics of Noam Chomsky—Sinead Kennedy
- ★ Cinema and radicalism: Film and social change—Roy Hassey
- ★ Franz Fanon and African nationalism—Willy Cumming

SATURDAY 11.45am-1.00 pm

- ★ Global warming, GM crops: How can we build a sustainable world?—Patricia McKenna, Owen McCormack
- ★ Blood and Oil: The real history of the Middle East—Dave Lordan
- ★ The body for sale: "Babes", backlash and the new sexism—Melisa Halpin
- ★ Leon Trotsky's Marxism—Mark Hewitt

SATURDAY 2.00-3.15 pm

- ★ Debate: Is national liberation possible in the modern world?—Eamonn McCann, Eoin O Broin (Sinn Fein)
- ★ Global & Local: Resisting the new privatisation agenda—Mick O'Reilly, Brid Smith, Debra McLoughlin, Dick Roche
- ★ Is the EU a progressive alternative to the US?—Andy Storey
- ★ Lenin: The state and revolution—Deirdre Cronin
- ★ Blues, Rock and Elvis—Shay Ryan

SATURDAY 3.45-5.00 pm

- ★ The movement of the imagination: Art and revolution—Mike Davis
- ★ The sickness of the Irish Health System—Dr Juliet Bressan
- ★ Unequal exchange: How can we make world trade fair?—Colin Roche (Oxfam Ireland), Helena McNeill
- ★ Women and Globalisation—Goretta Horgan
- ★ Why did the Russian revolution lose?—Sean Dunleavy

SATURDAY 7.00-9.00 pm

- ★ Can we defeat the US Empire?—Richard Boyd Barrett



- ★ Middle East socialist Revolutions and revolutionaries
- ★ Bush to Schwarzenegger: Can US workers revolt? Mike Davis
- ★ Drugs: Why is Ireland high?—Mary Smith
- ★ The writings and politics of George Orwell—Paul O'Brien
- ★ The communist Manifesto: Marx's critique of capitalism—Kevin Wingfield

SUNDAY 10.30-11.30 am

- ★ Ghandi, civil disobedience and resistance—Aoife Farrell
- ★ Robert Emmet and the 1803 rising—Pat O'Sullivan
- ★ The working class in the age of globalisation: Are they still a force for change?—Niall Smyth

SUNDAY 11.45 am-1.00 pm

- ★ Corporate power versus the people:—Can we stop capitalism destroying democracy?—Kieran Allen, Ivana Bacik
- ★ Global permanent war: A new era of Imperialism?—Donal Mac Fhearraigh
- ★ Gramsci and the Marxist theory of Ideology—Marnie Holborow
- ★ Third World Exploitation: who gains?—Luke Choto (Zimbabwean socialist)

SUNDAY 2.00-3.15 pm

- ★ Church, State and Child abuse—

Magdalen Memorial Committee speaker, Eoin O'Sullivan (author *Suffer little children*), Dr Peadar O'Grady

★ Apartheid wall and Israeli state terror: Can Palestine be free?—Dr Nazih al'Din (Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign), Ryan McKinney

★ The origins of women's oppression—Kate Packwood

★ Theories of globalisation—Joe Carolan

Is human nature a barrier to socialism?—James O'Toole

SUNDAY 3.30-4.45 pm

★ The future of Anti-capitalism—Alex Callinicos

★ Radical Islam and the fight for justice in the Middle East—Nuria Mustafa, Richard Boyd Barrett

★ Fortress Ireland: Immigration, asylum and globalisation—Barbara Muldoon, Ronit Lentin, Segun Nelson (Nigerian socialist)

★ Identity politics and gay liberation—Jo Tully

★ Life after Capitalism—How will socialism work?—Colm Bryce

SUNDAY 4.45-5.15 pm

★ Final Rally: Building a mass socialist party

Special offer ticket prices

€20 waged, €10 unwaged (Advanced booking)

Booking form

Name:

Address:

E-mail: Tel:

- I want ____ tickets to Marxism 2003
- I need accommodation in Dublin for the weekend (accommodation will be with Dublin SWP members)
- I need ____ places in the creche

Makes cheques / POs payable to *Socialist Worker* and post them to: *Marxism2003, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8. Tel: 01-872 2682*

Stop privatisation of council estates

COMMUNITY representatives from a number of inner city flat complexes met recently to discuss the selling off of public land to private developers with a net reduction of social housing.

The feeling is that social housing is under attack.

This is confirmed by a statement from Brendan Kenny, Assistant City Manager of Dublin City Council, with responsibility for housing who has stated that within the next 10 years Dublin City Council will not be responsible for providing social housing within Dublin city.

Council tenants in flat complexes, such as Fatima Mansions, St Michael's Estate, O'Devaney Gardens, St Judes facing regeneration are being forced to accept public private partnerships instead of receiving direct government funding.

Dividend

In order for a private developer to get their dividend from an investment into an estate, the number of social housing units has to decrease and the number of private units increase.

A stark example of this is in St Michael's Estate where a fabulous integrated plan developed in partnership between city council and the residents over the last two years was rejected by the Dept of the Environment because it was not 'Value for Money'.

This is a kick in the teeth to residents and community groups who put in time, effort and hope for a new community into the drawing up of these

plans. They are furious.

There is also a push to 'outsource' housing management companies.

This can be housing associations or even housing management companies. The city council is even encouraging an

American company—Jennison Corcoran—to look at housing management within the city.

The city council's practice of neglecting council estates has meant that alternative management may appear like a wel-

come opportunity.

But the real issue is profit—not genuine improvements.

Green space

Many inner city flat complexes have low density housing along with a

fair share of green space. In O'Devaney Gardens, the council wants to increase the number of housing units from the existing 276 to 700.

All of the new housing units will be private, of course.

Dublin City Council knows that the inner city flat complexes are on some of the most valuable land in Dublin City and now with the Luas being built many of them are lucrative sites and make fat killings for the profi-

teers.

The community representatives meeting decided to widen the alliance and contact all the flat complexes in Dublin and the surrounding region to oppose these developments.

Free the jailed bin tax protestors

PROTESTORS gathered outside the Dail at lunchtime on Friday 21 November.

They were demanding the

release of jailed bins tax protestors including John Murphy.

John Murphy, a retired CIE worker, was earlier taken from

Clover Hill prison and hospitalised following a heart attack in his cell.

John is 67 years old and has been an active trade unionist and community activist for

many years.

Bin tax activists fear the deterioration of his health is a result of the stress of being jailed.

Brid Smith, spokesperson

for the Dublin City Campaign Against the Bin Tax said: "Having spent two weeks in Mountjoy Womens Prison I can understand the stress and worry that John has experienced. He is not guilty of any crime and the pressure on his wife and family must have been of huge concern to him.

"The Department of Justice must take this situation seriously and order his immediate release."

Earlier in the week a lively demonstration had marched on Mountjoy jail where other bin tax protestors were jailed. Sixty residents from Cabra, the Navan Road and Dunard marched from Quarry road in Cabra to Mountjoy Prison in protest at the jailing of anti-bin tax protestors

Which way for bin campaign?

THE BIN Tax Campaign is holding a conference on December 6 to assess where it has to go from here.

It has already made many gains. Despite council threats, non-collection has largely been confined to private housing estates where the campaign is weak.

The council have not dared move against the big manual working class housing estates.

The main reason is that they know bin workers will not enforce non-collection when scores of people come out to protest.

The struggle so far has been fought to a stalemate—even though the Irish state has thrown its full weight of cruelty against the campaign.

In the immediate future, the campaign needs to keep up the resistance in local areas.

Shay Ryan, from Ringsend, for example, indicates how this can be done.

"We have twenty or thirty people who come out every morning when bin collections are due.

"If there is any attempt at non-collection they can call on many more.



■ The Bin Tax Campaign continues

"It is all down to good organisation at local level."

The campaign also needs to put pressure on local politicians who claim to stand up for left wing causes.

Mass meetings

They have reaped votes on the bin charges issue—and now it is pay back time.

There should be votes taken at mass meetings to call on Sinn Fein and Labour representatives to follow the path of Joe Higgins.

They should be told to commit themselves to their local communities by joining in mass pickets to enforce collection.

Based on their record in these struggles the campaign

should also make it clear that it will be supporting a platform of candidates in next year's local elections and in the Euro elections.

Mass meetings need to be called in each area to democratically give the endorsement to particular left wing candidates who have a record of struggle in their area.

Responded

Meanwhile the campaign continues. In Kilmore in north Dublin, campaigners responded to the introduction of non-collection. Residents organised to meet the bin truck and throw uncollected rubbish in the truck.

Dave Murphy, the UCD student currently in prison for taking part in peaceful protests against the bin tax has been elected to the UCD Academic Council.

Murphy topped the student poll by some distance in the elections for student seats on University College Dublin's Academic Council. The Student Union has backed a campaign to free him.

Oxigen fight for union rights

OXIGEN workers are still on strike to demand union recognition.

Oxigen has the contract to collect Green Bins with Dublin City Council.

Over fifty workers,

members of SIPTU, have been on strike for two months to demand union rights at the anti-union firm. The strikers have faced intimidation and dirty tricks from Oxigen management.

The SIPTU members are picketing the company

depots in Clonshaugh, Cookstown and the Robin Hood Road.

Harassment

One striker told *Socialist Worker*, "We getting harassment on the picket line. Management are photographing us and accusing

us of intimidation, but the reality is it is they that are using the intimidation tactics.

"We have to win this strike. If we don't non-union companies like Oxigen will be getting the contracts for all the council services and residents will face more local charges.

"The Association of Combined Residents Associations (ACRA) have come out in our support. We are calling on everyone to stop recycling their waste and stop using the Green Bins while the dispute continues.

"Strikers have been taking a petition about this

door-to-door to get residents on our side.

"The strikers are 100 percent strong and determined to see this out although money is getting tight at this stage.

"We understand council workers are planning further sympathy action in the near future and this is very

welcome."

Get the word out to your neighbours and workmates: Don't use the Green Bin.

Take up a collection in your workplace or union branch and send a message of support to the picket lines or post to Oxigen strike, c/o Paul Smith, Liberty Hall Dublin 2

Socialist Worker

inside:

*Shop Electric exposes
privatisation fraud —*

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*Eamonn McCann on
Poverty kills —PAGE FOUR*

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CIVIL SERVANTS DEMAND PAY

Build the rank and file

"They've only been out for five days. We were out for 16 days and they achieved more in those days than we did spread out over five months."

That was the reaction of a firefighter after the recent postal workers victory.

The reason postal workers were able to respond so quickly to attacks by Royal Mail management and then to spread the action was because there existed a network of activists.

Many were grouped around a rank and file newspaper, *Post Worker*.

NIPSA activists need to think seriously about how we ensure that firstly, we win this strike and secondly, we make sure that the NIPSA leadership know that they can't accept any old deal.

We need to challenge the accepted practice that a one day strike every couple of weeks is effective, this gives management too much time to prepare and only results in protracted disputes.

As with the firefighters, it also means we are more likely to lose. We need a much harder and faster strikes.

The only way we can begin to do any of this is to build a network of committed activists who want to challenge outdated methods that were suited to the limits of the 80's but are outdated in the context of today's world where workers are prepared to stand up to imperialism by walking off the job as seen in the anti-war movement.

A rank and file network is controlled by ordinary members, not full time officials. It is centred on real struggle rather than union elections.

We need to start building this now to meet the challenges of the future.

TWENTY THOUSAND members of the north's largest trade union are preparing to take to the picket lines after voting to strike over a derisory 3.67% pay offer.

The ballot result comes on the back of an insulting pay offer of 3.67%.

The pay 'rise' consists mainly of an annual progression increase that civil servants were entitled to receive automatically from April 1st this year, management are refusing to pay out this money, instead they are using it as part of this year's deal.

The pay offer gives workers no increase in rates of pay from 1st April 2003.

It is effectively a 0% pay offer with no 'cost of living' increase. In fact it represents a real cut in pay given that workers have already lost 1% in additional national insurance contributions and inflation is running at almost 3%.

At this rate civil servants are the ones who need benefit advice!

Parity

When NIPSA recently met the government minister responsible for public service pay, Blairite Ian Pearson, he refused to increase the offer, indeed he threatened them with the implementation of regional pay.

That would mean an end to parity of pay with the Home Civil Service, instead rates of pay would be in line

with those in the private sector, the gap between public and private sector pay in the north is 24%. That could mean years of pay freezes.

The pay offer sticks in the throat of civil servants for more than one reason.

It took five months for Civil Service managers to even discuss NIPSA's pay claim.

However in July Senior Civil Servants received pay increases from April 1st of between 4% and 9% at an overall cost on the pay bill of 5.3%.

They all received bonuses of up to £6,000. These bonuses are the fruits of the labour of lowly paid civil servants.

The government plans to cut civil service pay and if the NIPSA strike vote had been lost they would have torn up their terms and conditions.

An earlier pay offer was conditional on the acceptance of 'reforms'.

In reality these reforms are no different to the Bain report which was



■ NIPSA members protesting against Private Finance

packaged as modernisation in the Fire Service.

Everything that workers in the civil service have gained in the past 30 years will disappear in the name of a more 'flexible' workforce.

Contrary to the stereotypical

image, civil servants are low paid workers suffering rotten conditions. Many civil servants are forced to take up second jobs and rely on Working Families Tax Credit.

This has now translated into a mood for action.

GIVE BLAIR A BLOODY NOSE!

ON THE day that NIPSA announced the result of their strike ballot, British public sector union, PCS, began balloting 290,000 civil servants after receiving a similarly derisory offer to NIPSA.

Only last week the government decided to effectually 'impose' a settlement on them.

This was clearly an attempt to influence the ballot, especially by offering the carrot that civil servants would receive their back pay before Christmas.

However their members will be only too aware of the intentions of their colleagues in N.Ireland.

The impact of a strike by PCS and NIPSA members across the civil service would be huge and there is every likelihood that workers could be walking out on the same days.

Such a massive strike would put even more pressure on a government already shaken by

the determination of postal workers and firefighters who recently walked out on unofficial 'wild-cat' actions.

This combined with the huge protests against Bush's visit and the ever increasing resistance in Iraq will seriously worry Blair.