

Newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

The Government Must Stop All its Provocations against Iran Immediately

The British government in a totally arrogant and belligerent manner is seeking to escalate and internationalise the incident in

which 15 British navy personnel have been detained by the Iranian authorities. *Workers' Weekly* vigorously condemns the government for

its provocations against Iran and demands that it ends them immediately. The incident in the first place has all the hallmarks of a provocation by

Britain to provide a further pretext for ratcheting up its warmongering against Iran and, with the US, preparing

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SETTLING SCORES WITH THE OLD CONSCIENCE

End the Racist System of Modern-Day Slavery

(See "Opposing Disinformation on Enslavement and Abolition", *Workers' Weekly*, March 17, 2007)

One of the key messages presented by the government during the commemorative events held to mark the bicentenary of the passing of the Parliamentary Act to abolish the trans-Atlantic slave trade, has been how different society is today than it was in 1807. We should "rejoice at the different and better times we live in today", according to the Prime Minister, as if there were no legacy of the great crimes against humanity committed by the rich and their governments and no continuation of those crimes

today.

For the government it is as if these different and better times almost began in 1807, or shortly thereafter, as if the slate had been wiped clean and the Abolition Act ended all the crimes committed by the rich and their governments and ushered in a rosy new dawn for humanity. But the fact is that the 1807 Act did not end the enslavement and trafficking of Africans. The conquest, oppression and exploitation of Africa, Asia and other parts of the world increased during the 19th century, leading to



Emancipation Monument, Barbados. Larger than life-sized statue of unknown slave, with broken shackles. Named 'Slave in Revolt' by its creator, the Barbadian sculptor Karl Broodhagen, this statue was commissioned by the government of Barbados to commemorate the 150th anniversary of slave emancipation in the British colonies; it was unveiled in March 1985.

the time when British governments could boast that they ruled over an empire on which the sun never set, something which the present Prime Minister refers to as a "remarkable achievement". What is more this colonial exploitation underpinned and accompanied the exploitation and oppression of the majority of people in Britain too. Wage slavery, that more efficient system of exploitation preferred by the bourgeoisie in Britain, replaced the chattel slavery that had existed in

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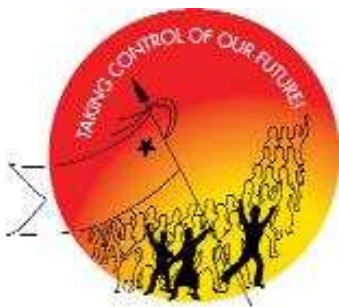
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People's Assembly 2007

By Workers' Weekly Youth Group



YOUTH+STUDENT
page of the
Workers' Weekly Youth Group

Workers' Weekly Youth Group (WWYG) participated in the People's Assembly called by Stop the War Coalition on March 20, 2007, the fourth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. According to the Coalition, 900 delegates representing 175 organisations attended the Assembly, which took place under the heading of "The Debate Parliament Won't Have". It was held in the Central Hall in Westminster, Central London.

In the pre-event publicity, Stop the War Coalition explained the necessity for the debate: "Almost alone in the world, Tony Blair has given George Bush unequivocal support. More than 130 British soldiers have paid with their lives as a consequence. And now the Prime Minister appears to be endorsing Bush's policies towards Iran. Where is our Parliament in all of this? There have been few debates and fewer votes on our Iraq policy – a policy opposed by the great majority of voters in this country. That is why the Stop the War Coalition has convened this special People's Assembly ... We are determined that the voice of people of this country should be heard on this, the most important of all issues."

The Coalition called for "communities and workplaces across the country to choose representatives for this Assembly, to give the greatest possible democratic weight to our debates. Ensure that

your anti-war, community, trade union, religious or political organisation is there."

The Assembly lasted for six hours, with 34 speeches plus contributions from delegates and passed three declarations on Iraq, Iran and Foreign Policy after Tony Blair. Videos of the speeches can be found on the YouTube website, and are also to appear on www.stopwar.org.uk.

The holding of the People's Assembly was a manifestation of a growing consciousness that the way forward is not to be found in the existing political system and institutions, but rather that there is an urgent need for democratic renewal in Britain. The fact that it discussed foreign policy was consistent with the need for the people themselves and their direct representatives to legislate. The People's Assembly was a form of reflection of the voice of the people, a contribution to the bringing into being of a truly representative Anti-War Government.

The fact that the Assembly placed on the agenda the alternative in terms of foreign policy was significant in this respect. The Declaration passed on Iraq states that "we urge the full and unambiguous restoration of the sovereign right of the Iraqi people to determine their own future"; on Iran, "the internal affairs of Iran are the responsibility of its own people alone". Regarding foreign policy, such statements point to the demand that Britain must give up all rem-

nants of its colonial past. This means consistently rejecting the idea of a "white man's burden" in whatever guise it appears, or the idea that Britain is somehow the "most civilised" nation.

One aspect of the notion of a "British" way of doing things, which represents the only way, and so-called "British values", is to prevent people from basing themselves on their own experience, cutting through the disinformation and setting their own agenda. The necessity to deal with disinformation was mentioned by a number of participants, in particular by Jeremy Dear, General Secretary of the National Union of Journalists, who spoke about journalists who are struggling to break through the "fog of disinformation".

A still-developing form, the People's Assembly had certain shortcomings, for example the need to make space for all participants to discuss the agenda and present their views. Nevertheless, WWYG is confident that the People's Assembly will continue to grow in strength and significance as long as the mechanisms for discussion and empowerment continue to be developed. As the Declaration on Foreign Policy states, "it is the task of the anti-war movement to uphold the principles of democracy, civil liberties and anti-racism and to continue to find ways to express the views of the people despite the now evident failure of Parliament to do so."



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SETTLING SCORES WITH THE OLD CONSCIENCE

End the Racist System of Modern-Day Slavery

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the Caribbean and elsewhere but this has never been accompanied by mass rejoicing. The working people of Britain, as well as other countries, were compelled to redouble their efforts to attempt to throw off this yoke of the new slavery and the political system which maintained it. That system of representative democracy, with the addition of elections and an extended franchise, was increasingly presented as "democratic", indeed as the most democratic that all should aspire to, even though the people are excluded from the decision-making process. The system remained more or less as rotten, corrupt and undemocratic as it had been in 1807 and before, and the institutions and processes appropriate only to the rule of white men of property.

Racism to justify enslavement

The racism that developed as a justification for the enslavement of the people of Africa, Asia and elsewhere was further developed during the two hundred years after 1807. Colonial conquest and rule were described and justified as the "civilising mission", or the "white man's burden", which must be taken up in order to exercise a "dual mandate", to supervise and exploit the allegedly inferior peoples of the world and their resources. Indeed, modern-day slavery rests on the dehumanisation and extinguishing of Africans of that time, not to mention the aboriginal peoples that the colonialists wiped out in Australasia, North America and elsewhere, and the psychological violence and destruction to those remaining. The world and its history was presented to show that only the deeds of the colonial powers were worth recording, since nobody else had created or contributed anything of note to world civilisation. It was confidently announced that whole

continents, particularly Africa, had no history, no cultures and no institutions of any significance. The British imperialists confidently asserted that the white men of property and their institutions were designed to rule the world and that the more of the world they ruled the more fortunate humanity would be.

No cause for celebration

The fact is that the arrogance, racism and hypocrisy of the 19th century imperialists is still alive and well and manifests itself in the policies and pronouncements of the government today. It is evident in the attempts to impose so-called "universal values" by military means throughout the world, by the attacks on those of Islamic faith, as well as in the government's attempts to re-write history and shed crocodile tears during the current commemorative events. The government's utter contempt for the peoples of Africa is openly expressed by its continuous interference in the political affairs of the African continent, the imposition of the values of neo-liberal globalisation, the forcing of governments to privatise their utilities, the utilisation of enslaving "aid", unequal trading agreements reminiscent of those enforced hundreds of years ago and a myriad of other means which have devastated the African continent and the majority of its inhabitants forced to survive on less than a dollar a day. It is difficult to see what there is here that is worth celebrating.

Two hundred years after the Act of 1807, something about which the government spreads the most blatant disinformation, it is only recently that Blair and co. have been forced to admit the trafficking of human flesh might constitute a crime against humanity, but one for which there should be no apology and no reparation. While in Britain itself, those of African and Caribbean descent, alongside other sections of the people, are still



denied the recognition of their history and culture and as all the social indicators show more likely than other sections of the population to be excluded from school, harassed by the police, imprisoned and detained under the Mental Health Act. Here too it is difficult to find cause for celebration.

Rather, it must be recognised and demanded those who benefited so greatly from this crime against humanity, who built their empire and wealth on the bones of slavery, make reparations for such a crime. The movement for reparations is in essence the striving of the working class and oppressed peoples of the world to create a system built on the rejection of everything that old and modern-day slavery stands for, the striving for a system without the exploitation of persons by persons in which the rights of all human beings and their collectives and nations are provided with a guarantee.

People make history

The demonstrations last week both inside and outside Westminster Abbey did more than just expose the hypocrisy of the British state. They pointed to the fact that it is the rich and their state which are the source of the crimes against humanity which have been perpetrated against the peoples of Britain and the world for many centuries. Not only that but it is those who have committed the most heinous of crimes who wish to present themselves as the greatest humanitarians, who wish to continue to prevent the people from fulfilling their historic mission. Amongst other things the demonstrators pointed to the fact 200 years after 1807, the economic and

political system still serves the rich, while the people are denied the right to govern themselves and control their destiny.

Most importantly the demonstrators pointed out that rather than history being the preserve of the rich and powerful, the last few centuries have ushered in the epoch of the masses of the people not just in Britain but across the globe.

Facts show that the end of the enslavement of Africans was brought about by the struggles of Africans themselves, as well as by millions of working people in Britain and other countries. In Britain, it was these struggles for the rights of all that produced the Chartists and other militant organisations of the working class in which those of African origin, as well as other minorities, often played a leading role. The history of these struggles shows that it is the people who make and transform history, that "we are our own liberators" and that this holds true today as in the past. History shows that the people must oppose and discard the old conscience, everything connected with the oppression, racism and hypocrisy of the rich and find the means and mechanism to transform society so as to put an end to the crimes of the rich, so that society serves the people and their interests, and the people themselves become the decision-makers.

Reparations must be paid!

End the racist system of modern-day slavery!

Fight for a world in which all forms of slavery are abolished!

End the inhuman system of exploitation of persons by persons!

Defend the rights of all!

The Government Must Stop All its Provocations against Iran Immediately

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for an armed assault on that country.

The government knows full well that Iran acts to defend its sovereignty as it its right and duty, and this is not the first time it has had cause to do so against British incursions. To defend its sovereignty and its borders is the right of any country, but the British government has used a spurious furore over a difference of a kilometre or so in an area where the boundary is complicated and has been drawn by Britain itself to take a posture of moral indignation and manufacture an international incident. What are British boats doing in the Shatt al Arab waterway or the Gulf? This sea belongs to Iraq and Iran. It should be considered an illegal act of aggression even to be there. Britain and the US have committed a crime against humanity of immense proportions in invading and occupying Iraq, causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people and annihilating the integrity of that country. The UN mandate under which Tony Blair claims the British service personnel were patrolling is a figleaf to cover over naked aggression. The Prime Minister has demonstrated not only contempt for the lives of the Iraqi people, the people of Lebanon, Palestine, Afghanistan and elsewhere, but also for the

lives and well-being of British armed forces. This has been clearly demonstrated by the stand of Military Families against the War, and by Blair's refusal to meet even one parent of a British serviceman or woman killed in the illegal and unjust conflicts into which the government has sent them.

To take the issue to the UN Security Council is an example of how Britain and the US abuse and manipulate the United Nations Organisation in an attempt to use it to impose their dictate. At the same time, the British provocation has coincided with a build-up of US military forces to be in a position to commit aggression against Iran. According to Russian military intelligence, the data of build-ups on Iran's borders point to heightened US military preparations for both an air and ground operation against Iran. According to the same source, the US naval presence in the Persian Gulf has for the first time in the past four years reached the level that existed shortly before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. The US is also sending Patriot anti-missile systems to the region.

According to the Associated Press, the US Navy on March 27 began its largest demonstration of force in the Persian Gulf since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, led by a pair of aircraft carriers and backed by warplanes flying simulated attack manoeuvres off the coast of Iran. The manoeuvres



bring together two strike groups of US warships and more than 100 US warplanes to conduct simulated air warfare in the crowded Gulf shipping lanes.

A French naval strike group, led by the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, was operating simultaneously just outside the Gulf. The French ships were supporting the NATO forces in Afghanistan and not taking part in the US manoeuvres, officials said.

Overall, the exercises involve more than 10,000 US personnel on warships and aircraft making simulated attacks on enemy shipping with aircraft and ships, hunting enemy submarines and finding mines.

The British have also contributed by sending naval reinforcements, including HMS Cornwall, the Type 22 frigate whose personnel were involved in the incident on March 23.

Such a build-up and war exercises preceded the invasion of Iraq. There too a pretext was used, that of WMD, to bring about "regime change", and there too Britain tried to get UN sanction for such illegality. Pretexts to begin wars of

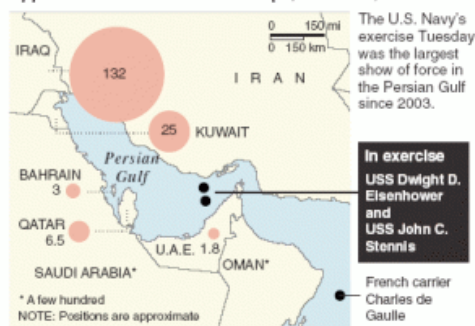
aggression are a Hitlerite method that is well-known, such as the Gulf of Tonkin incident which US imperialism concocted to spark the war in Vietnam.

We call on the working class and people to firmly support the right of Iran to defend its sovereignty, as is its duty under international law. All democratic and anti-war forces must unhesitatingly condemn the British government for its provocations against Iran, for its crimes of aggression in the region. This incident makes it even more urgent to counter the warmongering and imperial programme of the British state and its Labour administration with resistance aimed at bringing into being an anti-war government. It is a fundamental principle of such a government that international contradictions cannot be settled by the doctrine of "might makes right", and that the sovereignty of all be respected.

**No War on Iran!
End All Provocations Now!
No Troops on Foreign Soil!
Defend the Sovereignty of Iran!**

Military pressure increases in Gulf

Approximate number of U.S. troops, in thousands, as of Jan. 2007



SOURCES: Defense Department; ESRI

Approximate number of U.S. troops, in thousands, as of January 2007, the largest show of force in the Persian Gulf since 2003

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Address: 170 Wandsworth Road, London, SW8 2LA

Phone: 0845 644 1979 (Local rate from outside London)
or 020 7627 0599