

# Workers Weekly

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

## Successful Forum Held in London by Friends of Korea on the Korean Nuclear Issue

A successful forum with the title "Who Is Threatening Peace?" was held on Sunday, July 8, 2007, at a community centre in

central London, organised by Friends of Korea.

The forum was held to inform those interested in political developments in Korea in the context of

the world situation of the just stands of the DPRK, particularly over the "nuclear issue" and the successful agreement arising out of the Six-Party Talks. It provided

an opportunity for a lively exchange of views and debate on how to advance the progressive movement against war and for

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## THE CAUSE OF THE WORKING CLASS IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD



Working people throng the streets of Durham as far as the eye can see

Reflections on the 123rd Durham Miners' Gala, Saturday, July 14, 2007. Workers' Weekly Editorial

It is difficult to exaggerate the strong impression of the identity and growing coherence of the working class that is to be had from attending the Durham Miners' Gala. It is a world away

from the anti-social atmosphere and offensive that is prevalent in society as a whole which is in need of a transformation from its roots.

This year's Gala reflected that the working class movement in

the North East, with the miners at its centre, has refused to submit to the anti-social offensive. Not only has the movement kept its identity despite the closure of every single pit, the fact that it centres itself round the values of the working class has ensured that it does not regard itself as a victim and

become a devastated collection of individuals.

This sentiment was also reflected in the best of the speeches at the Big Meeting, which drew attention to the affirmative and enduring

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### Commentary

## "Sir" Salman Rushdie: An Intellectual Serving Anglo-American Imperialism

By Chris Coleman\*

IMPERIALIST STATES BENT ON PURSUING A POLICY OF WARS OF AGGRESSION in order to achieve world domination must first prepare the ground in the realm of ideas, in the field of culture. To do so they need intellectuals prepared to put their talents in the service of retrogression and against the people's cause. Such a person has been the writer Salman Rushdie.

In the late 1980s, with even what had become pseudo-socialism collapsing in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, apart from the openly revolutionary and

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## Successful Forum Held in London by Friends of Korea on the Korean nuclear issue

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peace and security.

Around 30 people participated in the forum. In the chair was Harpal Brar, Chair of Friends of Korea. Also on the panel of personages who had first-hand experience of visiting the DPRK were Andy Brooks and Ella Rule.

Michael Chant, Secretary of the Friends of Korea, gave a brief opening presentation of an update on the latest situation, as reported by KCNA, in order to set the context for the discussion. He also stressed the necessity to combat the disinformation of the monopoly media so as to be able to take a just stand. Every nation has the right to defend itself against a military invasion and to take whatever measures necessary to secure its independence and sovereignty against aggression. While it cannot be in the interests of the world's peoples or of the cause of peace when nuclear weapons are manufactured and stockpiled around the world, nevertheless any nation which is prepared to defend its independence and sovereignty and wishes to exercise its right to self-determination must take whatever steps are necessary to deter military aggression by big powers. This was the stand of the DPRK when it developed its nuclear weapons programme, stressing that this programme was not intended for aggressive purposes but to deter a nuclear attack by US imperialism supported by the British govern-

ment. The principled stand of the DPRK has now resulted in its victory at the Six-Party Talks, forcing the US to agree to a joint document. Now that the funds frozen in Macao have been released, this has opened the way with the principle of "action for action" to the prospect of the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. This victory is also one for peace and security not only on the Korean Peninsula but in East Asia as a whole, and has ramifications for the world's people as a whole. The Anglo-US imperialists must now demonstrate their good faith.

In the ensuing discussion, views were exchanged as to the significance of these developments for Korea and the world's justice-loving people. In the course of discussion, people eloquently spoke about their first-hand experience of the people-centred system in the DPRK, and the leadership of Kim Jong Il, following in the footsteps of President Kim Il Sung.

An important point which was clarified in the course of discussion was that, as with any country, what type of social and economic system the Korean people choose is a matter for them and for them alone. The defence of a country's independence and sovereignty is actually the key stand for progressive people to take when the big powers are attempting to impose their own system of global neo-liberalism by any means on the



world's people, and is a key contribution to consolidating the movement against war and imperialist domination and aggression. As such, the anti-war movement and justice-loving people should unite in support of the right of the DPRK and its people to determine their own social system and their own future. Different opinions on matters which pertain to the Korean people to decide cannot be allowed to divert from uniting to oppose Anglo-US warmongering in East Asia or any other part of the world.

In summing up the discussion, attention was drawn to the importance of the February 13 agreement if fully implemented. At the same time, as the DPRK Foreign Ministry has itself pointed out, all countries must fulfil their commitments, and if steps are not taken to make political and economic compensation as promised, even after the DPRK has suspending the operation of its nuclear facilities, the resumption of its nuclear activity would be legitimate. There can be no illusions about the nature of US and British imperialism.

Informal discussion continued well after the formal end of the meeting, relating to the just stands of the DPRK and the tasks of the anti-war and people's movements.

## "Sir" Salman Rushdie: An Intellectual Serving Anglo-American Imperialism

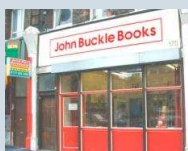
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anti-imperialist states like Cuba and the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), it was becoming clear that one main force standing in the way of imperialist world domination was various Islamic countries. In these countries, which had suffered from colonial oppression and interference, there existed mass anti-imperialist forces and sentiment, even if their manifestation came under the banner of Islam. To prepare the ground for later military aggression, cultural aggression was first necessary. The publication of Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 was part of this cultural aggression. Many commentators came to Rushdie's defence on the grounds of "the right of free speech" when a religious fatwa was issued against him by Ayatollah Khomeini. Among them, it is true, there was some puzzlement that he should immediately be provided with 24-hour protection by the secret agencies of the state – agencies not hitherto known to rush to the defence of a progressive writer, as Rushdie claimed to be, but in fact more famous for the harassment, persecution and even, facts would suggest, the elimination of progressive people. But precious few commentators joined with the Islamic world in pointing out that the right of free speech did not extend to the insulting of whole peoples, the demonisation of whole religions, the provoking of conflicts and violence that could provide the pretext for the

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# The Durham Miners' Gala and Big Meeting

**T**he Durham Miners' Gala was established in 1884 as a means to bring together and organise the mining communities of the Durham coalfield. After 123 years and the repeated attempt at the destruction of these communities, today the Gala, though not as big, is as vibrant and militant as ever.

The main thing that is noticeable, walking through the city of Durham as you attend the Gala, is that the working people of Durham and the North East come out in force. They come to celebrate their heritage, affirm their culture and to put forward their present-day concerns. The way this affirmation is shown has developed over 200 plus years since the industrial revolution. The rich culture of the mining communities takes the form of brass bands, banners and marching culminating in "The Big Meeting". Each mining community is led through the city by a brass band, a banner, and a con-

tingent of people from the community marching proudly behind. Colliery bands came into existence in the early 19th century, and were one of the first mediums to provide musical and social opportunities to the working person. Still today colliery bands provide a focus round which people can unite and express themselves musically and socially. The bands march through Durham city centre to the Racecourse where the Gala is held, stopping outside the County Hotel where they play for the invited speakers and guests on the balcony. The sound of the brass bands is awesome and fills your body with pure sound and tone, while the musicians and the people marching in celebration behind emanate pride and dignity. What is also striking is the discipline of these bands, moving into formation for different tunes where everyone knows exactly what they are doing, whilst harmonising with each other. The bands and com-



**Applause for the brass bands outside the County Hotel**

munity contingents enter the Racecourse loudly and buoyantly, and have a mass of people to greet them. This wonderful spectacle seems to both entertain and inspire.

Waiting for the thousands that attend the Gala is a strip of stalls, pertaining to politics, mining culture, literature, art and crafts, as well as fairground rides and attractions. Stalls attending this year varied from Stop the War, Palestinian solidarity and RCPB(ML). These stalls reflect the very political nature of the Gala. Also organised is a music stage where bands from all over the world come to play, as well as local folk musicians. There are also tents set up for art exhibitions by local artists. There is much to invigorate the senses, intrigue the mind, and the main thing you feel is fraternity that everyone is there no matter what their background, faith or what political organisation they represent; people come together to exchange discussion,

literature and celebrations.

For many, these exchanges are the main part of the day, but there is also the "Big Meeting" which gathers speakers from across the trade union movement to address the Gala. Speakers have ranged from Arthur Scargill, to Tony Benn, to Cuban health care workers. This is where the main concerns of the people are brought to the fore. This year there was a focus on the war, climate change, and working class and people's values.

The Gala is a space for affirmation of working class and people's identity, and a gathering of those who want to see progress, justice and peace, for their communities and the wider world. It is very much owned by the people of the Durham mining communities and extends this ownership to all who attend. This tradition always moves with the times while never leaving its character behind. Long live the Durham Miners' Gala!



**Left: Dave Guy, Durham miners' President, introduces the speakers at the Big Meeting.**

**Right: Paul Kenny, GMB General Secretary.**



# THE CAUSE OF THE WORKING CLASS IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

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nature of the values of the working class. This is especially significant because of the promotion by New Labour of the values of "Britishness" and neo-liberalism as so-called universal values, and the demand not only that these "universal values" become a yardstick for citizenship, but that the whole world adopt them before being allowed to become part of the "international community". The values embodied in the Gala and its traditions give the lie to this ideological and cultural aggression.

Neither is this a regional or a narrow issue. As a slogan of one of the many banners proudly carried at the Gala proclaimed: "The cause of labour is the hope of the world."

It is noticeable that the dignitaries participating in the Big Meeting have to pay attention to and come under the discipline of these values. The dignity of labour is such a natural theme of these traditions that it hardly needs emphasising. The watchwords of the working class, such as "All for One and One for All!", are everywhere evident.

The numbers taking part in this festival of the working class were the biggest in recent years, comparable with the increase in attendance at last year's Miners' Gala. Why are so many working people attending, packing the Racecourse ground, listening carefully to the speeches, pursuing their collective enjoyment and being inspired by the magnificence of the brass bands, and the pipe bands, and ensuring that Durham is under the control of the workers for this day? It looks as if the working class is affirming its identity, their right to be. The workers, with the miners at the forefront, together with the youth and others, have fought their battles, some very physical, with the state that has striven to wipe out their identity, destroy their livelihoods, and demanded that competing in the global market place is the be-all and end-all, and devil take the hindmost. The pow-

ers-that-be have always chorused that the workers should hand over the initiative and their concern for the future to parties and other forces over which they have no control and in which they cannot set the agenda. With the exposure of New Labour as a party leading the working class and people down the road of aggressive war and domestic dictate, it looks as if the communities of the North East have sensed that now is the time when taking control of their own destiny is on the agenda as a problem taken up for solution.

The debate is certainly joined as to how to take control of the future, how to advance to socialism in modern, proletarian colours, where the monopolies are deprived of their "right" to dictate to the people and to sow division and devastation.

The issue of confronting the crisis of climate change is one where the workers are putting forward solutions not just to problems which affect their own interests, but to society's problems. This was a feature of the Gala, where modern coal technology was discussed. It reflected the growing awakening of workers and their trade unions taking up the general interests of society, and in particular the question of the fate of society regarding the human and natural environment, the economy and the necessity for a pro-worker, pro-social and anti-war agenda.

What is posed by this Gala of the miners and the workers as a whole is how to move forward so that the workers are able to set their stamp on the whole country, to achieve that power to enable them to take hold of what belongs to them and to ensure that decision-making power is a prerogative not of a few but of the people as a whole. The best of the trade union leaders can be said to be responding to this challenge, and looking to take up an agenda which takes up responsibility for the fate of society.

There is thus an urgency present in the discussions which are taking place over the future direc-



**Listening to the speeches at the Big Meeting**

tion of society with the demise of Tony Blair. The workers, particularly the miners, are reminding themselves that the role of the working class in Britain in modern times was set with the defeat of the Heath government in 1974 when, in confrontation with the miners, he went to the country with the question, "Who Rules Britain?" It was a question posed again in 1984/85 without being brought fully to the fore. The direction of society and who is in control of this direction is again an urgent issue.

The workers are taking up this problem as a contingent of the international proletariat, strengthening their unity and defining the

aim of the working class movement as the cause of socialism and communism. Again, for example, there were Cuban representatives on the platform of the Big Meeting. The spirit is that each contingent on a world scale is settling scores with its own bourgeoisie or engaged in building a system which the people themselves have chosen and made sacrifices in their millions to achieve.

In summary, the essence of this year's Durham Miners' Gala and Big Meeting was that of taking up responsibility for the fate of society, as well as defending the interests of society's collectives, and affirming the rights of all by virtue of being human.

## "Sir" Salman Rushdie: An Intellectual Serving Anglo-American Imperialism

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most terrible destruction. Tragically, as is now clear, these worst fears were to be borne out.

Now with Rushdie's knight-hood nearly twenty years on, the Blair/Brown government and the British state have felt emboldened to reward this servant of imperialism, and moreover in doing so to unleash yet another provocation against the Islamic world. Despite the debacle into which their policies have led them with their criminal wars of aggression in Afghanistan

and Iraq, despite the wanton and terrible destruction they have visited on these countries, despite the vast and appalling loss of life they have caused, they stagger blindly on, threatening to drag millions more into their catastrophe. Salman Rushdie himself – despicable individual as he is – is not the issue. The issue is that once again Anglo-American imperialism is making its preparations for further wars of aggression against those who stand in their way. They must be stopped!

\* Chris Coleman is National Spokesperson of RCPB(ML) and a writer whose 1976 play on Ireland *United We Stand!* suffered harassment by the Army in Belfast, and by Special Branch in England leading directly to the cutting off of state funding to the theatre company who produced it.

## Workers' Daily Internet Edition

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