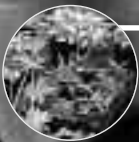


WORKERS

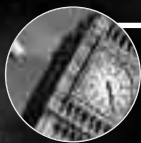
www.workers.org.uk

JULY 2013 £1

**NO TO
WAR ON
SYRIA!**



Seeds and sovereignty New EU plant rules | **08**



Britain's decline Take action, take control | **11**



Historic Notes The Battle of Kursk | **14**

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

WORKERS

“ CPBM-L Statement: EU referendum now!

IT IS TIME for a referendum on the European Union. Nobody in Britain under the age of 56 has had a vote on membership of the EU or of its predecessor, the EEC. The Parliamentary parties have often promised a referendum but have always broken their promises, because they represent capitalism and capitalists are afraid to hear the views of the working class.

The EU is the rule of finance capital. It is foreign rule. It is the enemy of Britain's survival. Yet Parliament has always voted it more and more powers, without ever asking us. It's time that the British working class put an end to Parliament's betrayal of Britain.

We the people must stop all the delays, all the lies of reform and renegotiation. We must demand the vote, to express the will of the people in a referendum with one simple question, whether to stay or leave. Democracy means that we take our own decisions, that we take responsibility.

It's time we focused on the job of rebuilding Britain. Britain can be an independent country outside the EU, forging relations with other countries both in Europe and in the wider world. This is impossible within the EU.

EU referendum now! ■

Patently good

THE SURPRISE decision by the US Supreme Court, in a case brought by the non-profit scientific society the Association for Molecular Biology, to ban the patenting of any naturally occurring human DNA is a major success. Multinational pharma and medical companies are now barred from carving off chunks of human inheritance in the interests of profit.

The court's decision is a triumph for humanity, rejecting the attempted blackmail by

a number of these research companies – that they would not invest in research if they could not then harvest the financial returns of such investment.

The court's statement that “we hold that a naturally occurring DNA segment is a product of nature and not patent eligible” is significant. Why not extend it to all products of nature and challenge the basis of property rights in all fields of human endeavour? ■



Cover image by Diaframma/shutterstock.com

WORKERS is published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB.

ISSN 0266-8580

www.workers.org.uk

Issue 171, July 2013



Contents – July 2013

News

FBU fights closure plans, p3; Musicians' Union returns to its Manchester roots, p4; Court orders Greek government to reopen state broadcaster, p5.

03

Features

Britain in the Middle East: a history of warmongering and war, p6; Heard of the European Plant Variety Agency? If it hasn't tested a seed, it's illegal to use it, p8; Britain, a country under attack, p11.

06

Historic Notes

1943: the Battle of Kursk, p14

14



FIREFIGHTERS	Battle against closures
FINANCE	Balls follows the City
MUSICIANS	Return to Manchester roots
SCOTLAND	SNP's pension debacle
HIGHER ED	UCU congress
GREECE	Broadcaster must reopen
BAIL-OUTS	Trying to save the euro
NORTH SEA OIL	Remembering Piper Alpha
WHAT'S ON	Forthcoming meetings
EUROBRIEFS	The latest from Brussels

FBU fights closure plans

Photo: Workers



Fighting for a safe London. FBU members at Woodford fire station in 2010, on strike over shift patterns.

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION on the proposed closure of 12 London fire stations and cutting of 500 jobs ended on 16 June. The opposition to the closures has been led throughout by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), which has gone everywhere to tell Londoners what this means. The union message is simple. Paul Embery of the London FBU put it like this: "Closing 12 fire stations would have one result, and that would be to jeopardise public safety. Longer response times would cost lives."

More than 20 public meetings have been held, and the Fire Brigades Union has been present in every debate at City Hall – and indeed has been following the Mayor of London wherever he goes. On 20 June the FBU's vocal presence at City Hall was the first time public protest has stopped debate in that chamber, and the Mayor's response was to just bellow "clear off" and "get lost" into his microphone.

The Mayor and his Chief Fire Officer, Ron Dobson, insist the closures will not affect target response times to incidents. Their other argument is that the number of fires in London has reduced. No one is disputing that – and there are two reasons for the reduction: loss of industry in London, and the magnificent fire prevention work of the London Fire Brigade, which is recognised as a model at home and abroad. In the case of the fire prevention work the Mayor's argument amounts to the idea that since you are doing so well, we are going to close you down until enough people are dying again. Except that fire stations that close do not reopen.

The FBU points out that the number of domestic fires is set to rise with more people in London living in outhouses, garages and all manner of unsuitable accommodation. Everyone in London now knows the phrase "beds in sheds" as a term for the shanty town accommodation springing up over the city. It was firefighters who coined that phrase.

The current position is that the FBU has called on the mayor to abandon the closure plans, while the Mayor has signalled his determination to press on. The "consultation" phase of the battle has ended, the fight goes on. See footage of the City Hall protest at <http://www.london.fbu.org.uk/?p=1991>

FINANCE Balls follows the City

LABOUR SHADOW Chancellor Ed Balls has bought into the City's disastrous policies. He says he will stick to whatever spending plans George Osborne has for 2015-16. Balls calls for "iron discipline" and "big and painful choices" in "a tough deficit reduction plan" with "tough fiscal rules". He said, "The next Labour government will have to plan on the basis of falling departmental spending." He said there was little mileage in squeezing global tax avoiders.

Balls said he would end winter fuel payments for all pensioners. This would save just £100 million a year (less than half a per cent of the £207 billion welfare bill). This means-testing a universal benefit abandons opens the door to making other benefits selective.

HOUSING 'Decades before a deposit'

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH commissioned by housing charity Shelter and published in June estimates that the average single Briton will have to save for more than 14 years to get enough for a 20 per cent deposit on a property. A young couple with children would need 12 years. In London the figures rise to 29.5 years and 20 years respectively.

Even with help from the government's Help to Buy scheme, which can provide for a deposit of up to 5 per cent, a home is still out of reach for most. Renting is hardly a viable alternative: latest figures show rents increasing by a huge 3.5 per cent in the last year to an average £737 a month

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or email rebuilding@workers.org.uk

EUROBRIEFS

The latest from Brussels

War movement

AFTER TOKEN RESISTANCE, the EU bowed to Cameron's call to send even more arms to al-Qaeda in Syria. Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger said, "The EU should hold the line. We are a peace movement and not a war movement." But the EU decision proves that it is a war movement.

Unscientific

THE EU STILL refuses to embrace GM crops and food. This anti-scientific approach is potentially disastrous for developing and developed countries alike. The EU's approval system for GM seeds in fact serves largely as a disapproval system. First applications for planting have to go to the European Food Safety Agency, and then to member states – meaning that countries such as Austria that are opposed to GM crops can stop any country adopting them.

Good money after bad

ACCORDING TO an internal Bank of Spain document, Spanish banks could need to put aside a further 10 billion euros to cover bad loans. Much of this arises from the banks extending loans which borrowers could not repay – a practice known as "extend and pretend".

Youth unemployment in Spain is 56.4 per cent, the highest in the eurozone. Spain's GDP fell for the seventh consecutive quarter. And after all this suffering, the Spanish central government's deficit was still higher than in April 2012.

Work more, pay more

OECD DATA shows that Greeks work the most hours per year in the eurozone but have one of the lowest average net incomes per year. Yet the EU, the IMF and European Central Bank are all demanding that Greece makes cuts of another 4.6 billion euros in 2014.

Iceland cold-shoulders EU

ICELAND'S FOREIGN Minister Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson has told the European Commission that their EU membership bid is over. He said: "This is how democracy works", pointing out that both parties in the new government had campaigned against EU accession. It's good to see that one country in Europe still has some democracy; the EU is killing it off everywhere else. ■



Orchestral rehearsals for the BBC summer promenade concerts at the Albert Hall, London.

Photo: Workers

Musicians return to roots

THE MUSICIANS' UNION will be celebrating its 120th anniversary at its biennial conference in Manchester this month. Significantly, Manchester is where the union was founded in 1893. More branches were then created, in Glasgow and Liverpool, and by the following year it had established its Britain-wide character with 17 branches and 2000 members throughout the country.

A vigorous strike campaign in 1980 reversed the cutting of five orchestras and today the union maintains membership of over 30,000. The main growth is in the 35 to 50 age group, but the union is particularly pleased by steady increases in those joining aged between 21 and 35.

A very wide range of skills are represented, from many styles of popular music including jazz, folk and dance music to soloists, orchestral musicians and music writers. ■

SCOTLAND

SNP's pension debacle

THE SNP'S private views on its own Scottish budgetary projections in the event of them succeeding in breaking up Britain were inadvertently disclosed in a leaked memo from SNP Cabinet Secretary for Finance John Swinney to Alex Salmond earlier this year. The memo revealed that its own projections had as many holes in them as a sieve.

Since then Swinney has been on the back foot, and Salmond has tried to make light of the fumbled disclosure with his usual verbal flatulence. On 19 June Swinney tried to regain some financial credibility by making a statement on pensions in Scotland, saying they would be protected by a "triple lock system" in the event of the SNP breaking up Britain.

Even leaving aside the SNP's phoney budgeting, the notion of getting bogged down in cross-border pension

arrangements, as Swinney proposes, when state, occupational and private pension provision are already overcomplicated, needs to be firmly stamped on.

The fact is the benefits of pension economies of scale are maximised if they are organised on a national basis. That means Britain. Any other approach is an inefficient economic duplication of effort.

The attempt to break up is not, of course, about economics but is instead about the politics of division. It was the united response by trade unions north and south in 2011 to cooked-up pension deficit figures that prompted Cameron shortly afterwards to give the green light to the Scottish referendum and let the SNP have a go at dividing us up.

Responding to the attack on pensions is among the many tasks the British working class is coming to grips with, and is part of the desire to get out of the EU and to rebuild Britain. The SNP and its Westminster sponsors are clearly desperate to prevent this from coming about. ■

HIGHER EDUCATION**UCU congress**

THE UNIVERSITY and College Union held its annual congress in Brighton on 29 to 31 May. It debated the need to fight for pay, and some delegates recognised that members needed to be involved in any pay struggles.

After a debate on the union's finances, congress agreed to note "the proposed budget for September 2013-August 2014 and the indicative budget for 2014-2015." Congress defeated, by 174 to 164, a wrecking amendment to delete "and the indicative budget for 2014-2015". Delegates agreed to do whatever was necessary to remain an independent union.

It was good that the NEC raised the issue of Britain's EU membership, bringing on the much-needed trade union debate on the EU. WORKERS last month noted the NEC motion: "Congress calls on the NEC to join with other trade unions to campaign vigorously on the benefit of remaining in EU membership to safeguard our already diminishing equality and employment rights."

Fortunately, congress carried, by 137 votes to 130, the Eastern and Home Counties regional committee's amendment to delete "on the benefit of remaining in EU membership".

Delegates heard calls to leave the EU, to defend the unity of the British working class and reject separatism, and to reject the anti-union practice of labour mobility. ■

Reopen Greek broadcaster

THE GREEK Supreme Court, in a case brought by the unions, has ordered the government to reopen the Greek state broadcaster ERT, while seeming to condone plans to replace it with a smaller body. Following months of strikes by station workers over plans for reorganisation Prime Minister Antonis Samaras shut down ERT mid-broadcast on 11 April claiming that it suffered from chronic mismanagement and waste.

The broadcaster ran three domestic TV channels, four national radio stations, regional radio stations and an external service, and 2,700 jobs would have been lost with existing staff having to apply for posts in a slimmed-down organisation.

The court decision followed mass protests across the country and a general strike which affected many public services such as schools and hospitals. Much of the media was also involved, and there were stoppages of all forms of public transport including the metro and a two-hour walk-out by air traffic controllers. After the shutdown ERT journalists continued shortwave radio transmissions and live broadcasts over the internet and there were sit-ins at ERT offices in Athens and Thessaloniki.

Workers celebrated outside their offices in Athens after the court decision was announced. They are aware that many consider the organisation to be corrupt and bloated but say that this has been the fault of successive governments.

Unions also fear that government success would open the door for the thousands of sackings in the public sector demanded by the EU and the IMF. A recent study by the University of Thessaloniki indicates that 120,000 professionals such as doctors, engineers and scientists have left Greece since the onset of the economic crisis in 2010. ■

BAIL-OUTS**Only about saving the euro**

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund internal report on the bail-out of Greece, leaked to the WALL STREET JOURNAL, indicates that the bail-out had nothing to do with saving the Greek economy. It was solely about saving the euro.

The report identifies that the bail-out was not drawn up to help Greece but was a "holding operation" that "gave the Euro area time to build a firewall to protect other vulnerable members and averted potentially severe effects on the global economy". It also says unexplained delays in implementing the bail-out shifted the debt from private banks to the public purse.

It turns out that the bail-out was more an amateur experiment than support. With the "troika" of IMF, European Commission and European Central Bank, overseeing the Greek economy it clearly cannot recover. That's true for the economies of Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus too.

Needless to say the European Commission repudiated the report. The European Central Bank President dismissed it without reading it, committed to the ECB's do-nothing strategy as unemployment soars and businesses across Southern Europe crumble.

The German Bundesbank Chief Executive, meanwhile, says, "It is not the duty of the ECB to rescue states in crisis... the ECB has no mandate to uphold the current composition of monetary union." ■

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****JULY**

Saturday 13 July, Durham.

Durham Miners' Gala

The "Big Meeting" – still trade union-dominated although the colliery banners are almost all those of closed pits. For details, see durhamminers.org/Gala.html

Friday 19 July to Sunday 21 July.

Tolpuddle, Dorset.

Tolpuddle Festival and Rally

The annual festival of the labour movement in the south of England features bands, meetings and general all-round entertainment. Highlights include a Royal College of Midwives Choir, an Action for Rail meeting that includes the general secretaries of the RMT, ASLEF and TSSA, and Jez Lowe and the Bad Pennies. For more information, see <http://www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/>

Photo: Workers

NORTH SEA OIL**Remembering Piper Alpha**

THE RMT is marking the 25th anniversary this month of the world's worst offshore oil industry disaster. On 6 July 1988 an explosion on the Piper Alpha oil platform killed 165 men, with two more dying aboard the standby vessel Sandhaven. Dozens more were seriously injured.

The years following forced a turning point in the industry in terms of safety, but despite renewed pledges spurred by this anniversary, the RMT regional organiser Jake Molloy struck a note of caution. In an interview in THE SCOTSMAN he said, "You can never say it will never happen again, and if we have a culture of fear, as is the case in the US, then even when you have one of the most modern units in the world, as Deepwater Horizon was, you can end up with it at the bottom of the sea with 11 workers killed. That's why we have to strive for continuous improvement."

BBC2 is to show a new documentary film – FIRE IN THE NIGHT: THE PIPER ALPHA DISASTER – in July. ■

The US is training Syrian “rebels” in Jordan and itself has 20,000 troops in Syria in an attempt to topple the government. The threat of war

Britain in the Middle East: a history of war

SUCCESSIVE BRITISH governments from Thatcher on have been warmongers. Thatcher had her war against Argentina. Blair had plenty of wars in Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq. Cameron has had his wars in Libya, Mali and now targets Syria. The real targets, however, are Iran and Russia. Why? Because they do not yield to US/EU control. In Russia's case it's because Russia blocks their will at the UN Security Council. Two million marched and protested against Blair's proposed invasion of Iraq. But there were no protests against the attack on Libya or Syria. Why? Why no outrage? Maybe it's because workers have discovered that marching does not achieve their objectives.

Let's have a look at Libya. The Benghazi-based rebels were from the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, an al-Qaeda affiliate. US troops in Iraq had previously captured al-Qaeda's headquarters in Iraq and found lists of foreign fighters in Iraq. Al-Qaeda was apparently a diligent note keeper. The list was handed over to the FBI who discovered that more than 40 per cent of the foreigners fighting for al-Qaeda in Iraq and against the US were from Derne, a city next to Benghazi. Another sizeable number was from Benghazi itself. These were the people Britain, France and the US were arming and fighting for in Libya.

Al-Qaeda is a child of the US, created in Afghanistan to fight the communists in power and draw in the USSR. So we shouldn't be surprised at the irony of the US, EU and NATO supporting al-Qaeda in Libya or Syria. A Palestinian friend of mine living in Syria remarked to me, when it had become clear that the main fighters against the Syrian government had been identified as the al-Nusra front (an al-Qaeda associate group): “They (US/EU/NATO) brought al-Qaeda into Iraq to destroy the country and that is what they are doing now to Syria.”

A common factor in the Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya wars is the creation by the US/EU of puppet governments from exiles.

This article is an edited extract of a speech given in Conway Hall, London, on 11 June by a frequent traveller and worker in Syria. A fuller version of the speech is available at www.workers.org.uk

There was Karzai in Afghanistan, Chalabi, Alawi and Maliki in Iraq and the same sort of people in Libya. This has led to a deeply unpopular and corrupt government in Afghanistan with a return of the Taliban due to be negotiated soon, civil war in Iraq and possibly the break-up of the country, and now a Libya run by Islamist militias with weak central government spreading arms to Syria and Africa. But the oil is flowing.

So who is next? Well there are no prizes for guessing it's going to be Syria. I've worked in Syria since 2006, with Palestinian refugee youth. I can tell you that Damascus is a beautiful, hospitable, cultured and historic city – in fact it's the oldest inhabited city on the planet. It was, as I told three young women trade unionists when the Northern Region of the TUC asked me to take them as a delegation to the Jafra Palestinian Youth Centre in 2009, the safest city in the Middle East. It was so safe that I left them to live in the Yarmouk Palestinian Refugee Camp, Damascus, on their own for a week.

Secular Syria

But let's look at today's secular Syria in a historical setting. At the end of the First World War, Allied troops captured Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire collapsed. It was partitioned between France, which got Syria, and Britain, which got Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan. There had, of course, been Arab resistance to Ottoman occupation typified by what became known as the Arab Revolt and portrayed in the film *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*, so the British and French could not expect a docile occupation.

The French could not “pacify” Syria until 1920. They only succeeded in winning the Battle of Maysalun Pass, the key to taking Damascus, when every Syrian soldier had been killed. In 1925 an uprising of Syrians and Druze liberated Damascus for a time only to be ruthlessly retaken. Statues of the leaders of those struggles famously stand in Damascus. Syrians know their history well.

France carved up Syria to make it more governable. It first sliced out the province of Lebanon as a separate entity. They thought that the Christian Maronites would be compliant to French will. Then France handed over the province of Hatay



Damascus, at night: the oldest inhabited city in

including the historic city of Antioch to Turkey. This was an attempt to buy Turkey's neutrality in the coming Second World War. Families live on both sides in today's countries, separated by artificial borders. Then, of course, Israel annexed the Golan after years of occupation.

It's now 70 years since France was forced to leave Syria. France ruled by using religious leaders to teach submission to French rule. The clan system is entrenched in Syria and clan loyalty is paramount. The main religious leader who enforced French rule through the clan system was Imam Nur-Eddin al Khatib.

Coincidentally, the leader of the “opposition” Syrian National Coalition was until a few weeks ago Imam Mouz al Khatib. He was appointed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia last November. He was the grandson of Nur-Eddin al Khatib. The previous leader of the SNC was Bassma Kodmani, a regular attendee at the secretive Bilderberg conference, an annual coming together of the world's most important capitalists and politicians. Kodmani was also linked to

o troops there. Qatar and Saudi Arabia are pouring arms into
is real...

Warmongering and war



Photo: Dudarev Mikhail/shutterstock.com

the world, it used to be the safest city in the Middle East.

Goldman Sachs and George Soros. So once again we see a puppet government in waiting put in place by Britain, France, the US, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The Muslim Brotherhood, an extension of Saudi Arabia, is also part of the government in waiting along with al-Qaeda's own al-Nusra front. The flag of rebels is the old colonial flag.

What are we to make of Qatar and Saudi Arabia? Qatar, in particular, supplied arms to the Libya rebels and took part in the bombing of that country. Now it arms the Islamists in Syria along with Saudi Arabia, which is sending shoulder-held anti-aircraft missiles to them. And then we have Cameron and France's Hollande, trying to persuade any who will listen to arm the rebels. Now we have allegations of the use of chemical weapons being spouted by Cameron as if it were fact. The evidence is two items of clothing the origin of which is unknown. The UN's investigator, Carla del Ponte, has said that it's the rebels who have used chemical weapons.

During the football World Cup 2010, Fidel Castro wrote one of his reflections. As

we all had our faces glued to the TV, he told the world that US and Israeli ships and submarines, including an Israeli nuclear submarine, had passed through the Suez Canal on their way to the Persian Gulf. He sent a warning of impending war, even nuclear war.

Armada

How very prophetic were his words. There is now an armada of military vessels from NATO, the despotic Gulf States and Israel in the Persian Gulf. Our leaders seem hell bent on a war with Iran, and Syria is a major ally of Iran. The Gulf sheikdoms have been armed to the teeth by the US. Patriot missile batteries are deployed around the Gulf as well as in Turkey and Jordan.

The US is training Syrian "rebels" in Jordan and itself has 20,000 troops there. Qatar and Saudi Arabia are pouring arms into Syria. What about China and Russia – will they stand by Iran? The threat of war is real. And all the time our leaders talk of Iran as if it were the devil incarnate. It is the next target. But Iran has never attacked

anyone. It has been the victim of an attack by Iraq at the behest of Saudi Arabia and the US. As far as its nuclear programme is concerned, even the US intelligence services say that Iran abandoned any idea of nuclear weapons in 2002. But it has huge reserves of gas and oil.

Now Syria is also hit by EU and US sanctions with dreadful consequences for Syrians facing shortages of food, medicines, electricity, diesel and petrol. Sanctions are war by alternative means. But in solidarity with the Syrian people, Venezuela sends tankers of diesel and Iran sends medicines. The Northern Region of the TUC and London Unison have successfully donated diesel generators to Palestinian refugee camps in Homs and Dera'a. That's one practical way to help the Syrian people.

But we all must defend national sovereignty, both of Syria and of Britain, and support independence from imperialism. No arms for the rebels. Invest in Britain and keep our noses out of other nations' affairs.

Out with the warmongers Hague and Cameron. ■

The EU has proposed a whole new set of legislation amounting to a new set of laws governing the food chain. If you like gardening, or work in horticulture or forestry, you should be interested.

Heard of the EU Plant Variety Agency? If it has, you should be interested.



Photo: Workers

New European law will have a draconian effect on gardens and gardeners.

ON MONDAY 6 May a draconian new law was put before the European Commission, which creates new powers to classify and regulate all plant life anywhere in Europe. The law – an EU Regulation that cannot be varied by individual countries – starts from the premise that all vegetables, fruit and trees must be officially registered before they can be reproduced or distributed.

This obviously is a major restriction on seed availability, as there are all sorts of costs in both time and money dealing with the bureaucracy of a new central EU Plant Variety Agency. So where does it leave gardeners and nurseries in Britain?

Amateur gardeners develop their knowledge through observation and experiment, working rather like scientists. Through experience they become experts at what works in their garden: practice, theory, practice – the essence of scientific method.

In Britain we have many organisations aiming to pool the knowledge gained by gardeners over generations. Two of these

are the Soil Association and the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), with the RHS laying more emphasis on scientific methods. Now both are involved in the debate about genetic modification (GM), and the Soil Association (known mostly for its “organic” label) is playing a valuable role in opposing the European Union’s attempts to control seed production in the interests of big companies.

Standards

A number of different certification bodies in Britain carry out the inspections and paperwork to ensure that organic standards are being met (see Box, right). The Soil Association is one of only a very few of these bodies whose standards are higher than the EU minimum, not just in relation to GM but also animal welfare and nature conservation – and is now instrumental in resistance to the draconian seed legislation proposed by the EU.

The EU has proposed a whole new set

of legislation amounting to 70 enormous legal texts governing the European Union’s food chain. Part of this, the “Plant Reproductive Material Law” regulates all plants. It contains immediate restrictions on vegetables and woodland trees.

Under the new law, it will immediately be illegal to grow, reproduce or trade any vegetable seed or tree that has not been tested and approved by the new EU Plant Variety Agency, who will make a list of approved plants. Moreover, an annual fee must also be paid to the Agency to keep them on the list, and if the fee is not paid, the plants cannot be produced.

Using words and phrases such as “sustainable” and “food security”, EU legislators hijack language to pretend their proposals address these issues, when they are really designed to benefit big business, such as Monsanto, at the expense of smaller independent companies.

By introducing expensive registration the legislation is likely to put many smaller

to 70 enormous legal texts governing the European Union's industry, watch out...

Hasn't tested your seeds, you can't grow them

seed producers out of business and is a major threat to seed diversity and, in consequence, to the breadth of the gene pool necessary for the breeding and development of seeds to cope with changing conditions.

The proposed regulation is laying down the future framework for the largest companies to trace down the intellectual property rights of seeds, putting in place a system that forces companies to keep records of their seeds, what has been planted and where, what has been sold, to whom and how. The regulation forms a perfect basis for controlling seeds that are patented. That is really its sole purpose, to benefit capitalists not workers.

Globalised agribusiness

The EU Commission says the regulation is needed to "tidy up" existing law. In practice it will mean that the globalised agribusiness seed industry will have EU laws to cope with gene patents and plant patents, and will be able to register "their" industrial varieties or genes safely and securely before selling them in large quantities to industrial farmers. This will effectively prevent the age-old practice of farmers saving the seed for their own use or sale to others, unless they pay a royalty fee.

At present, companies have to register seeds in each country where they want to sell them. Under the new proposed law, procedures valid in one member state would automatically be recognised across the European Union. The European Commission says this would make the process of registering varieties faster and "more conducive to innovation". At a stroke a country's seed sovereignty, our ability to have some control over our seeds, would be removed.

The ash dieback debacle, where EU legislation prevented Britain from stopping the import of diseased saplings, shows what can happen when a country loses control over its plant life. But there are other drawbacks, too.

The new annual registration fees would also be prohibitive for small companies,

Continued on page 10

Organic: science and non-science



Members and leading lights of the Soil Association are sufficiently alarmed at this EU proposed legislation that campaigns of civil disobedience and non-compliance are being mooted. This is all to the good.

But it is wrong of the Soil Association or anyone else to reject GM (genetically modified) seeds or crops out of hand. It may seem churlish to choose this moment to criticise, but anti-science can never benefit us as a working class and we turn a blind eye at our peril. In contrast the RHS retains a more balanced and scientific position on GM seeds and crops (see www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening/pdfs/c_and_e_genetic).

The RHS was founded on scientific principles. It is able to separate the science from concerns about how GM is being seized by big business (i.e. capitalism) for profit rather than the benefit for humankind. In the USA Monsanto has patented its GM seeds, making it illegal for farmers to save seeds from GM plants. When seeds were saved and sown without paying royalties, they have sued farmers for patent infringement, resulting in farmers being fined and even imprisoned. Monsanto and four other companies control between 50 and 60 per cent of the global seed market.

The Soil Association is one organisation licensed by the British government to provide producers with organic certification. But the term "organic" is often misunderstood. For many people gardening organically means doing so without the use of synthetic

fertilisers, pesticides or fungicides.

This approach benefits wildlife and as a result pests and diseases are reduced, although not eradicated. If slugs devour hosta plants year after year, you either ditch the hostas or find ways of thwarting the slimy creatures, if you wish to use organic methods.

The idea is that you do need some slugs for the frogs and hedgehogs to thrive. But it is perfectly understandable that most commercial nurseries use slug pellets in spring to protect their carefully nurtured seedlings. Yet some people equate organic with "good" and non-organic with "bad" – the lazy and potentially dangerous shorthand of all woolly thinkers.

"Organic Gardening" is a legal term – not a scientific one. It has been devised to allow certification and regulation of organic food and other products. The term is based on philosophical rather than scientific principles and means different things to different people and in different parts of the world.

There is a lack of scientific evidence that organic food is healthier or tastier than non-organic – as the Soil Association honestly mentions on its website:

"For the first thirty years the Association was based on a farm in Suffolk and was primarily involved in basic research as well as building a membership base. The farm was divided into three units, one farmed using the new intensive techniques, one farmed traditionally and one with mixed system. At the end of this period the results were not as clear as had been hoped (hardly surprising since we still have a poor understanding of what we truly mean by health of land and food), however a much clearer understanding had been built up of how the best of old and new traditions in land husbandry could be combined, and so the first organic standards were compiled defining this system." ■

Continued from page 9

pushing them out of the EU market altogether. Older seed varieties and older established European seeds companies would find it very hard to compete against the larger corporations, which prioritise the mass production of monoculture seed varieties at the expense of diversity.

A line in the proposed EU regulation calls for “more flexibility” toward so-called professional operators. It entitles the seed industry to carry out the necessary examination for registration, inspections, sampling and analysis of plant reproductive material for certification themselves – but under official supervision from authorities.

True to form

From its inception, the EU has operated for the benefit of big business. Back in 1983, writer Lawrence D Hills noted in *A MONTH-BY-MONTH GUIDE TO ORGANIC GARDENING* that it was no longer possible to recommend varieties for flavour and garden qualities and be sure that they would be available to readers by the time the book is in print.

Even then, it was already “an offence, punishable by a fine of up to £1000, to sell or even to catalogue vegetable varieties

not on the National Lists or the EEC [forerunner of the EU] Common Catalogue”.

The results were catastrophic. “Since 1973 we have been losing vegetable varieties by the hundred every six months. In June 1978 we lost 874 varieties, including the Pot Leek, traditionally grown by Durham miners on allotments fed with pit-pony manure, Market King tomatoes, the thin-skinned greenhouse favourite of the 1930’s, and Victoria spinach, as British as Early Albert rhubarb.”

Hills also pointed out that Britain lost some 600 varieties deemed to be “synonyms”, that is, too similar to be worth distinguishing, even though they often vary in qualities such as flavour, disease resistance and slowness to run to seed. Such things matter to gardeners, “rather than to commercial growers, who want weight, a long shelf life, thick skins for long journeys to the supermarket, and bright colour to show through polythene prepacks”.

Hills noted that the driving force for the European regulations came from multinational companies, since the laws allowed horticultural and agricultural seeds to be patented – earning royalty payments. But patents are expensive to win and to

police, time-consuming to obtain, and in the case of plants the applicant must demonstrate that the variety is “uniform, stable and distinct”.

No wonder multinationals – who have the resources to cope with it – like this patenting regime. And no wonder the multinationals like the EU’s latest plans.

Initial opposition to the plans has focused on the impact on what are called the “heritage seeds” and as a concession the registration rules will be relaxed for this niche market. If the company employs less than 10 people then they will be exempt from the rules. But Britain has a number of long-established seed companies such as Sutton Seeds and Thompson and Morgan which employ a fair few more than 10 but who would be “small fry” compared to the multinationals such as Monsanto.

The legislation is now being discussed and amended by member states and the European parliament. The Commission estimates that the legislation will enter into force in 2016. It used to be said in jest “they will legislate to sell the air we breathe”. Well, the EU is moving in that direction. Will it next try to stop plants from seeding themselves? ■



CPBML/Workers Public Meeting, London Tuesday 24 September, 7.30 pm “EU referendum now!”

Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. Closest tube Holborn.

Cameron is promising a referendum a few years from now. Miliband is being “firm” in his subservience to the European Union, just like Blair. The view of British workers is clear – but why is it not reflected in our unions’ policies? Come and discuss. Everybody welcome.

Capitalism's institutions are in permanent decline – time for the working class to assert its ascendancy...

Britain, a country under attack

This article is a shortened and edited version of a speech given at this year's CPBML May Day Rally, held in Conway Hall, London, on 1 May.

“OUR COUNTRY is under attack. All of its institutions, bar none, are in decline. Our economy is in decline, and the only growth anywhere is in unemployment, poverty and war. Apart, that is, from charity shops, pay day loans and food banks. In periods of crisis, leadership is necessary. This is a crisis. A crisis of thought, and of deed.”

This is how this Party's recent political statement opens, agreed at our 16th Congress in November of last year and it makes challenging reading. Good. We need to be challenged, all of us. Are the things said here true though? And if they are what can we do about them?

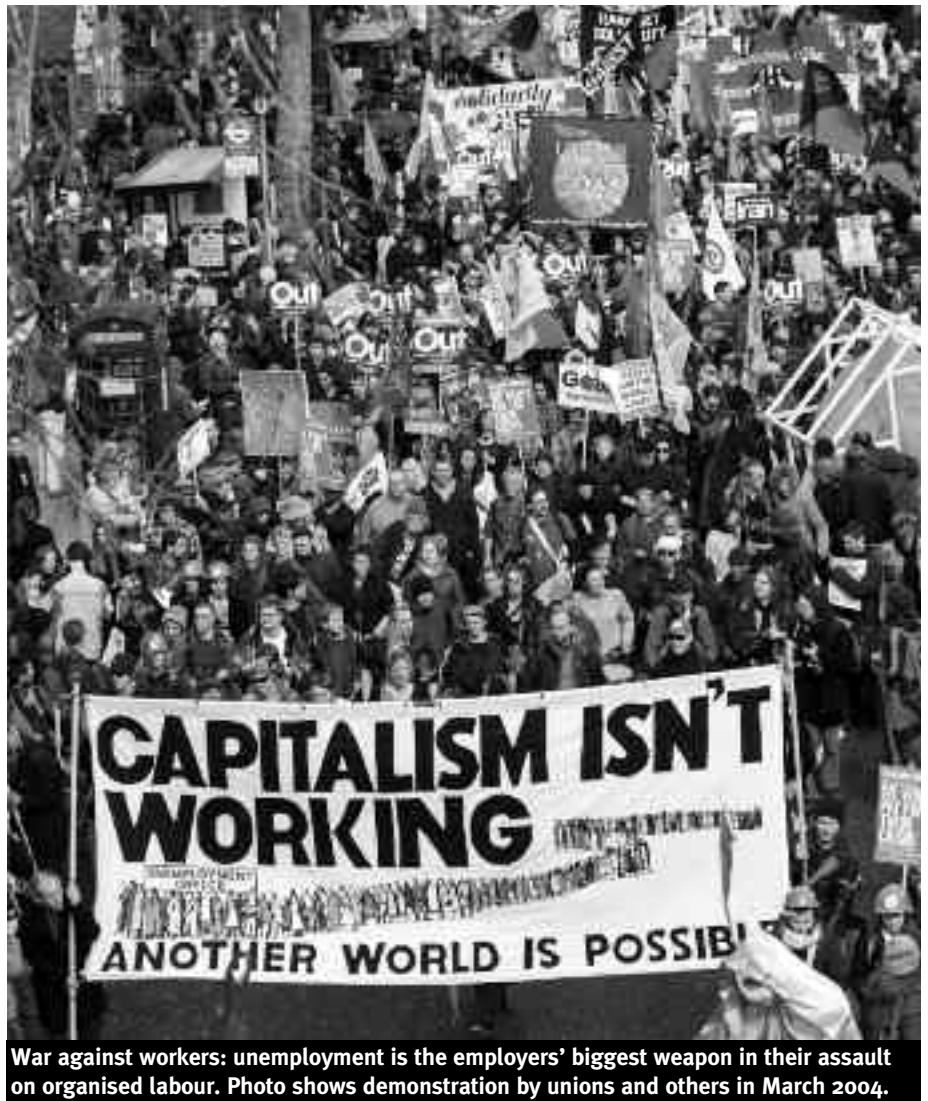
Attack

Is our country under attack? Well, yes it is. You don't have to be at war to be under attack, and anyway in a way we are at war. We said many years ago that unemployment represented war on workers. Unemployment is the biggest single weapon used by employers and the employing class against organised labour, that is, against workers in trade unions.

Why? Because it means that competition can be introduced between workers, which is far more important than competition between employers, driving down pay. It's what lies behind the attempts to break up national pay bargaining, for example in the NHS.

Actually of course what employers really want is not local pay bargaining but no pay bargaining. Unemployment plus low levels of trade union membership equals lower pay. There's a lesson there: low unemployment plus high levels of union membership means higher pay.

We might say too that migration has the same effect as unemployment. Imagine how much employers would have to pay refuse collectors if they couldn't go to EU-sponsored employment agencies in Warsaw to pick and choose them, much like employers picked labourers outside dock gates in years gone by.



War against workers: unemployment is the employers' biggest weapon in their assault on organised labour. Photo shows demonstration by unions and others in March 2004.

Photo: Andrew Wiard / www.andrew-wiard.info

The same argument holds for Filipino nurses or Nigerian doctors. They are needed first and foremost in their own countries. From December Bulgarian and Romanian workers have direct access to the British labour market, adding to the strength of employers, and weakening workers still further.

Collective abuse

Migration is one of the many forms of people trafficking, some legal, some not. Most of us see people trafficking as an unacceptable abuse of workers

individually. We need to see economic migration as an unacceptable abuse of workers collectively.

Our country is also under attack in the sense that we can no longer make our own government policy, economy strategy or the law. The final word in all these areas is determined not by anyone we might elect, but by that corporate entity called the European Union.

Let's be clear, when we talk about the

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

European Union we are not expressing the views of reactionary politicians who oppose everything not redolent of the British Empire, Colonel Blimp and the Union Jack. If you believed the media they are the only kind of people who are opposed to EU membership. Those stereotypes oppose the EU because they think it's too progressive an organisation, that it's not reactionary enough. We oppose the EU because it is deeply reactionary, and not at all progressive.

Internationalism

Some oppose the EU because they say it's too internationalist. We say that it's not internationalist at all. We oppose it not because we don't like the people of Europe, but because the EU is bad for all the peoples of Europe – including us!

Our country is under attack also because it is being broken up. The so-called historic so-called agreement between the Scottish so-called First Minister and the so-called Prime Minister of Britain has made provision for a referendum to take place in Scotland that completely excludes the people of Britain as a whole from that vote.

Except of course Scotland wouldn't become independent even if a majority of people there voted for it. A so-called independent Scotland would reapply to join the EU, a condition of which would be to adopt the euro and abolish the pound. It would then become more dependent upon the EU and the European Central Bank – for which, read Germany – than it is as part of Britain.

Just about the only thing that's less democratic than our being tied to the EU without a referendum is Britain being broken up without a referendum. It's saying Britain can be eradicated as a country without the people of Britain being asked. The last time something like that happened in Europe was in Yugoslavia, and that ended in war.

What about that other bald statement, that all institutions in Britain are in decline? Name one major national

institution that's thriving!

Look at Parliament. Its high spot in history was cutting the head off the king in 1649. Except it didn't even do that. It just lent its name to those who were brave enough to end the monarchy by executing the tyrant Charles Stuart. Parliament soon enough betrayed, and brought back his discredited son so he could cynically torture to death those he'd promised clemency to. And it's been downhill for Parliament ever since.

Parliament has been endlessly subservient and has not spoken up for the people of Britain. It crawled to the US government in offering Britain as an offshore aircraft carrier used to threaten our war time allies in the Soviet Union, and then in outdoing even this level of grovelling in obeisance to the diktats of the EU.

What about the church? What with rows in the Church of England over who can marry whom, who can preach to whom – and just who comes to listen anyway? And the Catholic church, not that strictly speaking it's a British institution – that's struggling a bit too. Every pope since the 1920s has managed to tick the "pro-fascist" box, and this new one's no different.

Perhaps we think the press, television, the media in general are not in decline? Technical improvements should not blind us to the role they play, and the decline is in their independence and their veracity. In the whole overblown Leveson hoo-ha did anyone raise the only relevant question? Why do all the media, without exception, support capitalism?

Trade unions

Membership of our own organisations, the trade unions, continues to slide. Unions huddle together in inappropriate mergers dictated by who's going to get jobs at the top, rather than by the interests of members. The announced merger of Unite and TSSA is one step closer to there being only two unions in Britain, Unite and Unison. If this eventually happens it will be the end of the British trade union movement.



Parliament: subservient since 1660.

Photo: Workers

Many workers who are in unions are nervous in case someone spots them, anxious that they might not be able to escape taking responsibility. Those who have got the courage to take responsibility are to be applauded. All of us in unions should ask ourselves regularly, "What more can we do? How can we join new members into the union?" And then, all together, we must ask how we can fight our way out of this decline.

It is a lie to say that there is a pay freeze. It is a pay cut. Pay is cut every year it goes up less than the rate of inflation, which it has been doing for many years now. Since 2009, says the TUC, workers on the average salary of £25,000 a year have lost £4,000. By 2014 they will have lost £6,000. That's if you're on the average salary. This is not austerity. It is the transfer of wealth from those who produce it, workers, to those who own the means of production and control society as a result.

Britain's richest 1,000 people, capitalists, 0.003 per cent of the population, have increased their wealth by a staggering £155 billion in the past three years. This is enough to pay off the entire budget deficit and still have £30 billion left

over. There is no financial crisis. It's just that finance, and the control of it, is in the wrong hands.

This is not a double- or even a triple-dip "recession". It is the Second Great Depression. The first one began in 1929, in the same sort of way that this one started, with a massive transfer of assets from workers to capitalists. It then led to an over-inflated stock market which led in turn to a financial collapse, and it ended in war. In fact there already is war today. War in our name abroad.

So much for what's bad. What can we do? First off we can make sure we join a trade union. Bad things in trade unions happen because not enough people join. We have always said that joining a union is the most political thing most workers ever do and that is as true now as it's ever been. And we can become active in that union. Stand for election. Take responsibility in how it's run. Run it better.

Leave the EU

We can as a country leave the EU – let's have a referendum on that now! We must insist our unions become involved in this debate, and demand a referendum. Currently the TUC thinks a referendum on EU membership is a distraction; a distraction from what, for goodness sake? From all that class struggle the TUC is out there organising? What is more important than securing national sovereignty for us as a people, as a working class?

We should also leave the misnamed North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Only by leaving the EU & NATO can we support the right of peoples around the world to self-determination. Self-determination of nations is what we fought the Second World War for.

Now Britain is joining in the wave of reaction aimed precisely at the eradication of self-determination in countries such as Iraq, Libya and now Syria, all peaceful countries which were not threatening Britain. Our government supports the destruction of all secular Arab countries. Britain, the EU & NATO prefer to have Al-Qaeda regimes than socialist ones. Forget the Arab Spring – history will come to call

this the Arab Winter.

When we leave the EU & NATO we will have the resources to rebuild our industry, make our own boats and planes and trains. We can train the young to develop the industries of tomorrow by learning the skills of today. We can harness the experience of the old rather than have them fear for their futures.

We can assert control of our health and other public services, and stick two fingers up to those who say that there's no alternative to the market. We could train our own doctors, nurses, and other health professionals rather than stealing them from countries which need them more than we do.

Anyway, to do all those positive things working people must become independent in the mind. The EU is not a boon companion. NATO is not a friendly giant. Parliament is not the place to go to get things sorted out.

Until we become collectively independent as working people, become a

class-conscious working class, then we will not be able to control our own lives, to make the really big decisions which lie in our way. At the moment we are collectively enslaved in the mind. Too many think that no solution to the problems life throws up can be found outside of the profit motive.

Our Congress statement concludes with what might be called a call to action to the people of Britain. It's a call to action we reiterate on this celebration of International Workers Day.

- Out of the European Union, enemy to our survival!
- No to the breakup of Britain, defend our national sovereignty!
- Rebuild workplace trade union organisation!
- Fight for pay, vital class battleground!
- Regenerate industry, key to an independent future!

So May Day greetings to you all – and to those of you who want to take hold of the future – join us in this Party! ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain's new series of London public meetings begins on Tuesday 24 September, with another meeting on 12 November and further dates to be arranged; all are held in the Bertrand Russell room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL, nearest Tube Holborn, and start at 7.30 pm. Other meetings are held around Britain. All meetings are advertised in What's On, see page 5.

M The theme of the first meeting, on Tuesday 24 September, is: "EU Referendum Now!". Details of further meetings will be announced in **WORKERS** and at www.workers.org.uk.

M Catch our **WORKERS** sellers this month at the Durham Miners' Gala and the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival (see What's On, p5).

M The Party's annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – in 2014, Thursday 1 May, in Conway Hall, Holborn. There will also be May Day meetings elsewhere in the country.

M As well as our regular public meetings we hold informal discussions with interested workers and study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further. If you are interested we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or e-mail to info@workers.org.uk

Seventy years ago, the Soviet Union's Red Army - in a colossal tank battle - stopped Nazi Germany's last major offensive operation, changing the balance of power in the world...

The Battle of Kursk – preparation, production

AFTER THE Soviet Union's victory at Stalingrad there was a pause while both sides prepared for the next phase of the armed conflict. By early April 1943, information from Red Army intelligence and the "Lucy" spy network indicated what German intentions were. In an attempt to get back the strategic initiative, the German Wehrmacht intended to assemble two huge Panzer concentrations in order to pinch out the vulnerable Kursk Salient, which projected like a fist from the rest of the Soviet front line.

By mid-April Marshall Zhukov and Stalin had formulated a plan to thwart Nazi goals. Thinking it would be risky for Soviet forces to go over to the offensive in order to preempt the enemy offensive, they opted to wear out the German army on the Soviet defences, smashing their tanks and then, by introducing fresh reserves, going over to a general offensive and beating them.

The Wehrmacht assembled a huge military force: 50 divisions (16 Panzer or motorised ones including 9 of the German army's finest divisions) comprising about 900,000 men with around 10,000 guns and mortars and nearly 3,000 tanks, 2,000 aircraft including elite Luftwaffe units and another 20 divisions deployed on the flanks as reinforcements.

But the scale of Soviet preparations was even greater. To defend the salient, immense numbers of troops were concentrated in and behind it. Elaborate defence lines were constructed of a complexity and depth far exceeding those which had protected Moscow in 1941 (see WORKERS October 2011). The system was not only frontally strong, but strong in depth, stretching for 110 miles from front to rear.

Behind the salient, in the 'Steppe' Reserve Front, was a further defensive system, and beyond that another line of defences on the east bank of the River Don.

Inside the salient were the Central Front and the Voronezh Front, whose combined artillery totalled 19,300 guns plus 920 of the devastating rocket mortars ("Stalin organs" or "Katyusha"). Their combined armoured divisions had 3,306 tanks and assault guns. And 2,650 Soviet aircraft were committed to the battle.

The salient defence system was based



Photo: Byelikova Oksana/shutterstock.com

Memorial: Russian tanks that fought at the Battle of Kursk on display at the site of the world's la

on six belts of concealed anti-tank strongpoints containing barbed-wire fences, anti-tank ditches, deep entrenchments full of infantry, anti-tank obstacles, dug-in armoured vehicles and machine gun bunkers. In front of and in between these strongpoints were minefields.

Some 503,663 anti-tank mines and 439,348 anti-personnel mines were laid, mostly in the first belt of defence. In addition, trenches totalling more than 6,000 miles were dug in the salient. Around 300,000 civilians from the Kursk area worked on all these constructions.

The Soviet plan was to progressively wear down the German panzer spearheads by forcing them to attack through a vast interconnected web of minefields and defensive strong points – by far the most extensive defensive works ever built. The plan worked, with the defence proving to be more than three times the depth necessary to contain the furthest extent of the German attack.

A new railway was built to improve the access of supplies to the Voronezh Front, while more than 250 bridges and 1,800

miles of road were repaired, mostly by civilian labour. And the German build-up was disrupted by partisan guerrilla attacks and air bombardments against German supply routes. More than 4,900 attacks hit German railways between February and July 1943, diverting large numbers of German units from front-line duties and preventing some ever being committed to the battle.

Formidable

Soviet military might was formidable. Newly trained, excellently equipped armies were added to the salient and reserve areas, as Soviet heavy industry was now fully mobilised for war – manufacturing a custom-built range of reliable, proven hardware and weapons in huge numbers.

The Il-2 "Shturmovik" proved to be an outstanding ground attack aircraft, far more versatile than German planes. The Soviet T-34 medium tank and KV heavy tank had admirable streamlined design and rolled off assembly lines at up to 2,000 a month; whereas German Panther tanks were often beset with mechanical problems and experienced huge spare parts problems.

ank battle - smashed
ance of forces in the

n and bravery



argest tank battle.

Monthly production of the German tank Pzkw IV (itself inferior to the T-34 in every respect except in the gun-power of its latest version) only topped 100 in October 1942.

The German attack began on 5 July; by 12 July it had been ground down and halted in the north of the salient; in the south, by 23 July. Soviet counter offensives began and continued until early November. The Red Army broke out of the salient, retook Kiev and crossed the River Dniepr. German losses at Kursk were greater than at Stalingrad (see WORKERS January 2010).

A whole 11 months before the allied landings in France, the Soviet victory at Kursk sealed the outcome of the Second World War. After defeats at Moscow and Stalingrad, Germany had managed to rally and inflict some reverses; after Kursk, Hitler's armies were forced into an almost continuous retreat.

At Kursk, on ground of Germany's choosing, the Red Army beat and hurled back the Wehrmacht in high summer, hitherto Germany's best campaigning season. The superiority of socialism was confirmed in that most exacting test, war. ■

6 SIX CALLS TO ACTION

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

Our country is under attack. Every single institution is in decline. The only growth is in unemployment, poverty and war. There is a crisis – of thought, and of deed. The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist held its 16th Congress in late 2012, a coming together of the Party to consider the state of Britain and what needs to happen in the future. Here we set out briefly six Calls to Action for the British working class – for a deeper explanation, see www.workers.org.uk.

1: Out of the European Union, enemy to our survival

The European Union represents the dictatorship of finance capital, foreign domination. The British working class must declare our intention to leave the EU.

2: No to the breakup of Britain, defend our national sovereignty

Devolution, and now the threat of separation, are both products of only one thing: de-industrialisation. Any referendum on the break-up of Britain must be held throughout Britain.

3: Rebuild workplace trade union organisation

Unions exist as working members in real workplaces or they become something else entirely – something wholly negative. Take responsibility for your own unions.

4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground

The fight for pay is central to our survival as a class, and must be central to the agenda of our trade unions.

5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future

The regeneration of industry in Britain is essential to the future of our nation. Our grandparents, and theirs, knew this. We must now reassert it at the centre of class thinking.

6: Build the Party

The task of the Party is singular: to change the ideology of the British working class in order that they make revolution here.

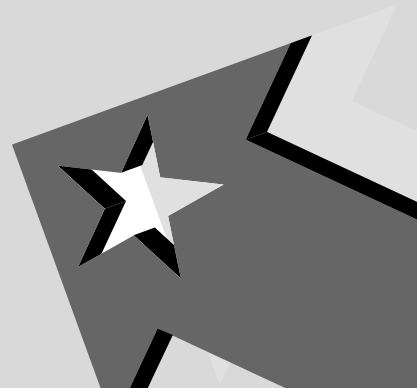
Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
- Get a list of our publications by sending an A5 sae to the address below, or by email.
- Subscribe to WORKERS, our monthly magazine, by going to www.workers.org.uk or by sending £15 for a year's issues (cheques payable to WORKERS) to the address below.
- You can ask to be put in touch by writing or emailing to the address below.

WORKERS

78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB

email info@workers.org.uk
www.workers.org.uk
phone 020 8801 9543



Subversion of Syria is a threat to us all

‘British ministers strut around the world ludicrously calling for war, baiting other, more reluctant, countries to “do something”...’

THE WESTERN-BACKED assault on Syria was planned long before the war started. It is part of an organised attempt pursued by the British, French, US and Israeli governments to destroy any independent states in the Middle East, above all Iran.

British ministers strut around the world ludicrously calling for war, baiting other, more reluctant, countries to “do something”. Yet Syria as a country is no threat to Britain, and its internal affairs are nothing to do with us or with any other country.

Former French foreign affairs minister Roland Dumas recently told French TV station LCP that he met top British officials in England two years before the violence in Syria, while he was on other business. The officials told him they were preparing something in Syria. “Britain was organising an invasion of rebels into Syria,” he said.

Who are these so-called rebels? Many are extreme Islamist jihadists. Even the warmongering French newspaper *Le Monde* says that many of the armed Syrian “opposition” are in fact al-Qaeda. They have been systematically targeting civilians from the start, and torturing and beheading captured civilians and soldiers.

In Jordan, British special forces and MI6 officers have been training and arming the jihadists. Since June 2012 the CIA has been helping US and British allies Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Qatar to fly 3,500 tons of weapons so far to the insurgents (this estimate comes from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which monitors illicit arms

transfers). As arms shipments to the insurgents have increased, so have the numbers killed.

At the G8 meeting in June, only Russian President Putin defended Syria’s independence and sovereignty. Putin said that Russia was supplying arms to the legitimate government of Syria in compliance with the norms of international law. Referring to the notorious video, he warned Cameron against arming people who “kill their enemies and eat their organs”.

Now Tony Blair is calling for a no-fly zone over Syria. That, NATO’s new Supreme Allied Commander pointed out, would be an act of war.

There are MPs in all parties who understand that we have no business arming these Islamist fascists, and no business fomenting war against the Syrian government. Many Conservative MPs oppose intervention.

Shadow foreign secretary Douglas Alexander went so far as to admit that there is “unease” among MPs of all parties. But that’s as far as the timid and grovelling Labour Party will go. On past form it will back any attack on Syria, claiming “humanitarian” motives for intervention. It backed the wars in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya – among others – and has neither the courage nor the integrity to oppose this one.

NATO’s intervention is fomenting and prolonging conflict in Syria. This is a time of great danger, a time when the British working class must raise its voice against war. ■

Subscriptions

Take a regular copy of WORKERS. The cost for a year’s issues (no issue in August) delivered direct to you every month, including postage, is £15.

Name

Address

Postcode

Cheques payable to “WORKERS”. Send along with completed subscription form (or photocopy) to WORKERS 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB



Workers on the Web

• Highlights from this and other issues of WORKERS can be found on our website, www.workers.org.uk, as well as information about the CPBML, its policies, and how to contact us.

Publications

CHANGE BRITAIN, EMBRACE YOUR PARTY

This pamphlet brings together the statement from the Party’s 2009 Congress with those from two former Congresses in 2003 and 2006. Also included is a statement on the European Union: “The fascist dream of a united Europe resurrected.” (£2.75 including P&P).

To order...

Copies of all pamphlets and a fuller list of material can be obtained from CPBML PUBLICATIONS, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB. Prices include postage. Please make all cheques payable to “WORKERS”.