

UNITY

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Changes at the top

GORDON BROWN is now Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at last, taking over from Tony Blair. But the question is will he be any difficult?

Mr Brown as Chancellor steamrollered through the neoliberal policies that have destroyed over a million manufacturing jobs, ripped the heart out of civil and public services and lost the exchequer billions because of his obsessive commitment to private finance initiatives.

Gordon Brown has never given any indication that his political approach will be markedly different from that of Tony Blair.

Indeed he has lost no opportunity to confirm his commitment to the private sector and is never happier than when addressing business people.

A few days before becoming Prime Minister Mr Brown said in a Mansion House speech to an audience of City financiers: "In future, every single secondary school and primary school should have a business partner," inviting his rich audience to jump in and fill their boots.

Although Mr Brown used the term "participate" no-one is daft enough to believe that the motive

By James Stewart

force of private sector companies is altruism.

Mr Brown is simply going one step further than his "city academy in every town" new Labour predecessor to demand that business should call the shots throughout the state education system.

Instead of holding the carrot of rich pickings to his Mansion House audience Mr Brown would have been far better off having in-depth discussions with teachers' unions.

Since taking office he has announced that there will be more open government under his leadership and an increased role for Parliament.

Time will tell whether Gordon Brown is prepared to take measures which will increase the power of the working class and its organised trade union movement as opposed to following the Blair line of pandering to, and working for, the interests of Big Business.

If he is to work in the interests of Labour then he must remove the anti-trade union legislation which was imposed on the trade unions under Margaret Thatcher's hard-line right-wing Tory regime.

With the change in Prime Minister at Westminster a change has been made to the office of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland - Peter Hain goes and is replaced by ex-Tory Shaun Woodward.

With the Executive and Assembly in place and working, the Brown government is reducing the personnel in the Northern Ireland Office, preparing the way for its eventual phasing out when the powers over police, law courts and the legal system as a whole is devolved to the Assembly in 2008.

Prior to the agreement of power-sharing between the DUP and Sinn Fein, Peter Robinson DUP Deputy leader stated that it would be decades before the DUP agreed to devolution on policing and the law.

Now that his party has agreed to share power with Sinn Fein there is no justification for them to retain such a stance.

After all is Peter Robinson saying that Northern Ireland's elected representatives cannot be trusted or are incapable of overseeing basic human rights.

If he is then he is insulting not only his fellow MLAs but the electoral at large.

Editorial

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Remove these injustices

BRITISH Prime Minister Gordon Brown told the House of Commons that he did not accept that events in Iraq and Afghanistan could have any possible link with the attempted car bombings in London or the Glasgow airport incendiary attack.

Mr Brown urged the public to "continue living their lives as normal" and pledged, "Everything is being done in our power...to protect people's lives."

To pretend that life in these circumstances is "normal" is nonsense, unless you believe that having a government which invades and oppresses other countries at will, provoking attacks by any means that the oppressed and their supporters can dream up, is normal.

However that abnormal state of events is rapidly becoming the norm in new Labour's Britain.

Mr Brown claims: "Irrespective of Iraq, irrespective of what is happening in different part of the world, we have an international organisation trying to inflict the maximum damage on civilian life..."

It would appear that Prime Minister Brown has the same tenacious grasp on reality as his predecessor Tony Blair.

If Mr Brown really wants to do everything in his power to protect people's lives, his first approach should be to look at the real world that we live in and identify the source of the problem.

The source of the problem is injustice. Injustice to the Palestinians who are living in Gaza in what amounts to the largest concentration camp in the world, while the British government supports the unbridled depredations of Israel, and economic boycott for the crime of having elected a government that the US didn't approve of.

Also injustice to the Iraqis, who have suffered invasion, blitzkrieg and mass murder for the crime of not having weapons of mass destruction and who continue to suffer occupation for the sole reason that the US and Britain covet their oil.

Further, injustice to the Afghans, who have suffered similarly for the crime of once having had aspirations to socialism, having the Taliban imposed on them and then removed, both as a result of the CIA manipulation, and not accepting the role of a US puppet.

Remove those injustices and the phony war with terror will become an unpleasant memory, not a present reality.

Unity Summer Break

Unity is taking a three week summer break

We will be back with you as usual on the weekend Saturday 4 August



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Postal workers protest about proposed closures

POSTAL WORKERS throughout the UK took strike action last Friday and this Monday.

According to the union over 95 per cent of workers throughout the UK took part in the the strike last Friday, which was at sorting offices, mail centres and crown post offices.

This was the first national post strike for 11 years, and the issue is over plans to hive off 85 post offices to WH Smith, which would lead to 1,500 job losses, pay cuts of £5,000-£6,000 for the majority of workers over three years, withdrawal of Saturday working allowances worth £1,000 a year and pensions cuts of thousands of pounds. Picket lines was the scene of the day both on Friday and Monday.

Andy Furey, national officer of the Communication Workers

Union stressed that members had been left with no alternative but to take strike action as "management are steamrolling ahead with closures of crown post offices across the UK.

"The plans announced by Post Office Limited will have an extremely negative impact, not just on postal workers but also for the general public."

CWU general secretary Billy Hayes stated: "WH Smith is not interested in the postal service. It is just about using it to get people into the shops to sell them stationery.

"The public will see through this ruse as a vain attempt to bolster a struggling business."

The CWU has called on Post Office Limited to return to negotiations with an improved offer on pay and job security or they warn that further strike action is on the cards.

ICTU calls on Stormont to adapt European Rights Charter

PETER BUNTING, Assistant General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions called on the Northern Assembly and Executive to by-pass the British Government's opt-out from the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Mr Bunting made this demand on Wednesday this week while opening the Northern Ireland debate at the 2007 Biennial Delegate Conference in Bundoran, Co Donegal. He told over 800 delegates, representing almost one million workers in both North and South, that it is simply unacceptable for workers in Northern Ireland to be denied the same protection as workers in the Republic of Ireland:

"Why should a central government in Westminster have the gall to draw a 'red line' around the Charter of Fundamental Rights? What nerve does it take to tell the working class of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland that they must be second class bearers of the EU passport? What cowardice is shown by this kow-towing to the unelected barons of a largely foreign owned press?

"Here is a proposal for the Assemblies of Northern Ireland and Wales and the Parliament of Scotland. If Gordon Brown won't allow the Charter to enter through a vote at Westminster, let our local and accountable democracies act as the back door. Let our Assemblies vote for every dot and comma of the Charter, including and especially Article 28:

"Workers have the right to take collective action to defend their interests, including strike action."

"We in Northern Ireland are still, almost a decade after the Agreement of Easter 1998, discussing a Bill of Rights. Time's up! Get on with it and include bold, honest and meaningful provisions like Article 28."

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Justice needed

RELATIVES of Pat Finucane and the five people killed in Sean Graham's betting shop on the Ormeau Road in February 1992 were handed letters from the Public Prosecution service (PPS). They were left to read that the PPS were not going to prosecute anyone in these cases where there appeared to be strong evidence.

The families of those killed in the Ormeau Road attack were also informed that it was the RUC who supplied the gun that killed their loved ones.

The statement revealed, that the loyalist William Stobie a Special Branch agent, handed guns over to his police handlers in in 1989.

The UDA went on to use one of these guns a 9mm pistol. in the killing of Aidan Wallace, on December 1991. UDA/UFF gunmen opened fire inside the crowded bar on Sunday lunchtime.

By Pearse McKenna

The killer walked from table to table with the 9mm weapon outstretched.

Aidan Wallace was shot twice in the back of the head from a range of nine inches. The same gun was used in the attack on the bookie's three months later, killing five people.

The PPS said while the identity of the constable who handed the weapons back to the UDA was known, he will not be prosecuted.

Excuse unacceptable at Nuremberg

An excuse was used which was unacceptable at Nuremberg but acceptable to the North's PPS.

"He was only following orders from superior officers who could not be identified," was the reason given not to prosecute.

★ **Belfast Central** ★
★ **Branch** ★
★ **Meeting** ★
★ **Wednesday 8** ★
★ **August 5.30pm** ★
★ **CPI Premises** ★

Investigations into collusion between the RUC and loyalists was carried out at a cost of £20 million by John Stevens an experienced senior policeman for 18 years.

This in spite of the lack of cooperation from RUC members, and a questionable fire at his office.

The Stevens investigation revealed they had found hard evidence of collusion between the security forces and loyalist murderers.

John Stevens said he could only publish a fraction of his findings but that he had submitted more than 20 files to the PPS.

There have been no legal proceedings taken by the PPS in any of these 20 cases.

The Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan office's investigation into the murder of Robert Mc Cord found that the state had colluded with loyalists in this murder.

Relatives of those murdered are being asked to accept that the state colluded in murder, but in the interests of peace, they must move on and let justice go.

During the negotiations of the current peace process people were promised a peace with justice, they have got the peace now they need justice.

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60 000 at the UZ-Festival

A league of its own

By Hermann Glaser-Baur

THE weather had been chaotic all week and the 200 strong collective of helpers from all over Germany and beyond was forced to work extra shifts and got soaked to the skin countless times.

It took Communist fighting spirit to get there.

By Friday afternoon the Revierpark was ready for the occasion: 6 kilometres of coloured lights, 15 stages, hundreds of stalls, 11 huge marquees, and the "biggest book-shop in Europe" – all up to accommodate the crowd.

The worrying question "will they come" soon answered itself.

By the time the Irish contingent arrived from Paderborn airport the park was absolutely mobbed and none of the cloud-bursts during the weekend was able to change that.

60 000 (police-figures which are not known to be given in our favour) turned out to celebrate with the Communists and their paper and the atmosphere was "electric" at all corners of the festival grounds.

Space here allows for little more than a bare mentioning of the absolute highlights.

One of them was certainly the "Clearwater Walkabout Chorus" (USA).

Founded by Pete Seeger in 1984 the fabulous 15 piece choir performed 8 times during the festival, each gig was packed.

Though Pete, now 87,

doesn't do the big tours with them anymore, they carry on his, message of a better, more peaceful, a socialist world.

The only people who had problems with them were sound engineers and MCs.

Due to the never ending "more, more".... they upset the schedule on every stage they played at, at one gig "we shall overcome" lasted 15 minutes – the crowd just kept on singing.

Konstantin Wecker has been Germany's no 1 songwriter for a good few years now. His concert on Saturday evening drew a crowd of 15 000.

When he left the stage after two hours of playing and singing without a break his comment "...I've been at many gigs in my life but this here is in a league of its own..." was far from being a sweet-talking exercise.

Rock against fascism

Microphone Mafia and Cologne rock band Brings delivered an outstanding "rock against fascism" concert and Israeli multi instrumentalist Gillard Azmon set the highlight in jazz.

Working class songs have always been at the heart of the festival and you got them all over the place: Rotdorn (Hamburg), Achim Bigus (Osnabrueck) and of course "our own" Song Club Ernesto Che Guevara from Dresden. Their special gig at the Irish stall

Saturday afternoon drew such a

big crowd outside the tent that all "traffic" on the main path through the park came to a halt. Nobody minded, why walk on when the crack is good, stand and join in.

More debates, more public lectures, more arguments (often controversial but always in an atmosphere of great solidarity), more readings from new books gave proof of the large and growing interest in the Communists' answers to the burning questions of these times.

Usually the marquees weren't big enough to hold the crowds.

The "international club" runs alongside the festival. It is an exchange between Communist parties and this time 25 sister parties followed the invitation of the DKP.

Marion Baur, the CPI representative at the festival will give an overview and reports on some of the discussions in the next few editions of *Unity* after the summer break.

I am not known to end a report with a quote from a bourgeois paper but here is the exception:

The *Westphaelische Rundschau* carried a front page article on the Monday following the festival saying "...during a weekend of cancellations and wash outs the Communists remained unimpressed by the weather and put up a massive festival. It makes one wonder how they can do it..."

Some day they will understand what solidarity, iron-discipline and Communist-spirit can achieve.

Mind you the day they will admit that will be the day after the paper has been turned into a Communist one.

Interview with Comrade Salam Ali, member of the Central Committee, about the 8th National Congress of the Iraqi Communist Party (Published in "Nameh Mardom", the central organ of the Tudeh Party - Iran, on 9 June 2007, No. 766) [continued from 23.6.07 issue of Unity]

What are your plans as regards the continuation and extent of your participation in various levels of the government?

How does the general public, women, youth, labour, etc view and evaluate your work in the parliament and in the government?

The Political Report endorsed by the 8th Congress dealt with the party's stance on the need to set up a national unity government following the elections in December 2005, and its evaluation of the government that was eventually set up, about one year ago, led by Nouri al-Maleki.

Its formation, which took several months of tortuous negotiations, was influenced by the climate of sectarian polarization and the policy of ethnic-sectarian quota, especially in allocating the so-called "sovereign" ministerial posts.

The Iraqi National List, a secular democratic and liberal electoral coalition, joined the government and was given four ministerial posts, including one held by our party.

Although its program was generally good and endorsed by parliament, the government inherited a heavy legacy from previous governments, in addition to working under abnormal and extraordinary conditions with organised terrorism, rampant corruption, and fervent attempts to sabotage its efforts.

While expressing its support for government policies and measures

that would serve the people's interests and satisfy their needs and demands, the Communist Party has been openly critical of the government failures and shortcomings.

The 8th Congress called on the government to take urgent action to fulfil its promises and implement its programme, especially regarding security, national reconciliation, disbanding the militias, providing basic services, reviving the economy, and combating corruption.

Bold and firm action are urgently needed to rid the political process of sectarian tendencies and ensure broader involvement of its participants in the decision-making process.

The next few months will therefore be crucial for the present government and its performance.

The party's participation and role, both in parliament and government, has so far been a generally positive experience, complementing its work on other levels and among the people, defending their interests.

The party's principled positions in both institutions, followed by broad sections of the population through the media, have contributed to enhancing its national status as a unifying patriotic force, that is praised for its honesty and integrity, and untainted with sectarianism, bigotry, violence, narrow political calculations or corruption.

How did the congress evaluated the calls for the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq and various timetables suggested for such withdrawal? Do you think US exit will help peace in Iraq or will exacerbate the violence in Iraq? Does US care for peace and stabilization of Iraq? What

domestic political forces are favoured by the US?

The 8th Congress stressed the crucial importance of a successful conclusion of the on-going political process for providing favourable conditions and necessary prerequisites for ending the occupation and foreign military presence.

It also endorsed the party policy that calls on the government to draw up a timetable for achieving this task, exercise its sovereign right and prevent further violations being committed by foreign forces, regain full control over the country's resources and their use in accordance with the country's needs and priorities, and finally regain full national sovereignty.

One of the most important prerequisites for regaining national sovereignty is taking control of security, running it in accordance with the priorities dictated by national interest.

As pointed out by the Congress political report, security has to be dealt with as an integral part of a chain of economic, social, political, military and media measures, that altogether contribute to eradicating the sources of terrorism and help to improve the security situation.

"There is no doubt that achieving progress on these levels will allow clear agenda to be set for the departure of foreign forces, and create the material and political prerequisites for that."

The two comrades representing our party in the Iraqi parliament have recently signed a memorandum calling for a timetable for the withdrawal of occupation forces.

There is broad consensus among

8th. National Congress of the Iraqi Communist Party

Iraqi political forces in support of such a timetable that would be closely linked to providing the necessary political and security conditions.

The party supports an open debate of this issue in the parliament, with the aim of achieving a national consensus and formulating a concrete policy in this respect, guided first and foremost by Iraq's national agenda.

Such a step will help to foil attempts to maintain an open-ended foreign military presence by the US and its allies to serve their own agenda.

How did the congress evaluated the role of Iraq's neighboring countries (especially Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria) in the stabilization or destabilization of Iraq? How significant is their influence on the internal developments in Iraq? Are they helping or hindering the efforts of the Iraqi people to regain the country's full sovereignty?

The Party Congress, in its analysis of the factors contributing to the complex situation in Iraq, drew attention to the role of the external factor, including regional interference.

Its report said that "our country has turned into an arena of a vicious struggle, where regional and international interests and strategies intersect and clash, interacting with the internal situation, and acting against the interests of Iraqi people and their aspiration to restore security and stability, regain sovereignty over their territory and wealth, achieve the democratic alternative and speed up the process of comprehensive reconstruction".

It is quite clear that some regional players have been waging their own proxy war with the US, or their regional rivals, on Iraqi territory, to serve their own national security interests or regional ambitions.

Non-Iraqi terrorist groups, whose agenda and objectives have nothing to do with Iraq and the interests of its people, have been used as convenient tools for this purpose.

Remnants and supporters of Saddam's regime, as well as extremist Islamist groups, have also received vital external backing to destabilise and sabotage the political process.

The principal victim has been the Iraqi people, who continue to pay a heavy price with tens of innocent civilians, including women and children, being massacred every day.

The criminal perpetrators of these heinous acts must be unequivocally condemned, and their hollow anti-occupation claims be exposed.

External interference, through backing rival political groups, manipulating sectarian divisions and stirring up sectarianism, has also had a detrimental effect on efforts to achieve Iraqi national reconciliation. In addition, shifting regional alignments are strongly influenced by the US policy in the area and designs for imposing its hegemony in the area.

The recent Sharm el-Sheikh Meeting on Iraq has highlighted mounting concern among its neighbours about the potential consequences of continued instability and terrorist violence in Iraq for their own stability.

It remains to be seen whether the resolutions and recommendations taken at that meeting will be seriously acted upon.

Were there any international delegations present at the congress? What has been the level of international solidarity from CPs and Workers Parties and cooperation with the Iraqi CP?

How did the congress evaluated this aspect of your efforts?

It was unfortunately not possible to invite international delegations to the 8th National Congress due to the difficult security situation in Baghdad. But several messages of greeting were received after the Congress began its deliberations, and the internationalist sentiments of solidarity that they expressed with Iraqi communists, democrats and people, were warmly received by the delegates.

These included messages from the Tudeh Party - Iran and CPUSA. Many messages have now been received from fraternal parties, including CPs of Vietnam, France, Britain, AKEL - Cyprus, Bohemia and Moravia, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Finland, Hungary, Left-democratic Socialist of Germany, Workers Party of Ireland, CP of Jordan, Progressive Democratic Platform - Bahrain. A congratulation message was also received from the Chinese ambassador in Baghdad.

The Political Report endorsed by the Congress stressed the importance of further developing international solidarity with the Iraqi people and democratic forces.

It said: "In this transitional stage, as contradictions and struggle intensify over the future course of development, it is essential, more than ever before, to secure the multifarious international solidarity of peace-loving, progressive, democratic, socialist and communist forces with the Iraqi patriotic and democratic forces, in their struggle to foil attempts to sabotage the political process and push the country into chaos and internal fighting, and to enable the Iraqi people to achieve a speedy end to foreign military presence, open up prospects of democratic development for Iraq, and enable its people to decide their political future and social system in accordance with their free will."

MEDIA REVIEW

Drang nach Osten !

US style

REMEMBER Kosovo, well George Bush certainly does but whether he can point it out on a map is another question.

A couple of weeks ago an article appeared in the *Guardian* in which the author stated that Bush had met with the Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi and declared that it was time to bring the issue of Kosovan independence "to a head."

As the writer of the article said, "In other words, Kosovo should become independent without the approval of the UN security council."

He added that, "now the emperor has spoken, is there really any point discussing the future of the disputed Serbian province any further?"

"Well yes, actually, there is" was the writer's response.

He went on to state that what is at stake is not just the illegal seizure from Serbia of the cradle of its national history and the "rewarding" of the campaign of violence by the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army - KLA - which resulted in 200,000 non-Albanians fleeing or being driven out of the area since 1999.

The question has to be raised as to whether - in the writer's words - "one dangerous and globally lawless state, the US of George Bush, has the right to redraw the map of the world in any way it chooses."

He makes the point that the in-

dependence that Bush is on about needs to be put in inverted commas as the Kosovo the US has in mind will be no more independent than Iraq or Afghanistan.

Certainly Bush's stance is not out of any concern for Kosovan Albanians or for any "passionate belief in self-determination."

He contrasts this attitude to Kosovo with the position of pro-Russian breakaway provinces in Georgia and Moldova, "whose claims for statehood they - the US - regularly dismiss."

The writer makes the claim that this is the "final stage" in the West's "strategic concept" i.e. the destruction of this "genuinely independent" Yugoslavia and its replacement with a series of "weak and divided World Bank - Nato protectorates."

The writer accepts that many people will support independence for Kosovo "on the simple grounds of self-determination" and that roughly 90 per cent of Kosovans desire separation from Serbia, but having said that there is the central concern of the rights of the non-Albanian population. The Minority Rights Group is quoted in its assessment of the situation where it states "nowhere is there such a level of fear for so many minorities that they will be harassed simply for who they are...nowhere else in Europe is it at such a high risk of ethnic cleansing occurring in

the near future - or even a risk of genocide." As the writer states, "this hardly impress confidence in the future."

Of course there is the knock-on effect as Albanian separatists in Montenegro and Macedonia will be encouraged by this development.

Serbia itself could face further disintegration as Albanians living in the south of the country are "keen" to be included in a "new" Kosovo and the Hungarian minority living in the area of Vozvodina is likely to intensify its demand for self-determination.

Of course the "liberation" of Kosovo has meant rich pickings for US companies with the privatisation of former socially owned assets.

Serbia is being supported by Russia with which it has strong historical links and the writer makes the point that the tide is turning, quoting the US support for another "colour coded" revolution in Belarus that "backfired spectacularly."

Also that Russia is increasingly challenging the US version of the nazi Drang Nach Osten - march to the east.

George Bush should take a look at his own country's history of the Civil War which was fought because the southern states seceded from the union.

Having said that, he comes from Texas, one of those very states.

As an aside it says a lot about the President of the most powerful country in the world when latest figures show that more Americans, in percentage terms, believe that Elvis Presley is alive than approve of Bush.

W. Owl

Taking a Look at Life.....by Raymond O'Connell

All change !

SUMMER is here. 'A' levels have been consigned to history - well until the evil day of reckoning in August.

Number Two is doing what seems the trend after 'A' levels and is going to Majorca with a large number of people from the same school.

It was sold to them with a promise of sun, sea, sand, sangria and sex - don't you just love the alliteration !

His beloved will also be there.

Meanwhile No 1 is heading for South America for the month of August with his beloved - that is if he can still afford to go after paying for all the jabs he

has to get and pills he needs to take with him.

So, the Boss and I have to make our weary and lonely way to France without them - to coin a phrase, to lose one son seems fortunate, but to lose two seems downright bliss !

At the end of summer No 1 will be going to live in Wales as he is returning to university.

Unfortunately, though No 2 is planning to live at home and go to QUB - results permitting.

I had always told him he could go and live in the Holyland and cause trouble like the rest of them - but given the hike in fees to over £3,000 a year, we

have been persuaded that the financial savings involved will fully compensate for having a real live student chez nous.

This remains to be seen.

We have contemplated changing the locks when No 1 departs or even doing what some other people have (apparently) done while their offspring was away - move house without leaving any forwarding address !

All this sounds a bit callous I suppose to people of a soppy disposition, but given present circumstances and the cost of housing or renting, the present generation of students and twenty somethings could be living at home for a long, long, long time.

And it's too cosy.

My generation, in general couldn't wait to break free.

Now it's equally likely to be the parents.

UNITY

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Japanese minister defends US atomic bombings

JAPANESE Prime Minister Shinzo Abe rejected calls to sack Defence Minister Fumio Kyuma last weekend after Mr Kyuma claimed that the US atomic bombings of Japan at the end of the second world war had been inevitable.

Mr Abe also said that he had no plans to seek an apology from the US over the nuclear atrocities.

Mr Kyuma came under fire last Saturday after he said: "I understand that the bombing ended the war and I think that it couldn't be helped."

He apologised the next day after bitter criticism from survivors of the bombs and from opposition and ruling-party legislators.

"I am sorry if my comments gave the impression that I do not respect the victims," Mr Kyuma told a news conference in his home city of Nagasaki.

"I will refrain from making such comments."

The US atomic bombings of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and Nagasaki three days later massacred more than 210,000 people.

Thousands of survivors still suffer from radiation-linked illnesses such as

liver cancer and leukaemia.

A-bomb survivors' group Nihon Hidankyo secretary-general Terumi Tanaka condemned Mr Kyuma's remarks as "nothing but verbal abuse. We demand the Minister retract his comments immediately."

The opposition Social Democratic Party called for the defence minister's removal from office.

But Mr Abe said he had no plans to dismiss Mr Kyuma.

"As a Nagasaki native and as the defence minister, he needs to continue to show his leadership towards nuclear abolishment," Mr Abe said.

The defence minister claimed that his comments had been misinterpreted.

He had meant to say the bombing "could not be helped from the American point of view," Mr. Kyuma said.

But opposition Democratic Party of Japan leader Ichiro Ozawa accused Mr Kyma of defending the US view of the attacks - that they expedited Japan's surrender - and called his comment "dishonourable and inappropriate as the defence minister.

Brazil: landless workers weigh in on biofuels

THE Fifth Congress of Brazil's Rural Workers Without Land, the MST ended last month with a march through Brasilia protesting about transnational land grabs and mining privatisation.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's push for using sugarcane ethanol for fuel occupied many of the sessions over five days.

Speakers warned against "big capitalism" taking over biofuel production, saying the interests of small farmers need to be taken into account.

The 18,000 delegates passed a resolution condemning new legislation that promotes large-scale eucalyptus monoculture, saying it would remove food-producing land from cultivation.

In a message, Cuban President Fidel Castro praised the MST as "combative," well-organised and "profound in its thinking."

He greeted a new MST school - founded in cooperation with Via Campesina, a worldwide social movement - for training environmental agronomists, and pointed out that 80 MST students are studying at Cuba's Latin American School of Medicine.

Some facts about Cuba



Cuban women know their place

IN Cuba, a mother or father can either opt to return to work or remain at home until their baby is one year old, and can avail of very low-cost day-care facilities.

This law also covers an absence of up to six months from work, without adverse consequence, for either parent should one of their children under the age of sixteen become ill.

Such a law is important in a country such as Cuba, where women are:

- * 66 per cent of all technicians and professionals,
- * 62 per cent of university graduates,
- * 49 per cent of judges, and
- * 36 per cent of the members of the National Assembly,
- * 33 per cent of all those at managerial level,
- * 18 per cent of the heads of Cuban ministries,
- * 23 per cent of deputy ministers,
- * 61 per cent of Cuba's lawyers,
- * 44 per cent of the workforce in the state and civil sector,
- * 47 per cent of Supreme Court judges.

All receive equal pay for equal work. Access to education and health services, including sexual and reproductive health, is universal and free. Abortion is free on demand.

Women's life expectancy in Cuba is 78 years, maternal mortality is below 6 per 1,000 live births (the lowest in Latin America, and better than many areas of the United States).

Life expectancy among top thirty

Cuba is among the top thirty countries in the world for life expectancy, according to statistics released at an international seminar in Havana on care of the elderly.

Included in the countries with the longest life expectancy are Japan (81.6 years), Sweden (80.1 years), Spain and Australia (over 79), New Zealand and Costa Rica (over 78), the United States (77.1) and Cuba and seventeen other countries (77).

Enrique Vega, a regional consultant on aging and health with the Pan-American Health Organisation, spoke of the commitment of the Cuban government, which puts great emphasis on human development.

He said Cuba has accomplished marvels with its diverse schemes for the elderly, who are an estimated 16 per cent of the population.

Cuba protects HIV-AIDS patients' labour rights

CUBA guarantees employment, job protection and medical assistance to people living with HIV-AIDS as a state policy that give priority to human development, and more than 90 per cent of those affected by the disease in Cuba have a job.

Cuba also maintains a co-ordinated prevention campaign, involving all relevant government institutions and organisations.

The legislation is part of a general system of social security and social assistance that together guarantee a dignified life for all citizens.

Cuba is one of the few countries that offer HIV-AIDS patients their medication free of charge and in which it is produced nationally.

This has caused the death rate to drop from 24 per 100,000 people in 2000 to 5 per 100,000 last year.

Generic drugs began to be produced in Cuba in 2001, and their effectiveness has proved similar to drugs produced by foreign companies.

Over the last five years the medicines have reduced by 70 per cent the more than six hundred related "opportunistic" illnesses that affect HIV-AIDS patients.

The six Cuban anti-retroviral drugs satisfy the local demand and guarantee the triple-therapy drug cocktail to all patients needing it.

There are 2,600 HIV-AIDS patients in Cuba, which is among the lowest rate, at 0.09 per cent, and the lowest in the Caribbean.

Information from the Cuba Support Group Ireland.

**For more info contact the group at:
15, Merrion Square, Dublin
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Questions on the role of trade unions

THE problems caused by capitalism today, which the Trade Union movement has to respond to, are problems faced by working people not just in this country but world wide.

Inflation and unemployment, in particular, beset all capitalist economies.

In the UK the trade union movement is also confronted by the specific weaknesses of the UK economy due to the low level of industrial investment provided by multi-national companies, which prefer to export their capital abroad, where wages are next to nothing, and profit is maximised.

These same companies, together with the traditional, domestic and foreign capitalist financial institutions, create the economic framework which "New Labour" decides its economic policies.

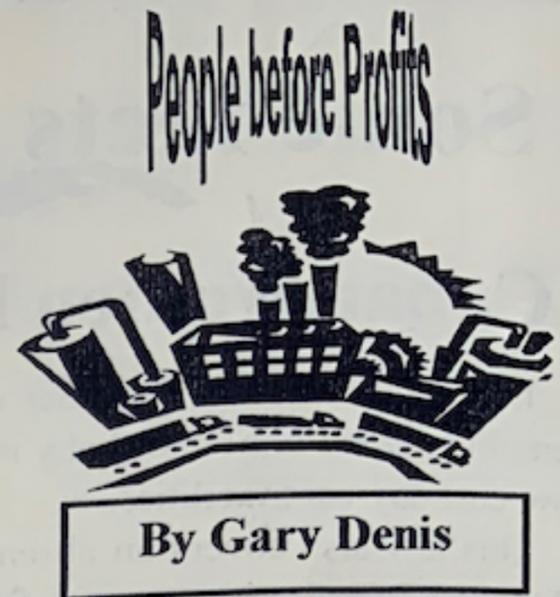
In this context, the major aim of government intervention in the UK economy has been, and still is simple, to suppress working-class militancy, and to maintain a cheap labour economy in order to bolster inefficient British capitalism.

Wide choice of options

In this endeavour, governments (New Labour included) have a wide choice of options, as capitalism contains an armoury of measures to combat labour's attempts to reduce the rate of exploitation :-

Speed up, "productivity deals", intensification of labour, inflation, tax increases, welfare cuts, privatisation, legal restrictions and incomes policies, etc etc.

It is thus not surprising that capitalism can maintain the



rate of exploitation even where trade unions are strong.

Given this context of the interpenetration of the state and monopoly capitalism, and the determined and seemingly successful incorporation of the trade union movement into this monolithic structure, it is important to ask theoretical questions on the role of the trade union movement in today's capitalist society.

What is the relationship between the trade union movement and contemporary capitalism?

Are trade unions still capable of articulating opposition to the power of capital?

Or are they now primarily a means of incorporating working class resistance?

If trade unions are still an opposition force, what strategies should they adopt in pursuit of workers power?

What is the trade union movements relationship with the Labour Party?

And finally, to what extent in current conditions, does trade union activity inspire or deflect socialist consciousness?

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