

workers power

Inside

- Asylum rights and wrongs
- What if the Tories kill Kenny?
- Argentine workers vs the IMF
- US anti-sweatshop strikes
- Why we're short of teachers

Blair's offer to PFI millionaires:

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LIKE
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AFTER GENOA: 8 PAGE SUPPLEMENT ON ANTI CAPITALIST STRATEGY

School's out for teachers

Kate Ford asks why nobody wants to teach in Britain's schools anymore

As schools return for the new academic year this month, many parents will be wondering if their child will be lucky enough to have a teacher.

The teacher shortage, which has been building steadily for the past two years, is about to reach a crisis point. The chief inspector of schools and head of Ofsted, Mike Tomlinson, grabbed the press headlines in August when he said that the shortage was the worst that he had witnessed since he starting teaching in 1965.

Tomlinson pointed out that 40 per cent of new teachers were leaving within their first three years. A survey commissioned by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) published in August shows that half of the current teaching force is due to retire in the next 10 years and argues that teaching may become unsustainable. In order to avoid this, one in eight graduates would have to become teachers – a highly unlikely scenario.

Another survey, conducted by the Guardian, shows that the shortage is not just an inner city problem: it affects Hertfordshire as well as Hackney. Vacancy rates in Yorkshire are as high as London, at 21 per cent. In Norfolk one headteacher told the Times Education Supplement (TES) that they had been unable to find a supply teacher since last February.

Headteachers, who have until now been keen to play down the crisis to avoid bad publicity for their own schools and to avoid confronting the government, are themselves now reaching breaking point. Stories are emerging of desperate measures as they try to staff their schools.

One head of an inner city school in London flew out to India to recruit new staff last April. When he returned a week later he found that another eight teachers had resigned from his school. One head in Thurrock has sent out pupils to leaflet a local supermarket asking shoppers if they would consider teaching at the school. Another headteacher admitted that they had employed two people to teach from this September who have no qualifications whatsoever.

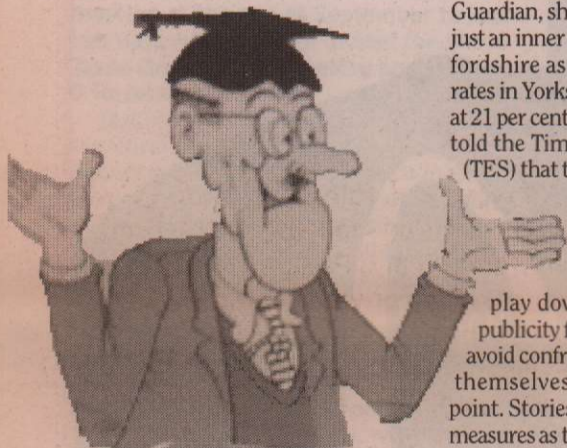
Aside from the scale of the problem, the most staggering aspect of the current situation is the government's permanent state of denial. They refuse to accept that there is a problem, that they are any way to blame for it or that there is anything that they can do about it. The new Education Secretary Estelle Morris spouts statistics in interviews claiming that there are more teachers now than under the Tories and the government is investing millions in recruitment and retention. The Department for Education and Skills resembles a child's spinning top: spinning at an astoundingly dizzy rate but going nowhere towards solving the crisis.

Not that they are being put under tremendous pressure from the unions. Despite what would seem to be a position of strength, the major teaching unions have been desperate to help the Blairites out. They called off action designed to highlight the crisis in return for the promise of talks. The outcome of these talks? The unions agreed that, to avoid sending children home, teachers should do more work to cover for absent teachers. With opposition like this is it any wonder that Estelle Morris is getting away with her ostrich act?



What are the causes of the teacher shortage?

- Pay is a abysmal – particularly in London and the south east where housing costs are making it difficult for many public sector workers to afford to buy a home.
 - Workload remains a key issue. Teachers are still bogged down in piles of paperwork often generated by the latest of the government's endless initiatives.
 - Ofsted, while the rhetoric has been toned down since the departure of Chris Woodhead, continues to be a bureaucratic nightmare for those schools under its spotlight – endless inspections rather than support is the Ofsted remedy for so called 'failing' schools.
 - Performance related pay is a major factor. Brought in supposedly to attract more people into teaching, PRP is actually having the reverse effect. Many highly experienced teachers were humiliated when they were forced into spending days filling in forms justifying why they should be paid an extra £2,000.
 - As some new teachers are offered "golden hellos", those already in schools feel undervalued and leave encouraging a revolving door culture.
- In addition, last year the government imposed a performance management scheme which will leave managers tied up in piles of paperwork and could lead to every teacher being paid differently.



An international crisis?

Concern is growing about the shortage of teachers internationally. Schools in New York will start this year short of 1,000 teachers. Australia, traditionally the source of many supply teachers in Britain, is currently suffering its own teacher shortage.

Unable to recruit from these traditional sources of overseas teachers, many in Britain are attempting to employ teachers from countries in the developing world.

The VSO estimates that over 1,000 teachers have been recruited from the developing world in the last year alone. Yet many of these countries are suffering even more severe teacher shortages. As the VSO pointed out many children in the developing world are taught in classes of 100, others have no access to education at all. Teachers are being lured to Britain, when they are desperately needed in their own country. A spokesperson for the VSO said: "Our own teacher shortage pales in comparison with those in countries such as India, Namibia, Nigeria and South Africa, where UK teacher recruitment agencies are able to recruit aggressively, unchecked and unbound by guidelines or regulations."

And when these teachers do arrive in Britain they can expect little in terms of support. The experience of two South African teachers who were recruited to work in Hackney last term is not exceptional. Renee and Cecil were recruited by an agency to teach in two Hackney primary schools. They received no training. Both teachers were sacked without notice after a few months, leaving them without pay, just before the summer holidays, and stranded in Britain.

Cecil was told to leave after a complaint was made about him by some teaching assistants. The complaint was not investigated and Cecil never had a chance to give his side of the story. He was told that since he had no contract with the school he had no rights to notice or to appeal against the head's decision. Renee was told to leave because she didn't smile enough and because in the heat of a summer's day she had opened one of the windows in the classroom – though only by a few inches. Again she was told that she was not employed by the school but by the agency – and so the school could dismiss her without notice.

The local education authority and the agency who had brought them to Britain refused to help them out. The agency told Renee that they didn't have to find her another job; she was not their responsibility.

Only with the support of the local NUT were Renee and Cecil able to get enough money to survive over the summer and Waltham Forest education authority immediately agreed to take them on when approached by the union.

Are the kids to blame?

POOR BEHAVIOUR is often cited as a cause for teachers leaving their jobs. The tabloids frequently indulge in frenzied exposés of the violence in our classrooms. Certainly behaviour can be a big problem in schools. But the reality is that, in most schools, it is government policies and the teacher shortage itself which are affecting behaviour, rather than poor standard of behaviour causing the shortage of teachers.

There are often two responses to poor behaviour. There is the "kick-em out" brigade, which clamours for more and more kids to be kicked out of schools. And then there is the "blame parents or teachers" brigade – "not enough discipline at home, softy liberal teachers" etc. Both of these responses are superficial and wrong, failing fundamentally to understand the underlying issues.

It is true that some children hate school. And it is not surprising that they misbehave when they are forced to spend the majority of their time in one.

For many children the curriculum that they are offered, what they are actually taught in school, has very little relevance to their lives.

The British state education system has since its inception attempted to mirror the public school model of education: highly academic in theory, repetitive drudgery in practice. Practical subjects are traditionally less valued than the academic core.

Recent revisions of exam syllabuses have continued this trend. Teaching to the exam has replaced an emphasis in the eighties on coursework. An ability

to take tests has become more important than developing any depth of understanding in a subject. Even if you choose to study subjects such as drama, music or art, exam success will rely heavily on your level of literacy and ability to "write to the exam". League tables and payment by results reinforce this academ-

For many working class and ethnic minority children schools simply do not offer them the education they want, need or in which they can succeed

ic, exam-orientated straitjacket.

This situation was exacerbated by the imposition of the National Curriculum under Thatcher. Black history disappeared and the history curriculum became overtly imperialist. In the study of literature, modern authors – many of whom write about the experience of working class or black people – were replaced by the wholly white, exceptionally middle class and predominantly male Victorians. Whilst these writers undoubtedly have their worth, their imposition at the expense of others has done little to inspire young readers.

For many working class and ethnic minority children schools simply do not offer them the education they want, need or in which they can succeed.

Other government policies are also

adding to feelings of worthlessness and alienation amongst some pupils. Rather than taxing the rich to fund schools according to need, Blair has since his election in 1997 introduced rationing into schools. Money is given only for some schools and for targeting pupils. "Beacon" and specialist schools get more cash for developing their expertise. Others, usually the struggling working class comprehensive down the road, get nothing. Schools have been asked to identify 10 per cent of their pupils as gifted and talented. Money is available for additional resources only for these "more able" pupils.

Challenging behaviour from pupils in school is always an issue for teachers. But a shortage of teachers adds to the problem. Research clearly shows that all children, particularly those children with special needs, do better in smaller classes. Fewer teachers mean larger classes.

Teachers who are forced to do extra classes to cover for absent colleagues or vacancies have less time to plan and prepare lessons which can meet the needs of all children in their own group.

Overseas teachers are being recruited to British schools with very little training and support. They arrive in a country with a totally different education system, a different curriculum, and they are expected to cope, learning "on the job".

Poorly resourced schools, a lack of training, a lack of teachers and an alienating school curriculum is a recipe for poor behaviour and failure in our schools.

Unions must up the ante on privatisation

Trade union leaders are talking tough with New Labour over privatisation. But have they got the bottle for a fight?

Will it end with a bang or a whimper? In the run up to this month's meeting of the Trades Union Congress in Brighton the union bosses are squaring up for a fight with Blair over privatisation.

John Monks, the TUC general secretary shocked the press, in August when he declared that New Labour was facing "the shortest honeymoon on record". He went on to warn of a "very difficult relationship" between Labour and the unions in the near future, if Labour continues with its privatisation mania.

The TUC Congress begins on 10 September. Many of the motions tabled condemn Blair's infatuation with the private sector and call for an end to PFI and PPP projects. A motion agreed by 19 unions, and expected to get overwhelming support at the Congress calls for mass protests against privatisation. The motion, proposed by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), states that:

"We fundamentally believe that public services should be publicly owned and staffed by public servants" and that "Congress does not believe that the expansion and improvement of public services can be achieved through an increased role for the private sector in the provision of core public services, and rejects the notion that efficient pub-

lic services can only be provided entirely by, or in partnership with, the private sector."

The motions will be debated on the day after Blair addresses the Congress. He is likely to reiterate his belief that the government has a mandate to privatise and that the only difficulty is how they "present" this policy.

So are the union leaders on a collision course with New Labour? At union conferences before and after the election union funding of the Labour Party has been challenged. Union donations are expected to fall from 70 per cent of the Labour Party's election budget in 1992 to 35 per cent. The GMB are cutting their donations by £1 million over the next four years.

But while some union leaders are personally opposed in principle to privatisation, most of them take a more "pragmatic" approach. Privatisation is decimating union membership - in two ways. Some transfers to the private sector are putting workers on the frontline of a battle with union busting multinationals that they are just not prepared for at branch level. A more insidious factor is that, with workforces being sold off to companies that are then taken over and broken up, the central offices can simply lose touch with hundreds of

former members.

So the union leaders will be keen to find a compromise with New Labour which protects their organisation and subs, while allowing the government's new friends in business to make a good profit. Even the motion promising mass protests emphasises pressure on the government over action. It states that the TUC will "campaign and mobilise support for this policy (against privatisation), press on the government the need to think again and, if necessary, support the calling of a national demonstration in support of public services."

Hardly an inspiring call to action! What we need instead is a fight to stop privatisation dead in its tracks. We don't want union leaders just to fight the effects of privatisation on the workforce: they should be fighting privatisation in principle. That, of course means a political fight - and inevitably puts on the agenda a socialist political alternative to New Labour that the Socialist Alliance is fighting for. And it means actively gearing up the unions at branch level to block privatisation - not chasing the fantasy of unions as "service" organisations that many delegates at this month's Congress are terminally addicted to.

Tories vote for civil war

This month, Tory party members may vote to keep their party out of office for at least another term and condemn it to years of civil war, defections and even splits.

On 17 July, Tory MPs unexpectedly kicked front runner Michael Portillo off the shortlist for the party leadership. Portillo was the preferred candidate of two-thirds of the Shadow Cabinet. He was preferred because his Thatcherite past and his quasi-liberal new image would allow him to straddle both camps of the Tories. He also held to William Hague's pragmatic version of Euro-phobia rather than Duncan-Smith's rabid ideological version.

But the party faithful were never going to have a man who admitted to past gay experiences in charge of the party. Lord Tebbit, on Duncan Smith's behalf, denounced Portillo as "not normal" and praised Duncan Smith as a "family man".

The future lies in the hands of around 300,000 party members. The average age is at least 65. Fewer than 5 per cent are under 35 years of age. They hanker after the "good old days" of Thatcherism and its crushing defeats of the miners, dockers, printworkers.

The core of this cesspool of reaction is the 30,000 or so Tory activists who have made it absolutely clear they want the Thatcher legacy revived in the form of Duncan Smith.

Their credo runs like this: no to asylum seekers, yes to hanging and caning, no to tax, welfare spending, yes to anti-union laws, no to blacks and homosexuals. One Tory member from Somerset wrote to the media of her shame at the fact that the word "coons" is regularly used in local Tory meetings and that party members cheered at the death of 54 Chinese asylum seekers in a sealed container last year.

People on the far right quickly signed up to Duncan Smith's campaign team. Even though BNP leader Nick Griffin's father has been "outed" it only served to underline the fact that most Tory party members agree with "voluntary repatriation" of black and Asian British people.

But more than anything, as the *Economist* said: "The Tory leadership contest is playing out, in slow motion, the party's fundamental divide over relations with the European Union."

Most Tory MPs and the majority of the membership hate the idea that they may be led by Kenneth Clarke simply because he proposes that Britain adopts the Euro. Duncan Smith has not only ruled out joining in principle but in 1997, in parliament, expressed sympathy for "that growing number of people" who "have determined that outright departure [from European Union] is the only solution".

This stance has induced despair into British bosses. Most big businesses want to be inside Eurozone soon for sound capitalist business reasons and the idea that Duncan Smith could lead the main political vehicle for the bosses this century, fills them with gloom.

But if a Duncan Smith win would lose the Tories even more business friends then they would certainly lose any influence that they have on those under 30 years of age - bar the 10,000 of them that are Tory party members.

The Tories social base has become smaller and older during the past 40 years. They hate recreational drugs, black culture and gays - in short all the things that young people see as normal and to be valued.

In this climate, policy differences between Duncan Smith and Clarke are hardly the point. Clarke is as reactionary as any Tory on education policy, welfare,

privatisation, trade unions and immigration policy. He was the architect of some of the worst policies of Thatcherism and signed up for the rest in a succession of Tory cabinets.

But he and his supporters know that if they want to get elected again they have to do two things: tailor their European policy to keep the support of mainstream big business; and alter their social policies to make them look like a modern political party.

Many trade union activists and socialists would be delighted if the Tory rank and file push the self-destruct button and vote for Duncan Smith as leader on the assumption that it will make them totally unelectable.

But this too is the outcome most favoured by Blair and the Labour leaders. They know that huge swathes of "traditional" Tory policy not yet vacated by them will be up for grabs. Blair could engineer a busload of Sean Woodward type defections. Blair would have no parliamentary constraints on him. Blair could further move Labour to the right, hard though it is to imagine.

Blair's famous "project" was to get Labour in power, cast off its links to the unions, and form a coalition of the political centre linked to Euro entry, the atomisation of working class communities and the adoption of US style welfare policies - and kept in power by proportional representation. The landslide of 1997 got in the way of that.

But a Duncan Smith victory will revive the possibility in a different form. A split of the Tory "left"; an ad-hoc coalition around the Euro-entry referendum; electoral oblivion for the official wing of the Tory party. Of course the price of the project will be paid by the working class, which will see the possibility of exerting pressure on Labour through the unions become even more remote.

What we think...

Had enough of McLabour?

Public services are in a mess. The reason for this is not in dispute. The public sector has been starved of cash for almost 30 years.



Labour's answer to this is to extend privatisation. But nine out of ten people are against the privatisation of public services.

The reasons for such levels of public distrust are easy to explain:

■ Privatisation doesn't result in an improved service, just look at the railways.

■ Privatisation drains money from public services into the pockets of big business

■ Privatisation removes the accountability of public services and hands real control over to a tiny number of corporate bosses.

These arguments are dismissed as dated dogma by Tony Blair. Yet the very same arguments were advanced by a firm of accountants, Deloitte & Touche, in a report criticising the government's plan to PPP the London Underground. A report Blair tried to suppress.

Labour's Brighton conference will see new levels of big business brown-nosing. The £15,000 McDonalds extravaganza is nothing compared to the thousands being spent on lobbying by the firms that stand to gain from PFI and PPP.

Why is Blair transfixed by private sector involvement? Blair is the principal political champion of globalisation in Europe. And globalisation means opening up every single public service in the world to the global profiteers.

Privatisation is enshrined in the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) which Blair supports to the hilt.

The anti-globalisation movements that have effectively harassed the gatherings of the globalisers during the past two years, know what is at stake. In many countries the movement has brought together anti-capitalist youth and the organised workers' movement. But not so far in Britain.

Blair currently has one enormous advantage. The anti-capitalist youth and the mass of organised workers are not united in one movement.

The union leaders refuse to really fight Blair. They stand by while anti-capitalist youth are criminalised by Blair's police, as they were on Mayday, this year. And many rank and file militants still see the street protests and the everyday job of union activism as two different worlds.

Overcoming this division, and the limitations it places on our ability to defeat privatisation, is the immediate task.

The anger in public sector unions is real and deep. We need to build that anger - around the demonstration at the Labour Party Conference on 30 September - and translate it into effective action.

We should aim to build strikes, occupations of threatened services, blockades of town centres or key roads, powerful demos outside every local council planning a PPP scheme, massive and imaginative publicity campaigns taking the message against privatisation and globalisation into every community.

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Oldham Nazis 'set to march'

ANL strategy is not working. Defy bans on anti-fascist demos!

Oldham: On 1 September about 100 anti fascists leafleted the mainly white council estates in Oldham where the BNP made its election breakthrough. About 150 people did the same in Burnley, despite the police turning back a coachload of Anti Nazi League supporters from London. The leafleting was a success - but a poor substitute for the ANL Carnival planned for that day, that was banned by the police.

Faced with the police ban the ANL complied. But the fascists have no such qualms. Their supporters brazenly told ANL leafleters that the BNP plans an illegal march in Oldham "soon".

Anti fascists in the north west are asking: how long can we go on accepting police bans on our right to fight back while the fascists poison our communities? And who decides on whether we comply with bans anyway?

Fascist successes in the general election are a wake up call to the working class and the left. The growth of support for the BNP is the payload of years of racist rhetoric in the press and of New Labour's crackdown on asylum seekers. But it goes further. New Labour's love-in with the global corporations means increasing deprivation, poor housing and crumbling services, breeding despair among the poorest sections of the working class. And fascism breeds on despair.

The government's scapegoating of refugees added thousands of votes to the BNP's final tally. Fascism thrives on racism and New Labour is making racism respectable. Labour's policies are helping the fascists.

But despite the big votes the BNP got, the fascist movement is still tiny. We can smash it to pieces before it grows big. The courageous, mass resistance to the fascists - and their police protectors - by Asian youth in Burnley, Bradford and Oldham shows this potential. Asian youth, united with thousands of workers, black and white, can crush the BNP on the streets and their

counterparts in the NF. Our immediate aims in the months ahead should be geared towards achieving this.

First off, we need a workers' united front against fascism as the basis of the movement. Anti-fascist, anti-racist, community, trade union, youth and anti-capitalist organisations must come together into one big force to throw back the fascists every time they try to meet, march, campaign or stand in elections. We must deny the fascists any platform to spread their views. We must impose this ourselves.

Second, we need well-organised teams of stewards capable of dealing physically with the fascists - only this can make the slogan "no platform" really mean no platform. BNP leader Nick Griffin plays Mr Respectable for the cameras while his storm troopers are out ambushing Asian taxi drivers and battering them with baseball bats, firebombing Asian shops and organising racist attacks. The fascist gangs can and must be stopped - by any means necessary. We can drive them back into their sewers by teams of stewards organised by the movement and accountable to it. Finally, we need to support community self defence. Every Asian youth who took to the streets in the summer knows that

after the demos, after the cameras have long gone, the racist gangs will be back trying to terrorise the communities. Well organised and vigilant community defence is essential. The police attack the Asian communities. They cannot be relied on. The communities have shown that they can defend themselves. It is vital that the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement supports them by committing the entire workers' movement to back up and help build vigilant self defence organisations.

These aims sum up the working class response to fascism - a self organised, self reliant united fightback. They strengthen us at the expense of the fascists.

Fascist successes in the general election are a wake up call to the working class and the left. The growth of support for the BNP is the payload of years of racist rhetoric in the press and of New Labour's crackdown on asylum seekers

State bans strategy is a dead end

Only organised working class action can stop the Nazis. That is why it is so wrong and dangerous to call - as the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) do - for the state to ban the fascists.

This policy has a long history in the ANL. It is designed to make anti-fascism "respectable". It enables the ANL to parade celebrities, MPs and church leaders as sponsors. These types can live with calls on the state to ban fascism but they would run a mile from a clear call on workers and youth, black and white, to physically smash fascism on the streets.

State bans work against the working class and the black communities - always and everywhere. Why?

■ They rely on the police to stop the fascists. But the cops are racist, so they protect the fascists and attack the anti-fascists, like in Oldham.

■ The state is not and never can be consistently "anti fascist". It is not neutral. In a nutshell it is a capitalist state and regards the working class, the left and the black and Asian communities as a bigger threat. It will come down harder on us than the fascists.

■ State bans are used against the anti fascists and left more than they are used against the Nazis. Even if a fascist march is banned, the ban will apply equally (indeed mainly) against us. Look at Burnley. It was the anti-fascist ANL carnival that was banned, while the fascist festival in Wales was defended to the hilt by the state.

The call for state bans ignores the way the capitalist state thinks and acts. Home Secretary David Blunkett responded to the Nazi incursions and resulting uprisings with the strategy: repress all street activity, all "extremism" of the left and right. He will look, as summer draws to a close, at the record of that strategy and claim it worked.

The continued call for a state ban on the Nazis indirectly led to the banning of the Carnival in Burnley and has prevented us from organising a united show of strength. This must never happen again. We must build a united front against fascism that relies on its own strength and organisation and that can, in future, defy any bans imposed on us.

Last, but most importantly, the threat of fascism can only be defeated by the working class itself - Asian, black and white - through our own organisations and our own activity. To spread the illusion that someone else (a racist, capitalist state) can do this hinders our self organisation. It is counter-productive to the fight against fascism.

Ultimately, fascist organisations will continue to appear, to attack black people, and to grow for as long as there is prejudice, division, poverty and oppression for them to prey on.

The root cause of fascism lies in the global capitalist system itself. To banish fascism from the face of the earth forever, we need to overthrow capitalism in a global revolution that can finally unite the human race.

HUNDREDS OF refugees were stranded on a freighter off the coast of Australia. Nine hundred wait in squalid conditions on the French coast at Sangatte. A young man is stabbed to death in Glasgow. A 35 year old man hangs himself in Lancashire after his asylum claim is rejected.

These are the human casualties of an international refugee crisis.

In the "new world order" hundreds of thousands flee poverty, repression and violence. They search for sanctuary - but rarely find it.

Six million Afghans have been forced to flee their country over the past 20 years, to escape war and now the oppressive regime of the Taliban. Last month, 433 made the dangerous

trip across the Indian Ocean in an attempt to escape to Australia. They were rescued by a Norwegian freighter only to be told that they would not be allowed to set foot on Christmas Island in order to seek asylum in Australia.

Meanwhile at the very doorstep of Britain, outside the entrance to the channel tunnel at Sangatte, 900 refugees are being held in a detention camp. Increasingly desperate to make the final stage of their journey to Britain, asylum seekers risk their lives attempting to get aboard the high speed trains. At the end of August a group attempted to walk through the highly electrified tunnel. Watched on CCTV, they were arrested before reaching their goal.

And yet what can they expect if they do arrive in Britain? New Labour is

Millions poverty

Why do thousands flee to Britain? Because we

You can't watch a TV programme or read a newspaper article about asylum seekers without some racist asking: "Why do they come here - is Britain a soft touch?"

But the real question is: why do asylum seekers come at all? Why do they leave their families and their possessions behind to risk suffocation, violence and death on the open seas? Why do they endure the humiliation of vouchers, dispersal and racist abuse?

The top three countries asylum seekers come from are Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq. A look at the statistics and the history of these countries tells you everything you need to know about why they come.

Afghanistan. According to the CIA's "World Factbook" Afghanistan has no government, no judiciary and no law. It suffers from "enormous poverty, a crumbling infrastructure and widespread live mines".

Afghans have a life expectancy of 46 years. There are 1.2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and 1.4 million in Iran. According to the CIA: "The majority of the population continues to suffer from insufficient food, clothing, housing and medical care."

Afghanistan got this way after of 10 years of Soviet occupation. The Islamic fundamentalist resistance that now rules Afghanistan was backed by the USA and Britain. But the country has always been desperately poor and until 1919 was ruled directly by Britain.

Women are denied basic civil rights. The internet is banned. Political repression is rife.

If you lived there, would you stay? **Somalia.** According to the CIA Somalia has "no functioning government". There has been intermittent civil war since 1977. Even the UN has pulled out from Somalia so humanitarian aid is patchy. The CIA says: "Somalia is one of the world's poorest and least developed countries. Somalia has few resources. Moreover much of the economy is devastated by civil war."

Life expectancy is 46. In Britain it is 77. Infant mortality is 125 deaths per thousand. In Britain it is just five per thousand.

Northern Somalia was a British colony, while the southern part was ruled by Italy. Somalia became independent in 1960. If you lived there, would you stay?

Iraq. Iraq is an oil rich country with a life expectancy of 65 and an industrial sector that was once the envy of the Middle East. But its economy is ravaged by sanctions imposed by the UN, led by Britain and the USA. There is no democracy: all political activity has to be sanctioned by the Saddam Hussein regime.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, in the north, there is a UN protectorate - but even here socialists are repressed and killed by Kurdish nationalists and Islamic fundamentalists. There is a large population of Shi'a Muslims that has been displaced from its traditional marshland homes by drainage schemes. Because of the economic sanctions, which include a ban on medicines going in, the infant mortality rate in this relatively developed third world country is 62 deaths per thousand.

Iraq was a British protectorate after the First World War, and the USA foiled its first attempt at independent government in 1953. It is still suffering massively from the effects of US-led bombing of 1991. It is still being routinely bombed by Britain and the USA to this day.

If you lived there, would you stay? The three top countries for refugees, then, have these things in common. They were once ruled or overseen, in whole or part, by British imperialism. British civil servants told their populations that Britain had a right to rule because it was civilised.

Independence, for all three countries, proved a sham. They were all economically dependent on the West at some point - and any attempt to act independently of the west brought military intervention.

continuing its policy of prisons, dispersal and humiliation of asylum seekers. Some are locked up in detention centres like Campsfield or prisons like Rochester, many thousands are packed off to different areas of the country.

One young man, Firsat Yildiz, was "dispersed" to a housing estate in Glasgow. 1,500 refugees have been sent to this estate which is amongst the poorest in the country. Fifty per cent of young people of Firsat's age are unemployed. Forty per cent of those who live in Sighthill are living below the official poverty line. Some resent the arrival of asylum seekers - they were not consulted, not even informed about what benefits they would and would not be getting.

This resentment is stoked by the right wing press, the constant media hysteria about bogus asylum seekers, and the New Labour and Tory politicians who compete

to see who can be the "hardest" on these most vulnerable members of society.

Since the refugees arrived in Sighthill there have been over 70 racist assaults, in April there was a serious assault on some Palestinian refugees; in June the flats were leafleted by the British National Party. Nothing was done. On the evening of 4 August Firsat Yildiz was stabbed to death in an unprovoked attack.

Nassar Ahmed had been in Britain for over a year. He fled his country, Eritrea, to escape war, arriving in Britain last June. He settled in Lancashire, living alone. In a letter dated 20 August he was informed by the Home Office that his application for asylum had been refused. A few days later he hanged himself.

We've got free markets, free trade, free exchange. But its working class people who are enslaved: trapped in their own country, prey to human smugglers,

imprisoned when they try to escape, subjected to violence and death where they look for relief.

The stories of Firsat and Nassar, of the people of the Sangatte camp or those stranded on a boat are sadly not exceptions but just part of a global picture of immigration and asylum seekers.

This is a global picture which must be torn to shreds. In the days after Firsat's death the workers of Glasgow began to organise. Over a thousand trade unionists and refugees demonstrated against the racism of New Labour and the press.

In August the refugees of Sangatte confronted the French CRS and marched to the local town centre to protest against their detention.

The imprisonment of innocent people, the racist murders, the poison and bigotry that is polluting working class communities can and must be stopped.

flee from and war

've created a world of poverty and war, writes *Frank Kellermann*

They are all desperately poor countries. And western aid in all three countries is patchy or non-existent - in part because the aid agencies cannot work with the combination of society breakdown and severe repression.

These are countries whose problems were made in the west. Britain's big businesses - even some of our big buildings - were paid for by the exploitation of these countries.

So when you hear of the "flood of asylum seekers" flowing our way - think of the flood of misery Britain and the other developed countries have sent in their direction.

We say: asylum seekers are welcome here. There would be more than enough resources to welcome every-



one who wants to live in Britain if the government would take them from the rich.

People come because the imperial-

ist new world order is only "orderly" in the industrialised heartlands. For the rest it means chaos, torture, dictatorship and poverty.

Hypocrisy over 'economic migrants'

NHS managers are currently scouring the world for qualified nurses. From Spain to the Philippines and even China they are recruiting with no holds barred.

Go to any school in a hard pressed inner city and you will find teachers from South Africa, Australia and the USA.

Go to any computer firm or IT department and you will find a good number of recently arrived experts from Eastern Europe or Asia.

And now the NHS is advertising for foreign doctors to come to Britain.

Now what is the word for all these people? Economic migrants. Sound familiar? Yes, "economic migrants" are supposed to be the worst kind of asylum seekers: the "bogus" ones who are cheating the system.

So on the one hand we have the government working overtime to keep "economic migrants" out: and on the other hand it is spending millions to invite them in.

Where is the logic? Well there is a logic - but it exposes the racism at the

heart of the asylum and immigration system.

Britain's black and Asian communities have existed for hundreds of years - but they were massively boosted in the 1950s and 1960s when there was a labour shortage.

Enoch Powell, the Tory minister who later became known as the leader of the overt racist faction of the establishment, actually toured the Caribbean to find people for the jobs white British workers did not want to do in the economic boom. So in a boom, even for far right Tories, economic migrants were a good thing.

Today, while we're not in a boom, there is an acute labour shortage especially of skilled public sector workers (doctors, nurses, teachers) and skilled IT workers. This is hitting the profits of the private sector and the targets of the Labour government.

So they're out looking for economic migrants yet again.

But you have to be the right kind of migrant. You have, if possible, to be

white. Or you have to be from the EU. If you are not either of these you have to come with very stringent conditions that you will not claim the right to stay.

Meanwhile, the asylum seeker population contains hundreds of trained doctors, nurses, teachers and other professionals who are not allowed to work.

It all shows how capitalism can simply tear up the "Britain is full" argument when the system needs it. It shows that Britain's asylum and immigration laws are racist and class-ridden.

If you are Afghan and poor and fleeing torture, you have no rights. If you are a white South African and a qualified teacher you have rights aplenty.

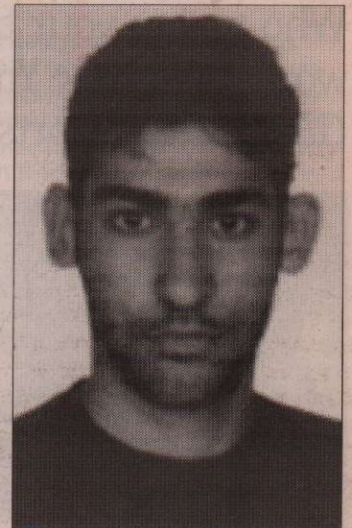
We have to put a stop to the hypocrisy on economic migrants. If Britain has a skills shortage let's fill it both by training unemployed people and by letting asylum seekers work.

As long as money can roam the globe freely workers should be able to move to find work.

Release Mario Bango now!

14th September: Day of International Solidarity with Mario Bango!

Racist attacks and murders are the hallmark of the discrimination and oppression of Roma in Eastern Europe. The state authorities ignore or minimise these attacks. The result has been waves of emigration to some of west European countries where Roma desperately hope that they can be safe from this sort of Nazi terror.



Young Roma anti-racist activist Mario Bango was determined to stay and fight racism and fascism in his own country - Slovakia. He and his family were repeatedly subjected to racist abuse and physical attacks. On one occasion his brother Eduard was seriously injured after being attacked by Nazis. He had to spend two weeks in hospital

So on Friday 10 March when a Nazi attacked his brother on a bus Mario defended him with a knife, which many young Roma carry because of the likelihood of life threatening attacks on them. The Nazi attacker was seriously injured and died in hospital 3 weeks later. Mario did not try to escape but waited while the police and ambulance was called. He was immediately arrested and charged with "causing injury resulting in death".

The Slovak media immediately reported the case from the Nazi attackers side, falsely stating that Mario and his brother had been stealing from passengers on the bus. Nationalist politicians sided with the racist attacker and the Slovak parliament held a minute's silence in commemoration of a "student and model citizen".

In jail, Mario suffers regular racist abuse and threats from prison guards who are open supporters of far right. Only the level of public and media attention brought about by an international campaign stops them from beating him up or making good their death threats.

■ We believe Mario Bango is no criminal! His "crime" was to defend his brother from a life threatening racist attack-the effects of which he knows too well.

■ We call on all progressive and anti-racist organisations to organise solidarity actions with Mario Bango on the 14th September 2001 - the date close to his first trial - under the slogan of "Freedom for Mario!"

Here in Britain, there is systematic oppression of Roma and other travellers. A group of Roma is facing eviction from a caravan site they actually own, in Hatch, Bedfordshire. The council is paying £230,000 to evict them - a sum that would more than cover the cost of modifications needed at the site to get planning permission for the caravans to stay.

And the anti-Roma racism links in with Britain's racist asylum policies. The UK has stationed immigration officers in Prague airport to weed out "inadmissible" people from even boarding a plane to the UK. The criteria for inadmissibility? If you are Roma!

And for those lucky enough to get here? This account was submitted anonymously to the Guardian last month:

"A Roma family from Lithuania, whom I support under a voluntary befriending scheme, has had a reasoned adjudication in its favour rejected by the Home Office on grounds that they have suffered "hardship" but not "persecution". This distinction has to be sustained in the face of facts in Lithuania: that the family's home was attacked and badly damaged, that the father was so severely beaten up that one of his hands is reduced to swollen pulp, that his three children have been denied any schooling, and that the whole family is given no access to health care."

Strikers play hardball against US sweatshops

Who makes your trendy American baseball cap? Exploited workers in New York, that's who – and they've had enough. GR McColl reports from the picket line



A small town on the outskirts of Buffalo, New York has become the latest battleground in the struggle between workers in the garment industry and sweatshop bosses. In mid-July some 250 workers – all members of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) – went on indefinite strike against the New Era Cap Company of Derby, New York.

The strike came after nine months of fruitless talks between CWA officials and New Era management, who made it plain from the outset that they did not want to deal with a bona fide union. New Era had demanded wage cuts of 30 per cent on an average hourly rate of \$12.75 (just under £8) and had threatened to slash pay even more drastically for workers who were unable to higher productivity targets.

The 80-year-old company, which has always been based in the Buffalo area, mounted a bitter campaign to keep the CWA out of its Derby and Buffalo plants. In July 1999 the US government's National Labor Relations Board upheld a series of charges concerning the intimidation and victimisation of union representatives at both facilities. Company bosses have also shifted a significant share of production to a pair of non-union plants in Alabama and extended subcontracting relationships in Malaysia and Bangladesh.

While New Era may lack the global name recognition of Nike, Adidas and the Gap, it is no bit player in the USA's sweatshop sportswear business. It is a monopoly supplier of on field caps to all 30 of the Major League Baseball clubs. In addition, New Era is one of only three authorised manufacturers for official souvenir caps on sale across North America and also supplies caps emblazoned with college logos to shops at 37 US campuses.

This latter factor led CWA activists to contact United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), which sent supporters to visit the Buffalo area plants in January 2001. The USAS issued a damning report, "Money made, Workers Forgotten". It argued that "The Koch family [New Era's

owners] ... have chosen to pit workers against one another across state lines and national borders in a relentless pursuit of higher profits ... This behaviour embodies the global race to the bottom that creates sweatshops and decimates entire communities."

USAS, with branches on some 200 college campuses, has indicated that New Era will almost certainly be the focus for a major campaign this autumn.

Members of the CWA local later contacted the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC), a recently formed research body charged with monitoring conditions in factories licensed to produce college sportswear. An investigative team spent 125 hours probing a range of complaints lodged by union members on the eve of the strike. To date the New Era investigation marks only the second by the WRC. The other examined conditions at Nike's notorious Kukdong subcontractor in Mexico. The WRC's mid-August report on the Derby plant bolstered almost all of the CWA's charges, especially around health and safety issues:

■ Between 1995 and 2000 at least 45 needle punctures occurred at the plant. Many involved the piercing of bones and the embedding of needle fragments in fingers. The rate of such injuries was 15 times the national average for the garment industry over this period.

■ More than a fifth of the Derby production workers have either undergone or been referred for surgery in connection with musculo-skeletal disorders such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis. These almost invariably stem from repetitive motions in work processes. The reported level of potentially disabling musculo-skeletal conditions is four to five times the industry average, based on official government statistics.

Among the victims of this sweatshop slavery has been CWA branch president Jane Howald, who reported: "I have had carpal tunnel syndrome and surgery for it. I've also had a ruptured disc in my back. And the company makes light of this."

Down on the picket lines, the bitterness is apparent. Their anger is directed against the 50 scabs and at a "family firm" that has raked in profits exceeding \$20 million a year from the plant – and a local media that has either ignored the dispute or simply regurgitated New Era's propaganda.

The strikers have enjoyed support – in words at least – from the Major League [Baseball] Players' Association and received substantial donations from other trade unions in the Buffalo area. The AFL-CIO, the American TUC, has also given its backing to a boycott campaign against New Era products. Many lorry drivers have refused to cross picket lines and several small local businesses have also made donations. The dispute has also gained national prominence, with *The York Times* and *Boston Globe* running substantial articles. All this has helped boost morale.

But strikers are also concerned that management's objective may be to close the Derby plant and shift all production out of the area. Strikers look set to embark on a tour of Major League stadiums in the run-up to the league playoffs in October. But after seven weeks on strike the New Era workers need a shot of solidarity from a local union movement that is still relatively strong (organising up to 28 per cent of the area's overall workforce), despite large-scale job losses and some significant defeats in the last 20 years.

The strikers have hit production at the Derby plant, but they need to stop work at the Buffalo factory, where the CWA narrowly lost a certification election after a vicious anti-union campaign played divide and rule between new immigrant workers from South-East Asia and longer serving African-American workers.

■ For more on the New Era strike see the CWA's website: www.cwa-union.org Check out USAS at www.usasnet.org and the Workers Rights Consortium's report at www.workersrights.org

■ Write to the CWA Local 14177, PO Box 62, Derby, New York 14047 (send International Money Orders rather than cheques).

Argent rise up

Argentine workers have been on the front line of struggle against a new austerity package drawn up by the IMF. We talked to José Montes, a worker in the Río Santiago shipyard near Buenos Aires, who is a leading member of the Workers Party for Socialism (PTS) in Argentina

WP: What is the IMF trying to do with its recent aid package to Argentina

JM: The IMF has granted a \$5 billion loan to Argentina – the aim is to bail out the holders of Argentine government bonds – the country's national debt. In the short term, this was done to avoid the possibility of a government default on the debt it owes foreign investors. Also the lack of reserves in the Central Bank would have made it impossible to keep the Argentine currency, the peso, pegged to the dollar. Without the aid package, devaluation looked inevitable.

The new loan makes the threat of an early devaluation less likely. The agreement with the IMF means that, in return for this help, Argentina has to stick to its "zero deficit" law in order to be able to pay its creditors. In effect, instead of defaulting on its debt to foreign banks, the government defaults on the money it owes to public sector workers.

This measure – if it can be carried out by a government which has been seriously weakened – means the reduction month after month of the salaries of the public sector workers and the reduction of pensions, because, according to the zero deficit law, the state can only spend as much as it receives in tax revenues.

Bear in mind, this is happening in a country that has been in recession for three years: that has already reduced the amount of tax received by the government. Moreover, the agreement with the US involves forcing Argentina's provinces to tighten their belts – and the privatisation of state institutions like PAMI (social provision for pensioners) and the customs services.

If that wasn't enough, there is also a requirement to "reform the state sector", which implies more sackings. The "zero deficit" law has to be maintained until 2002 – slashing \$6 billion from next year's national budget. The IMF and the American Treasury will monitor these measures.

The new agreement will allow the Radical Party dominated coalition government of Finance Minister Cavallo and President De la Rúa to survive until the elections in October, although the new loan will do no more than patch up the economic crisis.

The policy of parity with the dollar is on its last legs but the government doesn't want to face the convulsive sit-

uation that a devaluation of the currency would create. [Many people's debts and mortgages are held in dollars and devaluation implies a huge increase in the size of these debts – WP]. Because the country is in turmoil the US is searching for a new government of "national unity", with the incorporation of the Peronist Party into the cabinet. After twelve days of negotiations with the Argentine government the communiqué issued by the IMF points out that "the authorities [of the IMF] are also considering the possibility of a voluntary operation, based in the market in order to increase the viability of the Argentine debt profile", a condition for the payment of the remaining \$3 billion of the promised \$8 billion.

Washington is eager to start to negotiate with private creditors some mechanism for the restructuring of the debt, which constitutes a clear recognition that Argentina was close to default.

While thousands of workers have had their salaries frozen, \$3 billion will be spent on the purchase of the old valueless bonds in order to exchange them for other bonds that enjoy the guarantee of bodies like the IMF or the World Bank – and with a lower rate of interest.

The agreement with the IMF implies a total opening up of the Argentine market to imports from the USA, accelerating in this way the entrance of the Latin American economic bloc Mercosur into the US dominated FTAA (Free Trade Area Agreement). In other words, the ultimate condition of the IMF intervention is to impose a series of semi-colonial measures over the workers and the country.

WP: What's happening with the unemployed? How did the recent demonstrations and pickets by jobless people start – and who is leading them?

JM: On 24 July, the first national assembly of pickets met, bringing together all the different sectors of the unemployed movement. It agreed on a national plan for road blockades lasting 24, 48 and 72-hours, spanning three weeks. This conference represents an important step forward in the organisation of the unemployed and brought them to the attention of the rest of the country. The current leadership of the movement, led by the CTA (Central Trabajadores de Argentina – the confeder-

ine workers against IMF



ation of teachers' and public sector unions) and the Maoist CCC (Corriente Clasista Combativa) introduced "a new method of struggle": the blockade of the roads should leave "alternative routes" open. This is a kind of "expropriation" of the road blockades, originally a very efficient method of protest inaugurated by the unemployed sector in 1997. The unemployed movement, being unable to stop capitalist production from within – through strikes – uses the blockade as a method of struggle which can partly stop the system of distribution and transport of goods. Unable to impose their power over the bosses by occupying the factories in defence of their jobs, the unemployed use the tactic of the blockade to demonstrate that a huge part of the working class, which has been expelled from the factories, is still prepared to fight back. So efficient has this method proved that it has been taken up by sectors of the employed workers and even by poor farmers from the countryside. It is a method that has spread internationally, especially throughout Latin America: the "blockade of main routes" is often used by the peasantry in Bolivia and Colombia.

But this innovative method of struggle is under attack on two flanks. First, the state penalises it: there are hundreds of workers and activists facing legal action because they participated in the blockades and dozens of pickets are in prison. Secondly, at the same time, the current leadership of the National Assembly of Pickets is trying to tame the movement it by providing "alternative routes".

This is the same as accepting the

"emergency services" that the bosses are trying to impose when they face train and bus strikes, as a measure to stop the impact of those industrial actions. A new National Assembly has been called for 4 September, just as we speak, and this will be one of the issues discussed.

WP: How is it possible to bridge the gap between the militancy of the unemployed and the pickets and the relative lack of action by the workers in the private sector?

JM: The example for the private sector workers to follow is the 36 hour strike that took place last November, which was also supported by large numbers of the poorer middle classes.

During this action the workers for a short while combined the struggle of the employed and unemployed. There was even a kind of territorial control through the road blockades together with the crippling of production, transport, commerce and services. Such a huge, active mass strike was an intimation of the general strike that we need in order to get rid of this government and tilt the balance towards the working class.

The pickets' campaign over the last three weeks did not manage to mobilise the same kind of forces that we saw during the November 36-hour strike last year.

After each one of the four general strikes that have taken place during the last year and a half, the workers were knocked off track by the treachery of the trade union federations.

The two CGTs, ignored the decisions of the National Assembly of Pickets and

continued, despite the lack of credibility of their leaders, to keep control of the mass of employed workers. They organised a march to take place in the Plaza de Mayo, in central Buenos Aires, for 29 August under the slogan "For a plan of national salvation".

This is, in fact, a programme that ties the interests of the workers with the bosses organised in the Union Industrial Argentina. This is the industrial wing of the Peronist party.

The main problem facing the workers is to build a new national organisation and a political leadership that can overcome the conduct of the official leadership of the workers' movement.

In pursuit of this objective the PTS put a resolution to the National Assembly to get it to start to function on a delegate basis, on the basis of mandates from the rank and file. We argued they should represent not only the unemployed from their districts but also the workers in the transport sector, industrial factories, the schools, the public sector – all of which are now at the centre of the strikes and mobilisations.

If this strategy is accepted we will be on the road to turning the NA into a genuine Congress of the rank and file of all the workers' movement and which could attract the participation of the fighting sectors of the students, the small merchants and the poor farmers.

If the NA decides to become an organisation that directly represents delegates with a mandate from workplaces and estates – whether or not the leaders of the main trade unions are represented within them – it could be the starting point for a struggle against the whole government.

Our policy is aimed at bringing into existence a national organisation, one independent of the regime, that can fight – with freedom for all those political tendencies within it – for a workers' and people's government in Argentina.

WPB: What role are the PTS and the rest of the left playing in today's struggle?

JM: The PTS is one of the founders of the Movement of Workers' Coordinations, led by the ceramic workers in the province of Neuquén, an area with a rich history of militancy where the first pickets and road blockades in the country sprung up some years ago.

Given the contradiction noted earlier between the movement of the unemployed, which tends towards greater spontaneous militancy, and the control that the trade union bureaucracy maintains over the employed workers, this new initiative is very symptomatic.

The ceramic union is the only industrial trade union that raises the demand to co-ordinate the struggle of the workers and the pickets, something which in turn can give rise to an anti-bureaucratic movement inside the trade unions. The Neuquén ceramic workers recently concluded a national meeting that brought together around 700 workers. Among these were delegations of stewards from the energy company in Córdoba province fighting against privatisation; leaders of the Haedo section of the railworkers' union; internal commissions of the big food factories from one of the areas of Gran Buenos Aires with the biggest concentration of workers in the country; as well as dozens of delegates and activists from the metal industry, from the Metro workers, from Aerolíneas (airline), state owned companies and teachers' leaders.

This movement launched the first issue of a national bulletin, a workers' journal aimed at organising this movement throughout the country.

Moreover, we raised the need for building a workers' party inside those trade union and internal commissions in each factory that have been freed from the tutelage of the trade union bureaucracy, as well the unemployed workers' movement which is moving in a class independent direction.

We are not proposing to build in Argentina a new Labour Party nor something in the image of Lula's PT in Brazil. That is to say, we are not suggesting we build a reformist workers' party.

Today's crisis in Argentina, which is a historic crisis of semi-colonial capitalism, shows that the workers have to overcome the regime of capitalist domination. From this, it follows that what we are fighting for is a transitional policy for building with the best elements and organisations a political movement that wants to build a revolutionary workers' party.

■ www.pts.org.ar

Stop the Docklands arms fair

Britain is set to resume arms sales to Indonesia, according to press reports. That should time nicely with the huge arms fair set to be held in London's Docklands on 11-14 September.

As protesters get ready spoil the death-dealers party does anyone remember Robin Cook's 'ethical foreign policy' pledge when New Labour came to power in 1997?

Cook promised to put ethics and social concerns before national self-interest. This has proved, unsurprisingly, to be a joke.

Just look at the record on Indonesia alone. It has an appalling human rights record. The Indonesians have used British manufactured military equipment such as Saladin APCs (made by Alvis) or Hawk trainer jets (made by BAe Systems) for the purposes of internal repression against the East Timor.

When Labour came to power there were 125 outstanding licences, granted by the Tories, for the sale of weapons to Indonesia. The New Labour government could have revoked these licences but instead bowed to the wishes of the powerful military-industrial lobby and allowed the sales to proceed. Between May 1997 and December 1999, Labour granted a further 115 licences to ship arms to Indonesia.

Britain is the world's second biggest exporter of arms after the United States. There are many vested interests in the business of death and huge sums of money involved too. Between 1994-96 the UK supplied US\$725m of arms to Indonesia. Arms sales to Indonesia under Labour (1997-99) were worth £287.81m despite the economic crisis that had ravaged the country.

But the economics is not so straightforward as British firms earning foreign currency. The Government often offers an export guarantee credit which means that if Indonesia doesn't pay up, the company will be paid anyway out of our taxes.

The arms manufacturers, and their allies in the Government always promote certain lines to defend their unethical trade. You may have heard: 'British jobs depend on the arms trade'. But the people who used this argument never called for Government money to be used to safeguard the jobs of the miners, the Corus steel workers, the Liverpool dockers or the Vauxhall workers.

You may also have heard 'If we don't sell them weapons, someone else will'. This is a shallow cop-out that could be used to justify anything.

Now the merchants of death are coming to town to show off their wares. The Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEI) will be holding an arms fair at the Excel Centre in London's Docklands between 11-14 September. Workers Power and Revolution will be joining the anti-arms trade Fiesta.

Join us there!

■ www.disarm-trade.org

■ www.caat.org.uk

■ www.worldrevolution.org.uk

Brighton, Washington, Qatar...

The capitalists just can't hide!

The world's leaders are about to find that there is no hiding place from the anti-capitalist movement. In an attempt to avoid "summit-hopping" protesters they have shortened the World Bank/IMF meeting at the end of September to just two days - and they've moved the World Trade Organisation meeting on 9 November to Qatar.

But US activists are still determined to surround the White House on Saturday 29 September, while there will be a mass union-backed march the day after. And while it will be virtually possible to take the protest to Qatar, the call for simultaneous mass action has been given a tremendous boost by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the Geneva based mainstream union alliance, for a "Global Unions Day of Action by the Workplaces of the World" on 9 November.

"The purpose of the Day of Action is to mark the unwillingness of trade unions to accept the negative effects that globalisation is imposing on workers around the world, and draw attention to



Protests in Madrid against IMF

the serious deficiencies in the world trading system at the present time," said Bill Jordan, General Secretary of the ICFTU. Jordan is the former back-stabbing leader of the UK's engineering union and was on the right wing of both the Labour Party and the TUC in the 1980s. But the ICFTU's call can and must become the focus of our attempts to clinch the alliance between the anti-capitalist activists and the unions.

The ICFTU is calling on the WTO for "protections of basic workers' rights from the exploitation that results from world trade; reforming the world trading system to benefit the poor in developing countries; the right to quality universal public education and health services, free from WTO rules; cheap and affordable medicines to fight diseases like HIV and Aids; and opening up the WTO system to consultation with trade unions and other democratic representatives of civil society".

In short, like most union leaderships, it wants to reform capitalism and its

institutions. But because the world's bosses are trampling over union rights and ignoring the leaders' reform calls, they need mass action to get a place at the table.

Jordan has called for action "ranging from stoppages and demonstrations to workplace discussions, public meetings and high-profile media activities".

Let's be clear: 9 November needs to become a worldwide day of strike action and protest.

The next step in Britain is to build a big demo outside Labour Party Conference on Sunday 30 September. But after that we should keep the committees formed to mobilise for the Labour Party Conference demo (see below) going and focus now on a massive anti-globalisation drive in the workplaces, schools and colleges.

The ICFTU represents more than 156 million workers in 148 countries and territories. That power could stop globalisation in its tracks. Let's mobilise it from below! Check out www.icftu.org and www.destroyimf.org

privatisation... job cuts... G.A.T.S... refugees... militarism... public-private-partnerships... global warming... immigration... education for profit

DEMONSTRATE AT New Labour's Conference

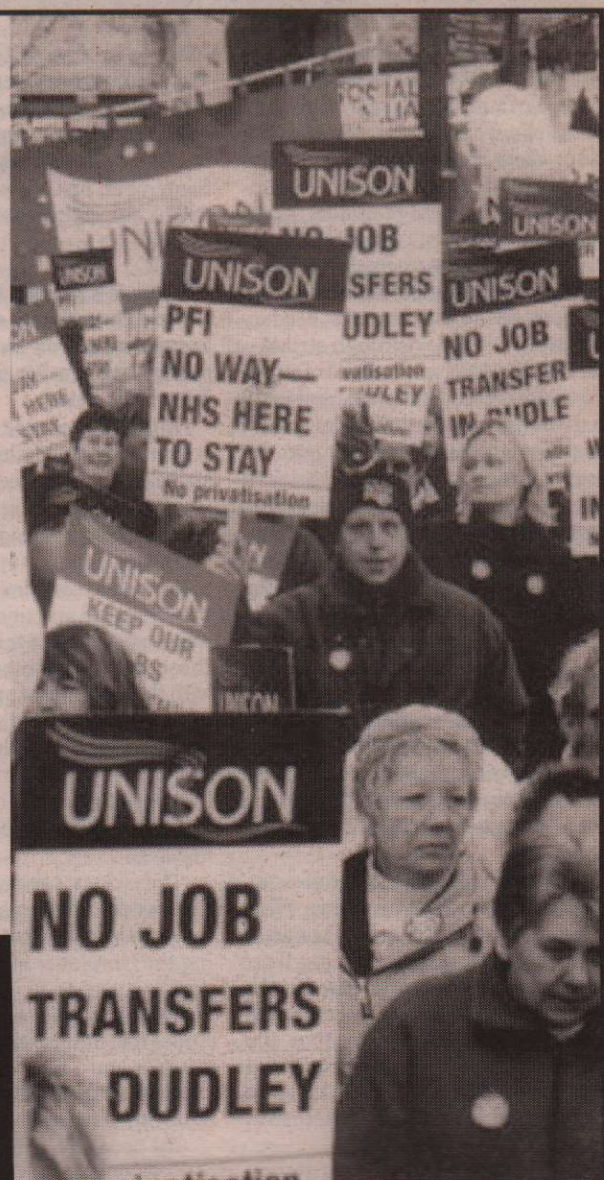
Sunday 30 September, Brighton
Protests start 12:00pm

GLOBALISE RESISTANCE COUNTER CONFERENCE

SATURDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 10:30am - 5:30pm,

PoNaNa (Hammersmith Palais), Shepherd's Bush Road, London

Speakers so far: John Pilger, Tony Benn, George Monbiot, Vittorio Agnoletto (Genoa Social fourm), Luca Casarini (White Overalls Movement), Caroline Lucas (Green party MEP) and others.



workerspower

GLOBAL
Theory & practice in
the class struggle
September 2001



- Genoa raises the stakes
- Fixing or nixing the IMF?
- The SWP and the anti-capitalists
- Russia's rocky road to capitalism

The debate over tactics after Genoa: taking anti-capitalism to the next stage

The defenders of world capitalism have changed their tactics. In Gothenburg and Genoa the political leaders of the rich industrial nations decided on a course of repression of the anti-capitalist movement rather than of appeasement.

Blair, Schroeder, Berlusconi and Bush have tasted blood and are hell bent on confrontation.

They have made it clear that they will not lightly tolerate civil disobedience which disrupts the gatherings of the globalisers. They will forcibly violate democratic rights if need be.

Schroeder has called for an EU specially trained paramilitary force to beat us down. Surveillance of the activists is to be stepped up and shared intelligence enhanced.

For the moment one country drags its feet - France. Both the president and premier have welcomed the "civic movement", providing it does not resort to violence. The anti-capitalist movement in France - led by ATTAC - faces a different tactic, not repression but a smothering embrace.

But Jospin and Chirac will not offset the determination of the other G7 leaders to meet civil disobedience with heavy, even deadly, repression.

What should anti-capitalists do now? A broad and intensive debate is underway within the movement. Do we accept a drastic narrowing of legality? Do we limit ourselves to those tactics which avoid at all costs a clash with the state forces? Do we inscribe the principle of non-violence into our strategy, or merely adopt it as a necessary and temporary expedient?

Genoa Social Forum and ATTAC

The strategy of ATTAC, the NGOs and pacifist organisations within the GSF was based on completely legal and non-confrontational methods. The furthest ATTAC would go in Genoa on 20 July was a "virtual" penetration of the red zone with balloons!

This whole strategy proved a failure. Despite long negotiations and detailed agreements with the police the latter broke these agreements and attacked the legal non-violent forces quite as savagely as they did the black block - indeed even more savagely!

The initial response of the GSF to the violence on 20 July was to blame the black block for wrecking their carefully constructed agreements with the police. Agnoletto, chief spokesperson for the Genoa Social Forum did just this.

It was only after the carabinieri rampage became totally clear with the murder of Carlo Giuliani that he changed his tune and put the blame on the police. After the attacks on the peaceful mass march on July Agnoletto was obliged to put the blame fairly and squarely on the state as did José Bové, the radical farmers' leader and vice president of ATTAC.

In the immediate aftermath of Genoa Susan George of ATTAC insisted that a major a re-evaluation of tactics was needed - suggesting that "we shall have to find new democratic avenues to wage this fight".

In an interview in Socialist Review she goes even further:

"The escalation of state sponsored terrorism is beginning to terrify ordinary people. I cannot now encourage our members to put life and limb on the

line to participate in demos where we are going to have the police shooting live ammunition and the Black Block completely infiltrated by police and fascists running wild."

She claimed that those who wish to mobilise vast numbers of the old, the young, the official trade unions, the churches, etc must avoid the sort of militancy on the streets which "provokes" the police to violence.

But the street battles in Quebec, Gothenburg and Genoa were a response to the aggressive violence by the police, to the closing down of the space to demonstrate by the state.

Peaceful protest at any price means peace at the enemy's price - surrender and ineffectiveness. Instead we have to take measures which preserve both the mass and the militant character of our mobilisations. We are talking about defence - not about attempts at insurrection.

Even Starhawk an anarchy-feminist NVDA supporter, has given a good answer to the Susan George. She resolutely defends the mass mobilisations to expose and disrupt their summits.

"When those bodies are forced to meet behind walls, to fight a pitched battle over every conference, to retreat to isolated locations, the ritual is interrupted and their legitimacy is undercut. The agreements that were being negotiated in secret are brought out into the spotlight of public scrutiny... We need to stay in the street."

Susan George's assumption was that the Berlusconi, Blair and Bush would succeed and demoralise the anti-capitalist movement as a result of its actions

in Genoa.

After all, did not Drop the Debt ask its thousands of supporters not to go on the Saturday mass international march for fear of more violence from the state, march they took the lead in organising?

But she was wrong. The movement did not die with Carlo Giuliani on the streets of Genoa and the orchestrated state violence has only served to further enrage and embolden the ranks.

More realistically, in the August issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique* ATTAC member Pierre Khalfa discusses the movement's response to the violence of the state after Genoa. "We would be deluding ourselves to believe that capitalism would, without reacting violently, accept having measures imposed on it that radically question how it works. How can we prepare ourselves for this violence, how should we respond?"

He acknowledges that "Capitalism, like all other systems based on one class's domination over the whole of society, was established using violence." He recognises the oppressive state uses direct violence to maintain capitalism in the face of challenges to it from below."

He accepts that that reformist socialists who tried to achieve radical change having won office in bourgeois parliaments have been crushed (e.g Chile in 1973) and this road is blocked. Nor is Ghandian non-violence any answer since the state just treats passivity with derision and destruction.

But he says that revolutionaries are also wrong when they advocate violence of the oppressed and exploited against the state and "should therefore prepare both it and 'the masses' consciously."

Khalifa claims that the experience of Stalinism and the fate of Russia and China under their rule proves that "theorising violence, or even acclaiming it, has day-to-day consequences on people's behaviour and on the culture developed in the organisations that use it. It does not co-exist easily with open debate and setting up democratic processes."

He says: "Violence is not a neutral technical means. It has consequences on those who use it, on the society that promotes it and unavoidably dominates any other social relationships. It is misguided to believe that it can be contained 'elsewhere' and not affect those who use it. ... Inevitably the use of violence against the dominant has consequences on the dominated themselves and grows amongst them."

This is a recycling of the argument that Leninism leads to Stalinism and that if you take state power by use of violence it can only be maintained by use of violence. This is little more than a mixture of psycho-babble and studied ignorance of the real historical conditions under which state power was taken by the Russian workers' councils and the nature and causes of degeneration borne of isolation and civil war.

Revolutionary violence is aimed at the oppressive structures and classes. Precisely at the time of such directed violence in 1917-18 the democratic structures of the Bolshevik Party flourished. To suggest that humans have an addiction to undirected violence once they "get a taste for it" is the worst kind of pop science.

Continued on page 7 of supplement

Enforcing the glob

At the end of this month the annual general meetings of the World Bank and the IMF take place in Washington. Up to 50,000 protesters are expected to protest against the effect of their policies on the lives of millions. *Keith Harvey* looks at the damage the IMF/WB has caused and what the alternatives are.



For most of its first 25 years, the system of fixed exchange rates ensured that the IMF did not have a very high profile within world capitalism. However, after the US unilaterally abandoned fixed exchange rates in 1971, this rapidly changed.

The Fund now interpreted its task of monitoring exchange rates to require it to, "evaluate the economy's performance candidly for the entire membership". In short, the current system demands greater transparency of members' policies and permits more scope for the IMF to monitor these policies.

"The IMF calls this activity 'surveillance' or 'supervision' over members' exchange policies. Supervision is based on the conviction that strong and consistent domestic economic policies will lead to stable exchange rates and a growing and prosperous world economy." (David Driscoll, What is the IMF?)

In other words, the IMF became a financial policeman which ensured that the economic policies of member countries promoted openness of trade and capital movement. Loans, for example, were now tied to the removal of tariffs and other protective barriers. Inevitably, as in all "free-markets" this worked to the advantage of the most economically advanced countries and corporations.

The 1970s saw an explosion in Third World indebtedness. In 1970, it totalled \$75 bn but by 1985 this had mushroomed to \$900 bn. Banks, which

were awash with money after the Opec oil price rise of 1973, were eager to pump loans into the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The ruling classes of those countries were just as eager to borrow. Many loans were tied to arms contracts which strengthened repressive military regimes, for example, Chile and Argentina, at the same time as they boosted the profits of the arms companies. Others financed prestige projects which did little or nothing for the people but enhanced the reputation of regimes. Still more were simply embezzled and hidden away in the private bank accounts of dictators such as Marcos, Mobutu or Suharto.

The crises and recessions of the 1970s, however, also led to a collapse in demand for the traditional exports of Third World. As a result, interest payments consumed a growing share of a declining export income. The ratio of debt servicing to export earnings went from 15 per cent in 1977 to over 25 per cent in 1982. During the same period, all Third World countries' debt payments went from \$40 bn to \$121bn. The debt crisis was made worse by the US decision to raise interest rates from seven per cent to 17 per cent in the years 1979 to 1982.

The crisis broke in August 1982 when Mexico threatened to default on its international debt. With much of the rest of Latin America also facing bankruptcy, the banks demanded that the IMF step

in to act on their behalf. It was after this that the IMF moved to centre stage. In 1978, the US had demanded, and won, an amendment to the IMF charter which expressly included a clause that loans would be subject to countries meeting IMF specified economic "reforms". Now, the IMF used this to force its "structural adjustment plans" on nearly 40 countries which were forced to go to it for loans.

The mechanism used is the same in every case. The IMF formulates a letter of intent in which it sets out the conditions upon which a loan will be made. The funds are only released when the debtor government signs this letter. This means that the agreement is not published and does not have the status of an international treaty so does not have to be ratified by, for example, a national Parliament.

Nor does the IMF's help come free. The debtor country has to pay interest of 0.25 per cent on the loan to cover the IMF agents' fees, it then has to pay 4.5 per cent on the loan to the countries whose currencies are being borrowed - usually the USA, Great Britain, Japan or Germany.

The "structural adjustment plan" for each country is also virtually the same; devaluation of the national currency, jacking up interest rates, cutting back on government spending, especially social spending and subsidies for food, an increase in prices charged by state

enterprises such as energy and water or their privatisation, a cap on wages and a restriction on credit. All have the same aim: to restore the "balance of payments" by restricting domestic demand and thereby cutting imports while boosting exports by lowering their price.

The case of Brazil stands as a typical example. In January 1983 Brazil signed a Letter of Intent prepared by the IMF which set out a three year "stabilisation" programme. After the cruzeiro was devalued by 30 per cent the IMF approved a \$4.5 billion loan in February. The measures included halving the balance of payments deficit in 1983 (to 2 per cent of GDP) and to 1 per cent by 1985. Likewise, the budget deficit was to be halved to 8% of GDP in 1983. Inflation, running at 100 per cent, was to be cut to around 85 per cent by the end of 1983. Interest rates were raised, state spending on services slashed and subsidies to nationalised industries cut. Export duties and import controls were

slashed and the IMF insisted that the government pass legislation to facilitate profit transfers by foreign owned MNCs. It also demanded the abandonment of wage indexation to allow wages to fall.

Given that devaluation ensured that prices went up twice as fast as wages, many people were impoverished. Exports increased but working class resistance ensured that wages did not fall as much as the IMF wanted; as a result they withheld the second tranche of money in 1983 and made the government sign up to increases in the price of petrol by 45 per cent, electricity by 90 per cent and water by 100 per cent. In July, the government passed a wages decree which held indexation of wages to 80% of the inflation rate.

More working class resistance led to the resignation of the Central Bank Governor in September 1983 and the IMF held back its loan. Brazil ran out of foreign exchange and pleaded for debt rescheduling. By heavy repression, the government pushed through IMF measures and in November 1983 the IMF and the banks agreed a package of assistance to Brazil of \$11 billion which in the words of one analyst "were used exclusively to meet foreign debt repayment commitments."

A "success", in the IMF's terms, means increasing export income and attracting foreign capital to invest in the country. The increased income is immediately earmarked for debt repayment while foreign capital finds that assets are now much cheaper than they were before. As a result, the banks get their pounds of flesh and the country surrenders more of its economy to the multinational corporations.

In Latin America, the IMF used its structural adjustment plans to break down the import substitution and protectionist models of economic development that had dominated that continent from the 1950s onwards. 15 years later, and in south-east Asia, the Fund confronted an altogether different problem. These were countries that had been praised by the IMF as role-models for the whole Third World: export driven economies with fixed stable exchange rates which were open to foreign capital investment. The massive influx of private capital into these countries in the early Nineties was applauded by the IMF as an example for Africa and Latin America.

In 1997, however, these policies led to over-production, profit collapse, unserviceable debts and capital flight.

The origin of the Washington consensus

The origins of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank lie in the Bretton Woods conference of July 1944. With the Allied victory virtually secured and the memory of the Great Depression still fresh in their minds, bankers, academics and government officials from 44 nations met to discuss the shape of the post war world economy. Whatever their individual intentions, the conference established without doubt the dominant role of the USA.

One figure, in particular, is often associated with Bretton Woods, John Maynard Keynes, the celebrated English economist. For two decades, he had argued for government intervention to offset the spontaneous operation of the free market. Left to itself, he argued, the market created a politically destabilising gulf between a rich elite and the poverty-stricken masses.

Similarly, the booms and slumps of the business cycle created political tensions that threatened to bring down the entire capitalist system. At Bretton Woods, Keynes argued for management of the international economy. For example, he proposed a world "reserve currency" administered by a global central bank. He thought this would allow the recycling of surpluses between different countries, just as the banking system allows transfer of funds within a national economy.

However, it was not Keynes' ideas but those of the US Treasury Secretary, Harry Dexter, that shaped the outcome of the conference. He accepted the need for new institutions to manage the world economy, but his objective was to ensure US dominance. For

example, he insisted that the US dollar become the world's reserve currency at a fixed rate of \$35 to an ounce of gold. This alone gave the US massive power over global monetary policy and a weapon with which it could gain a trade advantage by devaluation.

But that weapon was not used until the 1970s. What guaranteed US supremacy in the early post war era was its dominance of two key institutions set up at, or after, Bretton Woods - the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Each had a specific role to play and each was organised to ensure that American interests were dominant. Like the British a hundred years earlier, the US government sang the praises of free trade but only where they were guaranteed a competitive advantage.

The International Monetary Fund

The IMF's job was to "facilitate the expansion and stability and international trade". To do this, it was to set up and maintain a system of fixed exchange rates which would stop countries devaluing their currencies against each other. In addition, it was to act as a "lender of last resort" supplying emergency loans to countries which ran into short-term cashflow problems. Although Keynes had suggested that countries should have automatic access to such funds, the US insisted on a different model. In this, access to funds depended on how much a country had contributed to the reserve fund. On top of that, loans were to be conditional on a country accepting economic reforms laid down by the IMF. Finally, in a move that set the pattern for the other institutions,

voting power in the IMF was to be based on the size of the funds contributed by a nation. As the biggest donor, the US was thereby guaranteed not only the most votes but an effective veto on any measure of which it did not approve.

The World Bank

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as it was originally called, was set up to channel funds to rebuild war-torn economies. It was to do this either by providing loans itself or by underwriting loans from private banks. As a result, it was given the power to supervise funding programmes especially for infrastructural development in Europe.

At that time, the US accounted for some 60 per cent of steel production in the world and a similar proportion of other key industrial products. US banks were also the prime source of capital for development projects. World Bank policy, therefore, ensured both a market for US industry and a means of underwriting loans from US commercial banks to the nations of Western Europe.

In the late 1950s, the Bank shifted its attention to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Here, countries were so poor that they could not meet the World Bank's interest charges and the US feared that they would turn to the Soviet Union for support. To counter this, a subsection of the World Bank, called the International Development Agency, was established to channel "soft loans" to these regions and, thus, maintain the World Bank's domination.

al rule of business

IMF: Fixing or nixing?



Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea and the Philippines found that they could not defend their currencies and, one by one, they collapsed.

Given that these countries had been following the prescribed IMF development path, it might have been expected that the IMF would provide unconditional funds to stabilise the exchange rates while devaluations worked their way through into export-led revivals. It did nothing of the kind. In each case, the fund demanded additional measures to cut deficits, depress demand and raise interest rates. More, they demanded further deregulation on the movement of capital, something that had contributed to the crisis in the first place.

Liberal critics of the IMF were outraged by the Fund's intervention. Even the chief economist at the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, lambasted the IMF. He argued that the Asian crisis was one of liquidity rather than lack of profitability. Financial deregulation had led to capital being able to leave swiftly in panic over the debt repayments with the result that credit became hard to obtain for even the best firms. Stiglitz was first censured and then fired by his boss at the World Bank, James Wolfensohn.

Other critics pointed out that, by cutting demand, the IMF had caused healthy companies to go bankrupt. They argued that the fund should have helped to keep credit lines open, should have opened rescheduling talks with the banks and reformed the financial system to restrict movement of capital out of the country. But these critics were missing the point and the IMF was not listening. Its first priority was not to protect these economies but to use the crisis to open them up to allow Western banks and corporations to take their pick of the assets. That was why the IMF agreement with South Korea, dated December 1997, required far-reaching structural reforms, the closure of financial institutions, letting foreign banks buy up domestic ones and an end to government directed lending.

The effect of the IMF intervention was clear enough: "the combination of massive devaluations, IMF-pushed financial liberalisation and IMF-facilitated recovery may even precipitate the biggest peacetime transfer of assets from domestic to foreign owners in the past 50 years anywhere in the world, dwarfing the transfers from domestic to US owners that occurred in Latin America in the 1980s." (R. Wade and F. Veneroso, *New Left Review* 228) ★

Criticism of the IMF reached a crescendo in 1998. It was clear that the Fund's intervention in the south-east Asian crisis had turned a conjunctural crisis into a deep recession that threatened to destabilise the entire international economy. Countries such as Malaysia, which had refused to accept the IMF's prescription, were seen to fare better than those which accepted the medicine. Critics attacked not only the Fund's policies and its role in bailing out international finance capital but also its organisational structure, decision-making processes and lack of accountability.

The combination of evident policy failures, increasingly vocal opposition within the Third World and the emergence of the anti-capitalist movement symbolised by Seattle, has put the future of the key international finance institutions firmly on the agenda. Broadly speaking, three lines of thought have emerged.

"It's the wiring, not the building"

This sums up the position of the defenders of the IMF, WTO, and World Bank. Stanley Fisher of the IMF, says that reform should involve, "making sure the financial sector pursues sound lending policies, making sure that the banks have strong and adequate capital and that lending is based on economic criteria and not political or other criteria."

What this would mean in practice, is that crisis-prone economies should increase the transparency in their regimes, should introduce tougher bankruptcy laws to remove moral hazard (that is, the belief that investors will always be bailed out) increase regulation, and recapitalise failed banks with foreign capital to provide stability. In other words, an IMF-style structural adjustment programme, but enforced more rigorously.

All such policies are based on a false diagnosis. The root of the problem lies with an oversupply of capital looking for an outlet, this leads both to the volatility of capital markets and to the lending institutions pushing funds onto potential borrowers. Neither the IMF nor the World Bank nor any member of G7 is prepared to consider controls on capital flows. In October 1998, the G7 merely recommended that all they could do was to, "encourage offshore centres to comply with internationally agreed standards".

In the face of growing criticism and increasingly hostile mobilisations, defenders of the IMF are willing to talk in terms of reform. Larry Summers, the US Treasury Secretary, claimed that the IMF-centred process would be replaced by, "a new, more open and inclusive process that will involve multiple international organisations and give national policy makers and civil society groups a more central role".

US trade representative, Charlene Barshefsky, said after the collapse of the Seattle Ministerial in 1999 that, "the WTO has outgrown the processes appro-

priate to an earlier time. An increasing and necessary view, generally shared among the members, was that we needed a process which had a greater degree of internal transparency and inclusion to accommodate a larger and more diverse membership." Similarly, the UK Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Stephen Byers, told a Commonwealth trade ministers meeting in New Delhi, "The WTO will not be able to continue in its present form. There has to be fundamental and radical change in order for it to meet the needs and aspirations of all 134 of its members."

Two things are revealed by these supposedly conciliatory remarks. First, by focusing the discussion on questions of procedure and inclusivity they draw attention away from the most important issue which is policy. Second, the chosen strategy for each of the institutions is to try to co-opt the right wing of their opposition. This would include representatives of the ruling classes of the Third World as well as the NGO wing of the anti globalisation movement.

Back to Bretton Woods!

This is the programme of the reform wing of the Third World ruling class which benefits least from globalisation. It is a utopian plea for an idealised version of what Bretton Woods might have come up with had Keynes got his way. They believe in the need to impose some controls on capital (the Tobin tax) and they want such international measures to be backed up by national controls such as Chile's requirements for a 30 per cent deposit in central banks for one year.

Their aim would be to discourage short-term portfolio flows and to encourage longer-term fixed investment. They also call for the IMF, World Bank and WTO to be made more accountable, to lower their emphasis on free trade and give more votes to Third World countries.

They propose a return to Keynes' original proposals in 1945 for a rule-based system that would leave enough room for nationally divergent paths in a system of "peaceful co-existence". Such proposals are favoured by the G24 group.

The abolitionists

The most radical of the Third World middle class opponents, such as Walden Bello, recognise that US hegemony makes the IMF and the other institutions impossible to reform. For the same reason, they believe that it is utopian to expect any version of a global capital control system to overcome this problem.

Their first priority is the need for national capital controls, although they think that regional arrangements may be feasible, for example, an Asian Monetary Fund. Their developmental model could be called a kind of "deglobalisation" involving a shift away from the export-oriented model favoured by neo-liberalism and towards reliance on the domestic market rather than inward investment. Growth in this model would

be financed from internal savings and investment channelled through progressive taxation. They recognise the need to stop Third World ruling class conspicuous consumption and resistance to taxation and they call for greater redistribution and the raising of effective domestic demand. Beyond that, they argue in favour of land reform and a reduction in inequality. Finally, they believe that lower, but sustainable, growth rates, which would be less destructive of the environment, are needed.

The revolutionary critique

The abolitionists are clearly correct in their critique of the defenders and the reformists. No reform of the Bretton Woods institutions is possible without US agreement and any reform to which the US agreed could only be an expression of self-interest.

The fact that Stiglitz of the World Bank and then the author of the UN World Development Report, were sacked just for raising criticisms of the IMF, illustrates the limits of the possibility of self reform.

Only a serious conflict between the G7 nations could open up the possibility of reform but such a conflict itself could only arise as a result of a world economic crisis which dislocated and fragmented the world economy. In that situation, the conflict of interest between the imperialist powers would be more likely to lead to regional or even national solutions that would leave the Bretton Woods institutions not so much reformed as sidelined.

It is over their proposed solutions that we have to part company with the radical deglobalisers. Although they recognise that the narrow class interests of Third World capitalists leads them to ally themselves with the US-led globalisation process, and although they see the need for wealth redistribution, they have no realistic or concrete strategy for breaking the power of the Third World capitalists.

In reality, their proposals for internal investment based on progressive taxation would meet the fiercest resistance from the bourgeoisie, no doubt supported by the key countries of the G7. The wealth that the bourgeoisie holds is certainly the key to economic development but it will only be used in the interests of the majority if it is first taken away from them.

Their power can only ultimately be broken by a mass mobilisation from below which destroys their state apparatus, expropriates their property and takes control of the economy into the hands of the working class and poor peasants.

None of the deglobalisers have inscribed social ownership of the means of production into their programmes, yet this is the starting point for any economic transformation. Without it, all programmes are utopian.

Only when they have firm control of the economy can the workers and poor peasants decide upon the optimum economic development model for their

country. What that model will be will depend on such factors as the existing wealth and natural resources of the country, whether other countries are drawn into the revolutionary process as allies and the degree of hostility from the big imperial powers. Experience in the 20th century has shown that any programme of development restricted to national borders, or even regional boundaries if that region is impoverished, while it may achieve greater equality, will be doomed to economic backwardness.

"Sustainable development" will prove to be a pipe dream unless there are revolutions in a number of reasonably well-developed countries which can then integrate their economies to take advantage of the optimum division of labour, co-ordination of investment, trade relations with the rest of the world and a balance of planned development between town and country.

The inevitable difficulties associated with overcoming the economic and social legacy of 100 years or more of imperialist domination and the likelihood of external attack and destabilisation, will mean that difficult political and economic decisions have to be taken.

Only a political regime based on the fullest democratic mobilisation of the workers and peasants themselves will be able to sustain a government committed to socialist development.

At the same time, such a revolutionary social regime will inspire solidarity abroad and encourage the spread of revolution which is, ultimately, the surest possible defence and the foundation of further progress.

The deglobalisers want to tackle the problems of poverty and backwardness while leaving private ownership of the principal means of production intact. They hope to achieve their goals basically by redistribution of profits through taxation under a reform oriented government. Such a programme would not only fail but make the conditions of the mass of the people still worse.

Having aroused the masses with hopes of radical progress, it would, sooner or later, find itself obliged to accept the imperatives of the market, profit maximisation and international trade relations.

The reform programme would prove enough to stimulate internal and external attacks but not enough to overcome them. Faced with economic blockades, investment strikes, sabotage and possibly military attack, such governments would find themselves forced to demand ever greater sacrifices from the masses.

To maintain production, they would have to make concessions to the private owners of industry, trade and agriculture and this would begin to erode the popular support they had enjoyed. Finally, when their opponents calculated that this process had gone far enough, they would be more or less violently removed, leaving the economy in ruins and the masses demoralised. ★

The contradictions of

As the world's capitalists celebrate the 10th anniversary of Boris Yeltsin's rise to power, Russian workers face growing attacks. But the Russian economy is picking up - and many of the signs are there that it is operating like a fully fledged capitalism. But what kind of capitalism will Russia be - and where will it find the money to rebuild its crumbling infrastructure?

Over the past decade, and particularly since the August 1998 currency crisis, capitalist restoration in Russia has made huge advances. This was not only reflected in the clear growth of Russia's GDP and industrial production but also in the growth of capital investment (see box).

The first ten years of the capitalist restoration process were dominated by the initial accumulation of capital. This mainly benefited a class of "oligarchs" - as gangster-like and corrupt as the Rockefellers were in the USA in the 19th century. They made their wealth through corrupt privatisation of state assets, theft, bribery and financial speculation.

The creation in the mid-1990s of financial-industrial groups (FIGs) were the organised expression of the parasitic character of this process. Most profits, and many of the subsidies given by government, were invested in banks abroad rather than in promoting a cycle of productive accumulation in Russia.

But the period after the August 1998 crisis was a decisive watershed. The process was kickstarted by the devaluation of the rouble. This led to massive cheapening of Russia's exports and helped Russian enterprises gain shares at the domestic market by replacing foreign exports. Finally, the oil boom and rocketing oil prices on the world market helped boost export growth.

The rouble crisis and devaluation in 1998 forced the state to halt the process of hidden subsidies that underpinned a system of bartering between enterprises. The aim was to bring in a real, working tax system. Tax collection increased from 8 per cent to 60 per cent in two years in the crucial energy sector. Tax revenues increased generally by 30 per cent in 2000.

The barter system gave an incentive to the managers of unprofitable enterprises to keep them going in order to take the subsidies and enrich themselves. Barter involved a staggering 55 per cent of all transactions in 1998. By the end of 2000 it had fallen to less than 19 per cent. When barter was its height just 18 per cent of companies reported that they were profitable.

But the enforcement of tax collection, the end of subsidies and finally, under Putin, the outlawing of the barter system, drove many firms out of business. So by the end of 2000, 52 per cent of firms registered profits.

Today it is possible that a majority of Russia firms are making operating profits after taxes and an increasing number are retaining at least some profits for investment.

However we need to bear in mind that Putin said last month in his state of the nation address that restructuring of firms via genuine competition and investment has yet to really begin. He concluded that: "We still live in an economy that depends on rent not production".

The banking system however remains a long way from Western com-

mercial norms. And its backwardness is the main reason that investment is so low: firms need to borrow to finance most of their major investment.

Nearly half of fixed capital investment within Russian enterprises has to be financed from their own resources - profits, savings and unpaid wages. Just 3.3 per cent of investment was financed by bank loans in 2000. There are still more than 2000 banks, a figure no higher than 1995 and slightly down on 1998. The only effect of the 1998 crisis on the Russian financial system therefore, has been to make more of it unprofitable. Bad loans as a proportion of total loans have increased since 1998 from 3 per cent to 12 per cent.

The problem is that most banks originated as the finance departments of single big industrial companies. So they do not play the traditional role of aggregating savings and profits from the whole economy and recycling them to most profitable areas on commercial grounds. Indeed, Russians prefer to keep a reported \$40 billion in cash at home rather than bank it.

Investment needs during the last two years have been met by very healthy revenues as a result of the rouble devaluation and growth in GDP. This is now exhausted and a crisis could hit the finance sector this year or next.

Despite the existence of serious obstacles to the full operation of capitalist economics - what Marxists call the "law of value", the the period 1999-2000 saw the decisive measures taken. Russia has now become a country with a capitalist economy - although a fragile one.

Despite the often confusing official data from Goskomstat, a clear turn towards profit-orientated production is visible. The proportion of loss-making enterprises remains high but is declining (from 49.2 per cent in 1998 down to 39.7 per cent). While this statistic does not clarify which enterprises exactly are loss-making, we know at least that the industrial and transport enterprises (i.e. the productive sector) have the best performance while the housing sector has the worst.

Profits rose in Q1 2000 (compared

IS RUSSIAN GROWTH TAKING OFF?

	1999	2000
GDP	3.2%	8%
Industrial production	8.1%	9.1%
Investment	4.5%	18.2%

with Q1 1999) by 220 per cent on average. In the oil sector it was 340 per cent. In the metal sector profits rose by 310 per cent.

There are also strong indications that particularly the bigger enterprises are becoming profitable. By 1999 the Top 200 enterprises operated with a profit which was not the case in the year before. Anecdotal evidence about the investments of the oligarchs, and the increased productive investment abroad by Russian monopolies, also suggest a changed picture. Finally the changing situation is also reflected by the fact that enterprise subsidies from the Russian government declined from 16 per cent of GDP in 1998 to 5 per cent in 2000.

However we must not ignore the

The consequences of all this are that we have to expect a massive corporate assault in the coming years against the working class

huge challenges that still face the capitalist restoration process.

First the creation of a "bankruptcy culture" - which in the bizarre world of capitalism is held to be positive - is definitely still in the early stages. That is shown by the high number of loss-making enterprises. Second, there is still a high level of so called hidden employment, i.e. workers who do not boost profits but are not sacked.

Third, the operation of law of value is weak in the banking sector. The last point has some similarities with the path to capitalist restoration in Czech Republic, where the financial sector was also restructured along capitalist lines only after the decisive point of capitalist restoration.

The consequences of all this are that we have to expect a massive corporate assault in the coming years against the working class - with high unemployment and poverty as a result. This naturally implies significant dangers for the ruling class which is why they need a strong repressive regime.

The August 1998 crisis was also a watershed in the sphere of the Russian state apparatus. The Primakov government (October 1998 - May 1999) was a democratic-counter-revolutionary government which had the purpose of muddling through a pre-revolutionary crisis via the integration of the Communist Party into the system. The job done, Yeltsin successfully installed Putin as his successor and ditched Primakov.

The effects of the political change on the economy should not be underestimated. The weak semi-bonapartist regime of Yeltsin endangered capitalist restoration because of the threatening collapse of the federal state. It could not be the powerhouse that drove the Russian economy to complete capitalist restoration.

There are interesting parallels between Russia and developments in France in 1851-52, when Louis Bonaparte conquered power in a coup d'etat. As Marx described in detail in the "Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" the bourgeoisie was too weak, too fragmented and discredited to rule the country without a strong state.

The Putin regime is not a state capitalist regime. But it is certainly a

regime that plays a more active, regulatory role than under normal capitalist conditions. This role will probably have to increase in the future since the massive investments needed to renew the infrastructure will have to be provided primarily by the state.

Moreover, the Russian state still owns a majority or controlling share of some of the key companies (UES, Gazprom), which in turn have great leverage over the viability of other companies.

To a certain degree the huge majority of the ruling class - both in the state bureaucracy and the oligarchs - understood the dangers of the weak and unpopular Yeltsin-regime and the necessity to act decisively.

That's why they supported the Putin regime at the beginning and most still do.

So there are profound economic reasons why the Putin regime has to create a strong bonapartist state, a Great Russian chauvinist ideology, a stronger repressive apparatus and the subordination of individual oligarchs and the regional governors. It also had to remove the huge wage arrears, the sweep away obstacles to efficient profit making and initiate huge investment in the physical infrastructure of the country.

So far the Putin regime has succeeded in several of these tasks. But several others are still ahead - in particular, subordinating regional oligarchs and maintaining the infrastructure.

The political fightback

All told, the August 1998 crisis was indeed a watershed point. The economic and political collapse took place alongside high point of class struggle (the rail "war" in summer 1998 and the threatened mass strike for autumn).

It clearly opened a pre-revolutionary crisis. But because of the treason of the trade union bureaucracy and the KPU leadership which traded the sell out of the struggle for some governmental post it ended in a defeat. It opened the road to Putin.

The atomisation of the Russian workers' movement under Stalinist dictatorship was replaced by fragmentation under the Yeltsin regime. The dislocation of the federation into semi-autonomous regions and the emergence of local barter arrangements all worked to ensure that bitter, protracted and often highly militant local struggles have been kept isolated and eventually defeated due to the absence of generalisation and solidarity across Russia.

In addition, the fact that the struggles were often in unprofitable firms meant that only political solutions like nationalisations could have worked. But these required organised pressure upon the Russian government, something very difficult to achieve in the fragmented economy of the late 1990s.

The workers movement clearly faced a decline after the highpoint of 1998 despite some important occupation struggles which followed in 1999.

Will Russia join the imperialist club?

The 1998 crisis acted as a catalyst to create a number of powerful Russian monopolies in the energy and food production sectors. Using the massive influx of new revenues based on cheap rouble for energy exports and increased markets for domestically produced foodstuffs, a number of firms have consolidated through mergers and acquisitions.

In 1999 and 2000 some of them (eg Lukoil, Gazprom, UEA) have invested abroad and even taken over firms in the CIS, Ukraine and Hungary.

Also as the world's fourth largest arms producer Russia is technologically advanced enough to have important sales of fighters, missiles and tanks in India, China and even Nato countries.

But Russia is far from possessing strong - or even significant in global terms - finance capital. Banking remains pathetically weak and not the leading partner in a

fusion of banking and industrial capital.

In fact, Russia resembles in some ways countries like Brazil - a regionally powerful economy, possessing huge multinationals in the energy sector, a weak finance capital and above all chronically debt-laden and marginalised from the world's capital markets. Russia will be paying nearly 50 per cent of state revenues in debt repayments in 2003, on present projections.

It is at the mercy of the movements of the capital markets, global interest rates and not even a junior partner in a coalition of major powers which determine these issues.

In short having lost the Cold War, having been subject to fast-track imperialist-supervised programmes of capitalist restoration, having seen all its social indices become closer to the Third World rather than the First, it is more than likely that Russia's future is one of a regionally powerful semi-colony, under the hegemony of the European Union.

f Russian capitalism



Every queue needs a policeman...



Strong leader, weak state

The Putin regime is an example of a specific phenomena of capitalist restoration. The process of capitalist restoration in the last decade gave birth to a new, specific form of bonapartism - restorationist bonapartism.

Restorationist bonapartism represents the rule of an alliance of the pro-capitalist bureaucracy and the newly emerging bourgeoisie against the background of an economy in a highly destructive and unstable transition from planned property relations to capitalism.

Restorationist bonapartism is a specific, ambivalent phenomena. On one hand it has a relatively weak social basis. The new bourgeois class is small and so are the middle layers. The bureaucracy itself is in a process of transition; it lacks popular trust and legitimacy and wants people make forget that it served the Stalinist rulers until recently.

In the period of the counter-revolutionary transition there is also a basis for massive tensions and faction struggles inside the new ruling class which can result in coup d'etats. Combined with this is the economic collapse which massively reduces the material resources to sustain the state apparatus.

From this flows the weak, unstable status of the restorationist state apparatus. Examples for this are the sudden collapse of the Albanian state forces in the 1997 revolution, the retreat of the Romanian police during the January 1999 miners' march and the pathetic performance of the Russian army in the Chechnya wars.

It is a sign of the weak social base of Putin's bonapartism that he has had to wage war against all independent mass media to ensure a monopoly on political communication.

On the other hand restorationist bonapartism has an enormous strength: the atomisation, confusion and demoralisation of its main enemy - the working class which has suffered historic defeats by social counter-revolution.

Given the lack of stable support among strong classes in civil society Putin's bonapartism also has to rest upon the support of the armed forces. Putin doubled the defence spending in his first year to bind the army to him, has gained their support through his anti-Chechnya campaign and he himself is intimately linked to the security services.

Looking at the physiognomy of the restorationist state apparatus we can see a clear difference between the process in Eastern Europe and the countries of the former USSR. While in the majority of Eastern European countries

capitalist restoration was (and is) carried through via a by and large bourgeois democratic restorationist regime (with certain bonapartist elements in form of an influential president) in the former USSR there are in all countries bonapartist restorationist regimes - sometimes combined with certain elements of bourgeois democracy or none.

What are the reasons for this difference? Naturally in some countries the enormous political contradictions arising from national wars and civil wars played an important role for the formation of authoritarian bourgeois regimes (on the Balkans, in the Caucasus).

Also the influx of imperialist foreign direct investment played a significant role for the fast process of formation of a new capitalist class in Central European countries which again formed a basis for a more stable bourgeois democratic form of restoration.

But the most fundamental, general reason for this difference must be located in the different historic basis for capitalism. In Eastern Europe capitalism was abolished only for four decades before while in the former USSR it did not exist for more than seventy years.

In countries like Poland, Hungary or Yugoslavia there existed even before 1989 a sizeable petty-bourgeoisie which provided the basis for a relatively fast formation of the new capitalist class.

But even in Eastern European countries where no petty-bourgeoisie existed for most of the time (e.g. Czech Republic, Romania, Albania) there were nevertheless layers which had origins - either personally or via their parents - in bourgeois and petty-bourgeois classes (in case of Czech Republic there was even the legacy of an imperialist bourgeoisie).

But in case of USSR the bourgeoisie and middle classes were annihilated for many decades.

Combined with the dramatic economic decline in the period of restoration this provided the basis for the difference in the political restorationist regimes.

Restorationist bonapartism emerged with the social counter-revolution, i.e. the victory of the restorationist forces in 1989/91. It can - and likely will - continue for the whole transition period of restructuring the economic and social basis of the society in a capitalist mode.

By the end of this process it can transform into "normal" bourgeois forms of bonapartism or it can be transformed to various combinations with bourgeois democracy - depending on the national (and international) relation of class forces.

Strike numbers have now fallen drastically. But this has been accompanied by regroupment within the workers movement, and the emergence of more left-wing, militant forces like Zashita and it's deputy in the State Duma Oleg Shein. Other notable groups include the dockers union, which led struggle against the new Labour Code and also the Movement for a Workers Party. These forces are still small but they represent a step forward compared with the depressive 1990s.

But what are the prospects for workers movement? Successful capitalist restoration in Russia means a strengthened bourgeoisie on the one hand. But it also means - at least in the longer term - the formation of a working class which produces value and has the power to turn off the profit tap - and which is not atomised by a moribund economy. In the long run the restoration of capitalism will also restore capitalism's gravedigger.

In this context the development of a militant left wing inside the workers movement represents an important opportunity for the future.

While it is a small force with some roots in the masses at the moment, it could become a significant mass force in the struggles to come.

The tasks of Marxists in this situation is to help building a new, authentic workers party - a revolutionary work-

ers party - and outlining the revolutionary programme it has to fight for.

Putin's challenges ahead

There are still grave dangers for the Putin regime

- It needs to create the conditions for further capital accumulation and through this stop the ongoing capital flight. This is important because the infrastructure - from pipelines and electricity systems to machinery and military assets - needs many billions of dollars if it is to avoid physical breakdown - as the fire at Ostankino TV showed. Otherwise another economic crisis could emerge.

- It needs to succeed in fully unifying the federal state economically.

- It has to solve the chronic crisis in the army, cut it down and create either a better equipped professional army or at least an enlarged professional part of the army.

- It must one way or another finish the Chechnya war: either by a negotiated deal or full military victory. Neither looks promising at present.

It is not likely that the Putin regime will go into crisis because of a rising tide of class struggle. It's much more likely the other way round: that Putin will hit crisis because of a world

recession, a defeat in Chechnya, a split in the ruling class, natural and man-made catastrophes - or a combination of these factors.

Such factors are difficult to predict - and while the world economy certainly faces problems, how they will hit Russia is also far from clear.

Will a global economic crisis lead to a collapse of oil prices and therefore Russian exports? Maybe but not necessarily - as the developments on the oil market in the 1974-75 and 1980-82 recessions showed.

And given the low level of foreign direct investment, Russia will also not be so much affected by an investment downturn. The problems of the declining infrastructure are much more certain to predict. If the Russian bourgeoisie can not mobilise the necessary resources the economy will simply collapse at some time in this decade.

While an upswing of class struggle before such a crisis is possible we do not expect a massive wave of resistance in the near future. The impact of recent defeats overlays decades of atomisation under Stalinism

Despite all these difficulties big opportunities lie ahead for the Russian working class. While a realistic assessment of the successes of capitalist restoration is indispensable for Marx-

Strike numbers have fallen drastically. But this has been accompanied by regroupment within the workers movement

ists, the limits of the stabilisation of the bourgeois order can not be ignored.

The coming years will see repeated challenges to, and frictions within, the Putin regime. This will offer new opportunities for the Russian working class to fight back. Already vanguard sections - like the movement against the reactionary Labor Code - have started to draw the right lessons.

Meanwhile, from the fundamentally defensive position of the working class flows the importance of fighting to maintain democratic rights.

Marxists in Russia have to seek out every opportunity to challenge and weaken the bonapartist regime.

In a period of counter-revolutionary defeats for the working class revolutionary Marxists understand that it is more likely that political frictions will be opened on democratic questions - involving middle class or even bourgeois forces - than in the workplace.

The most important lesson is the need for a new workers party. To make sure the working class can meet the challenges ahead it is absolutely necessary for such a workers party to learn the historic lessons of the revolutionary workers movement. That's what a workers' party can do - and a new revolutionary workers party is the vital missing element of the Russian situation today. ■

SWP: A split too far?

In the eighteen months following the Seattle protests the SWP leadership was locked in a rancorous debate with its US sister organisation about tactics towards the anti-capitalist movement. It ended in a split. *Stuart King* reviews "The anti-capitalist movement and the revolutionary left", by Alex Callinicos.

This new pamphlet explains the SWP's view of the split in the International Socialist Tendency (IST), a split which led to the loss of one of its largest and founding sections, the US based International Socialist Organisation (ISO). In the process it throws into sharp relief the fact that the author does not have a clue about the real meaning of the Marxist united front tactic.

Callinicos' case is that the ISO failed to shake off the methods that were appropriate to the rightwing Thatcher-Reagan period "when it was necessary to protect Marxist ideas from a hostile environment". Instead of throwing themselves wholeheartedly into the anti-capitalist and Nader movement, they adopted a "sectarian approach" to the united front. From being a healthy revolutionary tendency they became an "ossified sect" which had to be expelled from the IST.

This tendency to "sectarianism" was apparently first spotted by the eagle eyed SWP leadership during the Balkan war of 1999. The ISO initiated a debate with the SWP Central Committee, arguing that it was necessary within united front committees against the war, to highlight the important differences that existed with the other forces involved.

It was, the ISO said, necessary to attack those who peddled illusions in the United Nations as an alternative to NATO and to criticise those who were in sympathy with Serbian nationalism and who opposed Kosovan self-determination. "It would" the ISO stated, "be unprincipled to ignore these questions within the anti-war movement."

As Callinicos points out "the ISO's approach contrasted dramatically with that pursued by its European sister organisations". The SWP itself was buried deep into an uncritical alliance with pro-Milosevic forces. The ISO was told in no uncertain terms by the SWP leadership that it suffered under a misconception, "that the way in which revolutionaries differentiate themselves within the united fronts is by 'putting the arguments' which sets us apart from other forces within the united front". Rather it was by "being the most dynamic and militant force in building the movement in question that we distinguish ourselves and draw new people towards us".

The result was that the SWP was indistinguishable politically from pro-Serbian Stalinists, and left Labour figures like Tony Benn, who wanted a peaceful imperialist intervention led by the UN. Support for Kosovar self-determination was abandoned in the struggle against "the greater evil" - NATO. Socialist Worker went into overdrive to deny that any sort of "genocide" was being conducted against the Kosovars, in the process belittling the actual horrors being perpetrated against them by the Milosevic's armed forces. In this they were at one with the Stalinists of the Morning Star.

Callinicos argues that "the systematic use of this united front approach developed by the Bolsheviks and the Communist International during its early years (1918-1923) is of crucial importance in relating to the new (anti-capitalist) political milieu."

The problem is the way the SWP use the united front has nothing in common with the Bolsheviks or the Com-

intern's use of the tactics. Callinicos does not bother to quote the Comintern's theses on the question; this is not surprising because it supports the ISO's view not the SWPs.

The 1921 Executive Committee's resolution, which was adopted at the Fourth Congress in 1922 unanimously, says of participation in a united front "While supporting the slogan of the greatest possible unity of all workers' organisations in every practical action against the capitalist front, communists may in no circumstances desist from putting forward their views, which are the only consistent expression of the defence of the working class interests as a whole." The resolution states that this should be done "not only before and after action has been taken, but also if necessary, during its course". No worries about "putting the arguments" here.

Further evidence of the ISO's "decline into sectarianism" was discovered around the anti-capitalist mobilisation at Seattle. Only a small number of ISO members were sent to this demonstration (although a leading ISO member was arrested in the actions). The ISO itself made a self-criticism, saying it had failed to mobilise sufficient numbers for what turned out to be a momentous event.

The roots of the split lie in the bureaucratic centrism of the SWP and its fellow IST leaderships. The methods they use to build their tendency have nothing in common with revolutionary Trotskyism.

This, it should be noted, was certainly more than the SWP leadership had done, when they failed to mobilise at all for the J18 Stop the City event in London in 1999 - a major anti-capitalist mobilisation - in a city where the SWP has hundreds of members. Nor did the SWP cover itself in glory on N30 in London when 1,500 anti-capitalists demonstrated in central London at Euston Station in solidarity with the events in Seattle: then they managed to assemble a few dozen paper sellers.

In fact if the ISO did underestimate the potency and significance of the anti-capitalist movement up to and including Seattle, it was a weakness they shared with the SWP leadership. The attack by Cliff and Callinicos in early 2000 was fuelled by hindsight at best.

There followed a further argument over priorities for the Washington anti-capitalist mobilisation. The ISO had called for some of its smaller branches to consider prioritising the Campaign to End the Death Penalty (CEDP) which had some success in mobilising against the decision to execute hundreds of blacks on death row across America. This led to further letters from Callinicos and Tony Cliff.

But the arguments were not just about priorities and resources. The ISO thought the SWP exaggerated both the revolutionary nature of the movement and its importance. They argued that the "self-identified anti-capitalists" were a minority, "predominantly young students, overwhelmingly white and largely middle class", that the movement was an "exciting development but

only one development among many".

This was tantamount to committing treason within the IST. The SWP, having virtually ignored the early developments of the anti-globalisation movement in Britain, was now running fast to catch up after Seattle. It now, correctly, recognised its importance on a world scale.

The ISO was not convinced, and dared to challenge their perspective. Worse at the same time the ISO took issue with another element of the IST's perspective - Tony Cliff's idea that Europe in the 1990s was like "seeing the 1930s in slow motion".

The ISO pointed out that far from slump, stagnation and mass unemployment the 1990s in Europe had seen a long period of boom. In criticising Cliff they had added lese-majesty to their list of crimes. Once they'd done that they were living on borrowed time.

The Nader campaign became yet another bone of contention. While Callinicos finds no fault with the ISO's prioritising of the campaign, again he is contemptuous of what he sees as a sectarian approach to work in the Nader Committees. This "sectarianism" consisted in the ISO orienting to people who were critical of Nader and attempting to win them to a "long term political alternative". Callinicos is particularly

scathing of the ISO inviting people from the Nader campaign to meetings such as "The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx".

He declares that while political discussion is important it was most likely to emerge "organically from the work of the movement rather than originating from abstract topics artificially introduced by revolutionaries". What this meant was clear from the SWP's work in Britain in the Socialist Alliances. Here there were to be no "abstract" revolutionary demands. They blocked with the "organic" reformists to remove demands from the Alliance election platform which called for the disarming of the police, the removal of their CS gas, long batons, guns etc.

Certainly working in united fronts around common actions means revolutionaries being dynamic, taking initiatives, being the most active builders of a campaign. But to counterpose this to revolutionaries putting forward their own arguments, fraternally criticising their united front partners when they mislead the workers and youth involved in the campaign, is self-defeating opportunism.

Further proof of ISO "sectarianism" is provided for Callinicos by the fact that it "dropped the Nader committees like a hot potato, preferring instead to relate to the liberal Democrats protesting against Bush's rigged victory." Callinicos fails to mention that the liberal Democrats protesting were in fact outraged black voters, deprived of their right to vote by a racist state Governor of Florida. To have ignored such a protest, one

the Democratic leadership quickly tried to close down, would have been really sectarian. Callinicos also neglects to point out that it wasn't just the ISO that dropped the Nader committees "like a hot potato" - so did Nader. He "disappeared" for months after the election, claiming he needed time to work out his election expenses!

The USA needs a Nader led "anti-corporate democratic" party like it needs a hole in the head.

What the radicalising and internationalising US workers movement and the anti-capitalist youth need today is a workers' party - a revolutionary workers party. Yet the IST is endorsing populism - not very radical populism either. This is of a piece with its protection of the reformist character of the socialist alliances in Britain and Australia.

Of course the SWP believes that these are only halfway houses along the road to a revolutionary party. But the experience of every major radical movement in the USA (before the first world war, between the wars and immediately after it, during the Vietnam war period) has stopped at the halfway house and then retraced its steps to the Democratic Party. These results were not inevitable but were in part made so by those who knew better trusting in the objective logic of the struggle rather than telling it like it is.

The split with the ISO was carried out in a typically bureaucratic manner. When the Central Committee decided they were heading for a split they suddenly summoned aggregates in the SWP and issued an internal bulletin presenting the debate for the first time to the members. Of course no ISO leaders were invited to argue their positions before the membership, rather the SWPs were invited to line up behind the leadership.

When a minority in the SEK, the IST's Greek section, declared its support for the ISO and demanded faction rights, they were quickly terminated. Or as Callinicos diplomatically puts it "their very disruptive behaviour during the pre-conference discussion caused a backlash". As a result of "the backlash" the faction left before the conference.

When Ahmed Shawki, a leading ISO figure spoke at the new Greek organisation's founding meeting, in the words of Callinicos "The leaderships of the SEK and the SWP responded by breaking with the ISO and calling on the rest of the IS tendency to follow suit." No meeting of the international tendency leaderships, no attempts at compromise, no discussion of the differences, no international conference, - the IS tendency was simply told "to follow suit", which of course it did.

Callinicos concludes his pamphlet saying "The British SWP and its sister

organisations have always set their faces against repeating the mistakes of Trotsky and his followers by launching an international organisation, with its own leadership and discipline... We have conceived of the IST as an international revolutionary current composed of autonomous organisations that are united by a shared political tradition." The split with the ISO has exposed what a fraud this rejection of international democratic centralism is.

Of course the IST organisations are not "autonomous" (or rather they are as long as they agree absolutely with the SWP leadership). Callinicos' pamphlet shows how the SWP in London tried to direct in detail the tactics of the ISO - even down to which campaigns it participated in and what resources it allocated to them.

When the SWP(GB) moved away from large geographical branches, the whole of the IST, no matter how big the section or whatever the national class struggle terrain, were expected to "follow suit". The fact that the ISO refused to change its structure was another point of attack by the SWP leadership.

But at the same time as insisting on this centralism the SWP rejects the democracy that Trotsky insisted upon in order to build an international tendency. The IST has no world conferences of its tendency where political or tactical differences can be put before delegates elected by the membership, discussed and voted on. It has no accountable leadership that is elected at such conferences and is responsible to (and recallable by) the members. Minorities who disagree with the London/Athens leadership have no rights to put their case, no means of removing this de facto international leadership.

The ISO claim that "the SWP increasingly acts as a foreman unwilling to tolerate even the slightest criticism". Of course the American leadership only "discovered" this when they were attacked. They have been party to this method of top down leadership in the IST for decades and have yet to renounce it in their own organisation. No doubt when the Greeks fall out with Callinicos they too will "discover" his bureaucratic methods.

The roots of the split lie in the bureaucratic centrism of the SWP and its fellow IST leaderships. The methods they use to build their tendency have nothing in common with revolutionary Trotskyism. Yet thousands of potential revolutionaries, disillusioned and repelled by these bureaucratic methods, take them to be the policies of Lenin and the CI - nothing could be further from the truth. This is the real tragedy - and its an international, not just an American one. ★

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Continued from front of supplement

But if revolutionary violence and reformism are dead ends what does Khalifa propose we do now after Genoa?

"The emergence over the last few years of radical non-violent forms of action taken by a number of social movements – unemployed people taking over French unemployment offices, or homeless people taking over empty accommodation, for example – has made it possible for those concerned to express their exasperation powerfully and give their cause visibility whilst at the same time having a positive impact on public opinion. We must take inspiration from this."

So after the historical digression we are back to square one. Direct action, illegal if necessary, is the way forward. No doubt it is useful. But Khalifa side-steps the issue: what do we do to defend ourselves on demonstrations against police attack; how do we dismantle the army and police that protect the bourgeois governments, and IMF/World Bank, and prevent us from realising our objectives?

Is the direct action auxiliary to a reformist strategy of incremental change, pursued through national parliaments? Or is it a way of educating and steeling the working class in the need for destroying oppressive structures through their own alternative centres of power? Khalifa does not answer the question he sets himself but only repackages it.

The Black Block

At the other end of the spectrum lie those who make a fetish out of street fighting – the black block. For them the sole purpose of a demonstration is to fight the police. This too elevates a means into an end. The result in Genoa was an equal, if opposite, failure to the GSF: the experience of a roving band of black-clad street fighters and capitalist property trashers revealed itself as useless and self-defeating.

The problem is that the "dress code" and the tactic – the masks, the unrecognisability to the mass of demonstrators, the appearance and disappearance, the obsession with trashing – all cut them off from the masses and destroy their trust or sympathy. Indeed it makes them objects of fear and resentment.

Firstly, it will not save the black block from repression by the police. In Genoa the carabinieri turned the "tactic" into an auxiliary tool of repression against other demonstrators. In future it may subject the black block itself to savage repression and mass arrests.

It is true that some of the black blockers did try to avoid the destruction of property and municipal facilities (and there were police provocateurs doing it in their name). They insist they targeted only banks and corporate buildings and symbols. But banks can be located on the ground floor of apartment blocks. To set them on fire is very dangerous.

More importantly what serious damage is done to capitalism or the state by these actions? Next to nothing! They mend their broken windows and cash machines in 24 hours. Car dealers can restore their ravaged showrooms in a few days. The cost is a pinprick for them. At best such action is a symbolic irrelevance. At worst it could alienate the local population and act as a pretext for the police to attack other demonstrators.

Some black blockers have argued that their main objective was indeed to fight the police, that they tried to avoid clashing with other marchers – not always successfully, they are forced to admit. They put down their failure to lack of preparatory meetings. They admit the police penetration. But because their principles will not allow for a leadership to plan and coordinate or the imposition of any discipline on their own forces they are in a helpless situation.

Whatever our criticisms of the black block we believe that everyone in the anti-capitalist movement should refrain from demonising them and must defend

those black block militants who have been arrested or framed by the police.

But we do say with the utmost seriousness to these comrades – find a better tactic! Taking up a defensive deployment on a mass demonstration or spearheading an agreed decision to penetrate and exclusion zone, will not condemn you to inaction and passivity.

What is essential is participating in and then respecting the democratic decisions of the mass of the demonstrators. In any case mass demonstrations have a right and a duty to defend themselves against provocations. If the black block want to join mass marches they must accept those goals and methods that have been democratically agreed. If not they should keep well away or be made to do so.

Peoples Global Action

Ya Basta was certainly the best organised and most numerous force on 20 July. Consequently it drew by far the largest number of the unaligned forces towards it. Around 10-15,000 were present on the Ya Basta action.

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International and the independent youth organisation REVOLUTION – from eight different countries – joined this march. Not because we agree with Ya Basta's tactics or politics but because its forces were the most sizeable, the most Italian, and were the only ones pledged to try and breach the steel fence around the red zone.

The tactics which has made Ya Basta and the tute bianche famous are described by one of their main leaders, Luca Casarini:

"Our technique was different: we stated publicly what we wanted to do, letting it be known that if the police attacked us, we would defend ourselves only with shields and padding."

Honestly, if naively Casarini observes, "In Genoa we expected that more or less the same thing as usual would happen. They [the police] deceived us."

The problem was that the police changed their strategy. Instead of defending the red zone they attacked the Ya Basta march in force long before it got to the red zone.

The police chose the ideal spot – a narrow road with high walls – to attack it with gas and police charges. They broke up the Ya Basta vanguard. Thereafter the Ya Basta militants – and those of the other groups or individuals who saw the need to engage the police and stop the whole thing turning into a rout, engaged in street fighting. Barricades were built and militants drove the police back on a number of occasions. Again REVOLUTION and the LRCI participated in the front ranks of these battles. It was in one of them that Carlo Giuliani was murdered.

Ya Basta's militants were the most courageous and best-prepared on the day. But their commitment to active but "defensive" civil disobedience meant that they were nevertheless unprepared for the violence and the sheer force of the police offensive.

Their normal methods of pushing through police lines, demolishing crowd control barriers, wearing purely defensive armaments, were extended to include huge perspex shields on wheels and (advertised but unseen) metal cutters for dismantling the red zone had they reached it. But all this proved ineffective against a sudden teargas attack – including canisters dropped from helicopters on the leading ranks.

Ya Basta were hampered by their overall strategy – above all by its fundamental political ambiguity. There is more than an element of real "frivolity" in their tactics – one which leaves the last laugh with the carabinieri, not the tute bianche.

What they are after, as with many of the north American populists and the silver-pink block, is non-violent civil disobedience. Their leaders have created an elaborate post modernist rationale for a purely symbolic street confrontation, aimed at exposing the repressive

nature of the state and encouraging a defiance of it.

But what happens when the police stop playing by the rules of the democratic game, when they do not restrict themselves to the use of low intensity force, when trample ruthlessly on the civil rights of the "disobedient", when they maim, torture and kill?

Genoa appears to have provoked a major rethink inside Ya Basta. Luca Casarini has said that after Genoa the tactic of white overalls is "exhausted". He goes on to describe it as "a positive experience but one which now seems inadequate to deal with the imperial system that faces us".

He defends the spontaneous fight-back of the youth. "The police charged violently. We fought back and I stand behind our response as a political fact." But immediately adds – "Nonetheless, for us to also take up militaristic tactics would be crazy and political suicide."

This misses or evades the point. Could such an attack have been foreseen? After Gothenburg yes, it could. Could it, therefore, have been prepared for? Yes, it could. Is carefully prepared self-defence – active and not just passive – militarism? No, it is not – not in the sense of reducing every demonstration to street fighting as the black block has a strong tendency to do.

Casarini frankly admits that the GSF and Ya Basta are in crisis after the G8 protests. He expresses the view that the phase of "civil disobedience" needs to be changed into one of "social disobedience". This he says involves a turn towards the working class forces who mobilised for Genoa and may enter into struggle this autumn against the Berlusconi government.

This is positive – although the abandonment of "civil disobedience" for traditional reformist demonstrations would not be a step forward but a step backward. Just because choreographed street theatre – pushing and shoving – has to be abandoned because the police will not play does not mean that everything Ya Basta developed must be junked. The defensive gear prepared by Ya Basta in the Carlini stadium was extremely useful indeed.

What Ya Basta should junk is the non-revolutionary opposition to the strategy of fighting for working class power. This is the basis of their frivolous tactics. Casarini explains the post-modernist confusion he has adapted from the Zapatistas. "We think in terms of a process of social transformation where 'the network of several networks' becomes a magnet which grows in strength and favours the birth of other social networks."

This is a re-invention of reformism, a do-it-yourself reformism but reformism none the less. Just as the carabinieri refused to play by the rules of street theatre so the rulers of the world will not allow the "social networks" to enmesh their states and render them powerless. They will use the sharp sword of the state machine to cut through these meshes.

If a radical movement really threatened their power they would resort to their auxiliaries, the fascist gangs. Mussolini smashed and intimidated the massive world-within-a-world network of institutions of the old Italian Socialist Party in 1922. The blackshirts toured through northern and central Italy torching every undefended "home of the people" while the workers, with no serious self-defence organisations, looked on in dismay. This is a warning to today's mass movement.

International Socialists Tendency

After the anti-EU summit demonstrations in Nice last December, the IST declared themselves pleased with their intervention. They set themselves the aim of "hegemonising the European anti-capitalist movement". Genoa was their first test – and they failed. The SWP claim 1,000 IST supporters were present at Genoa from Greece and the

rest of Europe (possibly 300 from UK). If so this is no more than were present at Nice.

Moreover, they were heavily reliant on forces from Greece, mobilised by their group the SEK. They perhaps had as many as 500 on the IST presence on the Saturday mass demonstration. Two points stand out here already. First they timed to arrive over half their forces after the Friday confrontations. Second, not only did they fail to make a step forward in hegemonising the European left but failed to hegemonise the Greek left. The Greek Committee, of which the split from the SEK was a main driver (DEA), brought more than 1,000 to Genoa.

On 20 July they chose not to join the 10,000 youth from the Social Centres, Ya Basta and others on the socialist far left inside the Carlini stadium. Nor did they join the march to attempt to penetrate the red zone. Instead they held their own small march of around 350 from the Convergence centre which, although it reached the wire fence, had neither the numbers nor the equipment to penetrate it: nor did they try to do so. This march was then attacked and gassed during its retreat by the police.

This meant that they failed to intervene amongst the most militant, Italian youth or to be present in the most significant organised mass confrontation with the police. This latter was not only important in itself (revolutionaries should be present in the vanguard of all progressive mass actions against the capitalist state) but because it was the exact moment when Ya Basta's strategic limitation to non-violence was shipwrecked on the rocks of unrestrained state violence.

This is especially important because the SWP has concentrated its polemical fire against Ya Basta. But on closer inspection these polemics criticise Ya Basta's strong side, i.e. for its defensive preparations (helmets, shields, padded overalls) suggesting, demagogically, that this is "militarism" and might lead on to terrorism.

Alex Callinicos has gloatingly observed of Ya Basta:

"One group that previously pursued elitist tactics is showing signs of a rethink. The White Overalls movement in Italy has relied on highly trained and specially armoured experts to break through police lines on demonstrations. This strategy went disastrously wrong in Genoa. Massive concentrations of police attacked and broke up the White Overalls march long before it got near the walled-off Red Zone around the summit."

Let us be clear. Was Ya Basta right to march to the red zone with the aim of penetrating it – as the demonstrators did in Quebec? Yes or no comrade Callinicos? If yes then was it not a good idea to be prepared for police attack? Those who will the end must will the means.

If Ya Basta can be criticised it is for insufficient preparations or inadequate foresight and tactics. But their declared objective and their activists courage and militancy, these we will not criticise. On the contrary we solidarise with them.

The SWP has an absolute phobia about the danger of "militarism" and "squadism", a phobia it developed in the anti-fascist movement in Britain in the 1980s. It rejects, if not in principle then in practice, organised self-defence for mass demonstrations and it does it under cover of being against "militarism".

The SWP thinks that the problem in the 1970s was that demonstrations, faced with state repression and the state's "strategy of tension", became too military. Callinicos observes: "Demonstrations became increasingly militarised. Large numbers of stewards wore crash helmets and carried big sticks. Things got even worse with tolerance of 'P38 comrades'-demonstrators who would dart out of the march to take a pot-shot at police lines with P38 pistols."

Here necessary self-protection against attacks by the police are wilful-

ly confused with adventurist tactics. But in any case to roll all Italian anarchists, German autonomes Ya Basta, the black block into a common bugbear to frighten the unwary and call it "militarism" is unworthy of revolutionists.

Under the pressure of Susan George's defeatist talk about not going on demos where the police and the black block threaten violence the SWP suddenly slip in the following:

"The police will feel confident about battering a small gathering. They will feel much less sure if a march is hundreds of thousands strong and full of union stewards."

Correct! Here they concede the whole argument – almost. But note the SWP's typical tailism and spontaneism. The unions will bring their stewards. We (i.e. the present anti-capitalist movement) don't need to advocate it, prepare ourselves for it, involve the vanguard of the working class in preparing for it, NOW. That would be "ultraleftism", "sectarianism", "militarism".

Subsequently, in Socialist Review Lindsay German even draws back from this concession to self-defence. She attacks the idea of being "better equipped" on demonstrations as doomed to failure in the face of the capitalist state power. But, trying to distance the IST from adopting a "non-confrontation" stance, she argues for a third alternative which combines mobilising "sufficient numbers onto the streets so that it is impossible for them all to be repressed." And secondly, "to confront the state power with an alternative power", which can be done by the workers by "organising collectively where they work and thus beginning to seize back power from the capitalist class."

This "alternative" is no more successful than ATTACS. First she admits that the march on 21 July, despite having 300,000 on it "the police took terrible revenge on a minority". And what should this minority have done in the face of this? Comforted themselves that next time maybe they will be part of the majority? She has no advice. How about enough self-protection and disciplined demeanour to make the police think twice, make them worry about the cost to them of an assault?

Instead German suggests that we trust to the emergence of "an alternative power" in the future, another example of the SWP's tailism. Self defence, the training of youth and workers to use force against our violent enemies is an essential component of preparing the overthrow of this society and building another one. It is not simply a far distant task which we can improvise when, one fine day, the revolution comes along.

The SWP counterposes to this sheer numbers and involving the working class. But mass workers demonstrations too need to be defended, need to be effective, need to challenge the undemocratic restrictions which the state puts on them.

Does the SWP suggest we offer our unguarded heads to the batons, our eyes to the teargas? It is becoming all too clear after Prague, Gothenburg and Genoa that the SWP is in favour only of a symbolic confrontation.

If Ya Basta abandons its militancy and the "Marxist" or "Trotskyist" left provides no effective alternative then these young workers and the social centre youth will turn to the anarchists and the autonomists. The growth of anarchism is, as ever, the punishment for opportunism.

It cannot be counteracted by pedantic lectures on the dangers of militarism and terrorism combined with militant phrase-mongering devoid of effective action. Under anarchist or autonomist inspiration there will inevitably be a damaging split between the radical youth and the great mass of the working class – who will remain under their reformist leaders. This, not primarily the "danger of militarism/terrorism", was the real lesson of the 1970s.

Continued on back page of supplement



Continued from page 7 of supplement

On many, indeed on most, occasions we want demonstrations to be peaceful. But it takes both sides to be peaceful. Strength lies not only in numbers but in the capacity to resist attack in a manner very costly to the attackers.

The SWP-IST is not offering effective leadership to the anti-capitalist movement. The very swift development of the anti-capitalist movement since Seattle has objectively posed urgent questions which the SWP is ill-equipped to answer.

However it tries to present front organisations like Globalise Resistance (like the ANL in the antifascist and antifascist movement) as THE anti-capitalist movement.

At the same time it has a marked preference for liberal individual academics and journalists (Susan George, George Monbiot, Ralph Nader) who will attract newcomers – forces clearly to the right of it, which it judges cannot recoup organisationally as well as it can. It shields these figures from criticism and condemns and slanders all who do criticise from the left them as “sectarian”.

It seeks to recruit out of these “united fronts” to its sections – which is its right and duty. But it does so not on the basis of presenting a clear strategy and tactics which it tries to win the movement to adopting.

Rather it tries to control them through its own organisational structures and to tail or mimic the lowest common denominator politics prevailing at any given moment. In short it seeks to control behind the scenes but not to lead from the front.

It ignores or minimises the libertarian and radical populist components of the movement and does not seriously debate with any of them. It has always given the most grudging recognition to the anarchist and radical ecologist wing of the movement – which preceded the SWP in building the anticapitalist movement.

In Britain and to a lesser extent in Germany it can get away this by organisationally stacking the cards in its own favour. But elsewhere its policy has led to splits and confusion – most notably in the USA, where its total prostration to the liberal bourgeois Ralph Nader is a major abandonment of any sort of class line. Again this is the fruit of tailism.

As the movement and the class struggle develops the SWP-IST will oscillate between its formal revolutionary politics and its adaptations to reformism or liberalism. When things hot up, these present gentle oscillations will become violent swings, with crowds of its unassimilated members flying off the vehicle at every wild turn.

This phenomenon has a name in the Marxist lexicon – centrism – so called because of the middle road its tries to play between reform and revolution. Centrism cannot play a clear honest open role in the class struggle because it steals from reformism and revolutionary politics without acknowledgement and robbing both strategies of any coherence or consistency.

For this reason the dominant influence of the IST would be no less fatal for the anti-capitalist movement than that of the black block, ATTAC (or Ralph Nader in the USA) or Ya Basta.

That is why we need to defend the united front character of the anti-capitalist

movement against purely organisational domination or takeover. We can achieve the maximum unity in action. We can debate out tactics and strategy in an honest and open way. Individuals, currents, organisations can review and change their tactics, and indeed their programmes, where they have been revealed as failing.

Mass demonstrations are essential, and they can be combined with, mass direct action too – on one condition. If the demonstrations are combined with serious organised self-defence. Marshals, stewards, militia, defence squads – call them what you like – must be assembled and trained by all the participating organisations, or as many of them as are willing and able to do so.

They must guard the countersummit meetings, the mass rallies and marches of the ACM against sudden attacks by the forces of order, such as were seen time and again in Gothenburg and Genoa.

Numbers are not enough. They must be protected and made confident to deploy their full strength, just as a strike needs pickets to be effective. They must be equipped sufficiently to do the job. They must be able to be concentrated where a mass of marchers have decided and are willing to assert their democratic rights by force against the force of the state.

Those who say this is impossible or adventurist are counselling surrender to the state's violence.

Ensuring a powerful element of organised self-defence is the only means to continue pursuing the militant goal the movement has set itself: stopping, delaying or obstructing the normal functioning of the international gatherings of the globalisers.

This objective is neither one for all time nor should we make a fetish of it but it is a militant act of solidarity NOW with those outside the imperialist heartlands who are fighting the IMF austerity measures.

What is needed is the conscious co-ordination of all the forces of the ACM so that the police cannot pit us against one another, so they cannot infiltrate agents provocateurs, so that we do not wantonly alienate precisely those we wish to win over and encourage them to join us in the streets so that we overwhelm the forces of “order”. ★

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After Genoa: we need a new revolutionary international

Over the next four months we can step up our challenge to those who run big business and those who represent them.

We must not abandon the mobilisations against the arrogant gatherings of the corporate globalisers and the distant and unaccountable statesmen. It is these events which have drawn the attentions of million of people to what is being planned at the WTO or IMF meetings.

Nor should building locally be counterposed to them. Such mobilisations can enormously foster links between those in struggle around the globe. This is especially true where there is an international and continental mobilisation.

Washington and a world day of action on November 9 are now the next targets. The latter, the opening day of the WTO ministerial conference, should be a day of strikes, occupations, marches, teach-ins worldwide. This will scare the hell out of the WTO functionaries meeting in Dofar and embolden all those who are fighting them.

But as well as international mobilisations we need to develop and unite ongoing struggles at a local national, continental level and at the level of the international corporations too.

■ We must take solidarity actions against the implementation of the austerity measures that the IMF/World Bank is imposing on countries like Argentina today and being obediently implemented by the parasitic local élites.

■ We need to demand the cancellation and encourage the renunciation of the foreign debt which all the non-G7 countries have not only paid but paid over and over gain. We need to mobilise in support of any country which takes any real step to doing this or refusing to implement the austerity measures of the IMF. Enough is enough!

■ We need action against the corporate promoters of sweatshop labour to create superprofits for their infamous brands. We need to help their workers in South Asia and China to revolt against this exploitation and oppression, to organise.

■ We need to take action against the corporations who wreck communities or whole countries by moving production where there are few or no democratic or trade union rights.

■ We need action against the privatisation and destruction of public transport, education and healthcare. We need action against the huge corporate exploiters, of agricultural products – those who are trying to seize the land and further enslave the rural poor with their GN monocultures for corporate controlled markets.

■ We need to expose and fight the huge profits of the pharmaceutical corporations and support those countries that defy them, break their patents and produce at a fraction of the costs the medicines needed to stop people dying

■ We need to fight the corporate polluters that threaten our communities and our planet; against the deployment of NATO rapid reaction forces and the star wars project; against Plan Colombia, against the Zionist murder-offensive on the Palestinian intifada.

■ We must make the fight against racism an integral part of our movement. This means fighting the harassment and racist killing of US black people via mass imprisonment and the death-penalty. In Europe we need defence of asylum seekers and sans papiers against state racism and the growth fascism with its murderous

and cowardly attacks on them.

■ We need agitation and propaganda aimed at workers in the factories, offices, in the public services. The ACM needs to explain there the links between global capitalism and the privatisation drives, the rationalisation that leads to mass redundancies and the privatisation of public services and pensions.

■ We need to organise teach-ins in the schools and the colleges aimed not only at students but wide open to young workers, asylum seekers, the immigrant communities. Here we could discuss the whole range of issues from the economics of global capitalism to methods of struggle.

■ Last but not least the shootings in Gothenburg, Port Moresby, Genoa – the arrests and imprisonment of demonstrators in these cities and of the pickets in Salta, Argentina – show the urgent need for solidarity with all anti-capitalist, class struggle, anti-racist and anti-imperialist prisoners.

■ We need to expose and brand the perpetrators of torture and brutalisation, frame-ups, violations of human and democratic rights. They need to draw a powerful and immediate worldwide response. We need to mobilise funds, legal resources, pressure on governments to rescue our comrades from the talons of their persecutors.

Taking up these issues will mean both a struggle within existing mass organisations like trade unions, but also a struggle to build new organisations to link new militants together. The anti-capitalist movement is indeed a movement of movements.

It is an alliance presenting a united front of struggle to a common enemy. But such united fronts will not be sufficient to overthrow it and build a new world. For this a political struggle, a struggle to destroy the sort of state we saw deployed in Genoa, is necessary.

The key instrument of political struggle is a party. But it is not only anarchists who are sceptical of this today. After a century which saw the bureaucratic degeneration of many workers parties: those of the Second International (the social democratic and labour parties) and those of Stalin's Comintern, (the communist parties).

Their history certainly proves that bureaucrats do not wish to make a revolution and cannot lead one. But are all parties doomed to degenerate? Is a “movement of one ‘no’ but many ‘yesses’” or a post-modernist “network of networks” sufficient to bring “another world” into existence.

Is it a sheer fantasy to think that there can be a party which is not at the mercy of its fulltime apparatus, which does not make a cult of its leader? After all, for all the enormous differences from Stalin to Blair there is a lot of evidence to the contrary.

We believe that it is possible to create a new political party. It must be one of the working class, but open to all fighters against oppression and exploitation that realise the main enemy is capitalism and imperialism. Such a party need not be a bureaucratic brake on struggles:

■ If its members are clear as to their goals and methods, if they accept and understand its programme;

■ If they can control and replace their leaders;

■ If they operate the fullest democracy when it comes to policy and the maximum unity in action.

A revolutionary working class party can be free of all the bloody or corrupt legacy of Stalinism and social democ-

racy. But such parties must not be nationally isolated entities. Indeed they must be national expressions of an international organisation – a new revolutionary International.

The national parties of the second international degenerated because the International was an impotent federation which masked their subordination to the defence of their (imperialist) fatherlands. This mask was ripped off by the first world war. They were never able thereafter to say no to the capitalist state's demand for support in time of need.

The Comintern did not degenerate because it was too internationalist but because it was too subordinated to one party in one country and when that country and party suffered terrible bureaucratic degeneration this pattern was imposed on all the rest

Trotsky drew the lesson that to combat the powerful tendencies to accommodation to national conditions and consciousness it was necessary to build not national parties federated together but a single world party with national sections.

The party would check and control national adaptations, and bureaucratic distortions.

We believe that the struggle to build such an international can begin today. It can be begun at the international mobilisations like Seattle, Quebec, Melbourne, Seoul, Prague and Genoa. Why should the NGO ideologues, the right wing of the antiglobalisation forces, like Attac, hog the platforms with their reformist utopias?

Why should the voice of revolutionary socialism, yes and anarchism and radical populism, be silent? They should not. They should debate and argue in comradeship born out of common anti-capitalist actions.

We should set an example even on a modest scale of how an international organisation can function with full internal democracy, with full transparency to the working class and the oppressed, with an eagerness to learn from the masses and from other political currents which make real discoveries vis-a-vis methods of struggle or organisation.

The economic storm is gathering: the growth rates in North America and western Europe are heading towards zero. Since coming to office George W Bush has torn up a new treaty practically every month. He arrogantly voices his refusal to agree to anything that is not in the interests of the US mega-corporations.

But every such act confirms the analysis if the anticapitalist movement. In Blair the USA and globalisation has a self-proclaimed champion within the European Union.

Major battles are looming with these leaders. Mockery of them will not be enough. The good humoured phase of the movement in the imperialist heartlands came to an end when they shot Hannes Westberg and murdered Carlo Giuliani. In conditions of a capitalist recession our struggle must become one in deadly earnest.

In the global South the struggle against corporate capitalism has long been such – from New Guinea to Argentina, from Bolivia to Bangladesh three have already been many victims and a wave of mass actions, including general strikes.

Over the next year in Europe and in North America we have not only to link up with these struggles but to launch ones of a similar magnitude. If we do so another world will indeed be within our grasp. ★