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Revolutionary Perspectives

18



What is Anti-capitalism?

UN: Tool of Imperialism

Global Wage Labour

Tottenham By-election

British Imperialism in Sierra Leone

Ecuador • Zimbabwe's Agony

"Peace Processes" in Northern Ireland and the Middle East

Revolutionary Perspectives

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For correspondence write to:

CWO

P.O. Box 338

Sheffield S3 9YX, UK;

email: **cwo@ibrp.org**

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Our “Anti-Capitalism” and Theirs

Just over ten years ago the Berlin Wall came down. A year later the USSR had disappeared. In a parody of the *Communist Manifesto* Francis Fukuyama proclaimed that we had reached “the end of history”. Capitalism had won and “communism” was shown to be a total failure. Those of us in the Communist Left who had been arguing for decades that the USSR was not “communist” were hardly convinced by this.

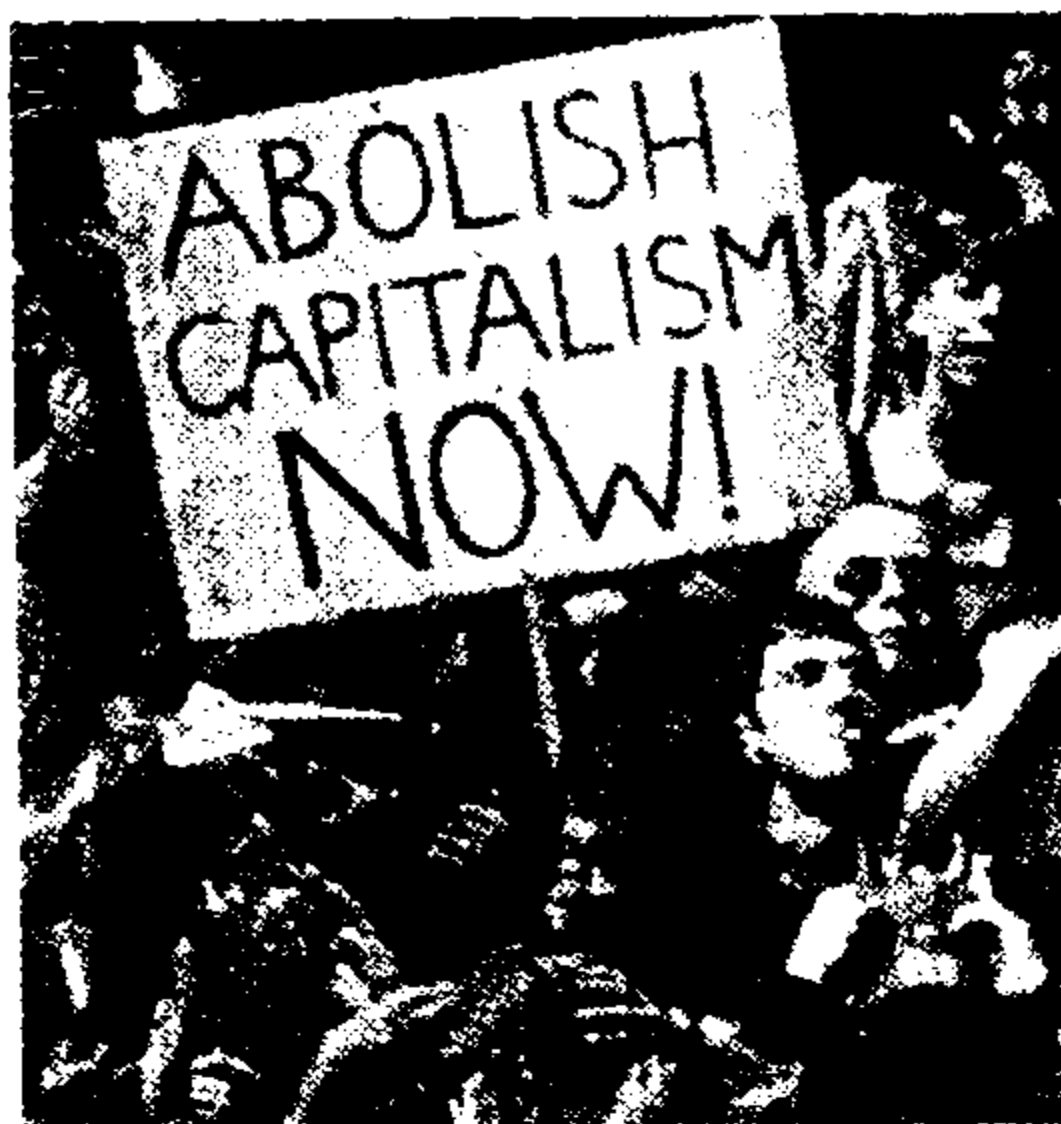
Many Stalinists, Trotskyists and fellow-travelling Social Democrats, however, hastened to scramble aboard the capitalist bandwagon. Either they wholeheartedly discovered the virtues of the free market or called for a “human face” for capitalism.

Many others abandoned a holistic view of society by seeking solace in environmental or other single issues. And ever since then the working class has been faced with a rampant ruling class which has not hesitated to make us pay for the world economic crisis which has been paralysing the world economy since 1972. In the US the average managing director was making 326 times the wage of the average worker in 1997. Today that figure is 419 times. If real wages of workers had grown as fast as those of managers over the last decade, they would be earning \$110,000 a year (instead of the current \$23,000).

But such inequalities pale in comparison with the greater poverty, unemployment and wage cuts capitalism has inflicted on the entire planet. The now familiar statistic from *Forbes* magazine that 3 trillionaires (including Bill Gates) earn more than the poorest 48 countries in the world does not diminish in obscenity by repetition. In the former USSR 2% of the population lived in poverty ten years ago (so much for the achievements of “communism”!). Today, 50% are of-

ficially living below the poverty threshold. In Indonesia a further 20% (40 million people) have fallen into poverty since the Asian crisis of 1997. Globally, according to Susan George, the US economist who campaigns against the World Trade Organisation, the ratio of global income between rich and poor has risen from 40:1 in 1973 (the year the current capitalist crisis began) to 74:1 today. It is no surprise therefore that we have the rise of movements denouncing capitalism.

Carnivals Against Capitalism



As we wrote at the time after two decades of being hampered, to read headlines such as “Anti-capitalists lay siege to the City of London” (*Financial Times*) when the June 18th 1999 Carnival Against Capital invaded the LIFFE (London International Financial Futures Exchange) was a pleasant experience. It was also uplifting to see that dockers struck in Seattle and all down the US West Coast in support of the “Battle of Seattle” protests against the World Trade Organisation. At last there was a sense that some resistance against the misery produced by the capitalist system was beginning (for more on this see *Revolutionary Perspectives* 16 and 17).

However, from the beginning we were asking some more searching questions about what “anti-capitalism” meant. In Seattle at the April 2000 Washington demonstrations against the World Bank and IMF, and in the May Day Global Day of Action, it became clear that for most of the participants, the struggle was more against the symptoms of capitalism than against the system itself. Some were Greens who wanted to save the planet from pollution rather than end the uncontrolled free market system which puts profits before anything, including environmental concerns. Others had even more reactionary agendas.

In Washington, as we reported in our broadsheet *Aurora* 3 (issued on May Day 2000), the trades unions not only herded their members away from the rest of the protestors (as in Seattle) but also demonstrated what they thought “globalisation” really meant. The SEIU public sector union allied itself with the right-wing Republican Pat Buchanan, and demanded that China be banned from the World Trade Organisation since it was “cheap Chinese labour which was taking US jobs”.

This is the same reactionary nationalism that the unions have peddled since the nineteenth century. It is similar to the anti-German campaign conjured up by the engineering workers union, the AUEE, during the Rover crisis. What makes this talk reactionary and dangerous is the fact that the unions twice in the twentieth century have signed up no-strike deals to defend the “national interest” during world wars. The defence of the national capital means that the unions are today not only divide the workers by nation and sector they are actually ranged against the working class in defence of the capi-

talist state. In the next war which capitalism foists on the planet they will be the recruiting sergeants for the different imperialist interests amongst the working class. Many of those who consider themselves “anti-capitalist” have not seen this despite over 80 years of solid evidence. Instead they welcome the unions as partners in the “anti-capitalist” crusade.

Equally reactionary was the response of the press to the planned May Day Global Day of Action. All in all the “eco-warriors”, “guerrilla gardeners”, “Critical Mass” cyclists got a good press. *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and even the *Financial Times* all managed to say something positive about the action. This alone should be a cause of suspicion. Ros Coward in *The Observer* who claimed to be a committed ecologist confessed to a sense of “optimism” about the “anti-capitalist” protests. This was because she could plausibly deny that they were revolutionary

It is active Christians, not anarchists, who have spearheaded the most effective anti-IMF protests, Jubilee 2000's cancel-the-debt campaign...these groups are far from extreme...Their dissatisfactions are those of many ordinary people... the need for sustainable forms of transport like cycling; the need to live harmoniously with other species; the need not to exploit Third World countries... Now the causes are not just being linked theoretically... This is changing everything.

“Have plants and watering can; will protest” in *The Observer* April 30 2000

Heady stuff. But precisely what is changing? The State? The way in which workers labour to produce profits for the few? At the moment absolutely nothing has changed. Even the so-called cancel-the-debt has been larger in rhetoric than in real achievements

(see box). At the same time Ms Coward also shows where she stands when she tells us that

... when the usual far-Left groups turned up outside the conference with their leaflets, eager to latch on to any new political movement, the organisers promptly provided special recycling bins for “unwanted socialist propaganda”.

The “usual far-Left” groups such as the SWP, Militant, SLP are not “socialist” (but stand for a form of statified capitalism) but no matter. The anarchists, autonomists and assorted ecologists reveal not only that as “anti-capitalists” they do not know what anti-capitalism means but also that the bourgeois press love them as much for their “anti-socialism” as their anti-capitalism. The same people who cannot see that the unions are a capi-

capitalist rather than socialist. As very few people read Marxist literature at any time this is one of the few occasions when they might encounter it (even in distorted form). Had “Bill” burned the *Sun* or the *Mirror* or *The Guardian* then he might have had a case for saying he was promoting “thinking for himself”. The control of the mass media by the multinational corporations would surely have been a more appropriate target for a Global Day of Action. Bill obviously needs to do a little more thinking but then he and his anarcho-Nazi friends can stop reading here. The next bit is unashamedly “boring politics”.

The Real Anti-Capitalism

The next proposed Global Day of Action is set to coincide with the Annual General Meeting of the IMF/World Bank in Prague. Already literature has gone out to try to coordinate action. A leftist gave our London members a leaflet about it signed by the Prague September 2000 Mobilising Committee (Which can be checked on

www.destroyimf.org). This leaflet is signed by a number of Czech trades unions as well as Trotskyist and Stalinist organisations which are based in the Czech Republic.

This leaflet puts forward the following demands:

- *Cancel the debt of Third World and other countries!*
- *Establish a democratically controlled international development bank which would provide needed investment to education, health service infrastructure and housing!*
- *Stop the dependence on multinational monopolies!*



The Financial Times front page on June 19th 1999

talist racket and seek alliances with them are quite determinedly anti-socialist and anti-Marxist. Not to be left out on this one *The Guardian* ran a story about the May Day riots in London about the events around Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square.

In front of the column, Bill a 'freelance' from Peckham had gathered all the socialist and Marxist literature that he could find and set fire to it, to cheers. "Its just boring politics," he said. "I'm just into thinking for myself."

The Guardian 2.5.2000

Let's leave aside the issue that a lot of what he burned would have been state

Tax the MNCs and investment of speculative capital!

This is not “anti-capitalism” but total reformism. And today such reformism is simply utopian. The welfare state is being dismantled and the services like health and education are being cut so that taxes can be cut to encourage the “inward investment” of speculative capital. And in the context of a world where the capitalists control all the means of expression of ideas what does it mean to talk of “democratically controlled” banks? The leaflet was distributed at a meeting of Amis UK, the organisation of the British supporters of the French journal *Le Monde Diplomatique*. *Le Monde Diplomatique* is not anti-capitalist but wants a humane, Keynesian capitalism (and it noticeably only attacks US Multi-National Corporations and never French ones, possibly due to the support it receives from the French state). Talk of shutting down the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation does not address the single factor which causes all the world’s miseries and that is **the capitalism mode of production itself**.

In all the debates and discussions surrounding the demonstrations against the global organisations of capitalism

very few seem to be asking what capitalism is. Some seem to think that if we got rid of the international organisations at the head of the capitalist system that would solve all the world’s problems. In truth the “anti-capitalism” that we have seen so far is so

defend workers in the “third world”. This seems to ignore the fact that unions that are in the third world exist to discipline the workforce and enforce the conditions demanded by the bosses and the state (and frequently without the minimum disguise for this).

Pre-dictably she has little time for Marxism

I don't think anybody has an agenda for the future. I don't think the ideological framework exists yet to deal with the diversity of issues that we saw on the streets of Seattle. I'm wary of people who think they have got it all figured out. We need something new and I think that's great."

Quoted in *Socialist Worker* 8.7.2000.

For some of us this is déjà vu the 1960's. Then too confusion was seen as better than clarity. The framework to deal with anti-

They Promise, We Suffer

At the Cologne summit last year the G7 nations promised to make \$100 billion of debt disappear. \$260 billion is owed by those called the heavily indebted countries. The G& ministers promised that 25 out of 40 of the most indebted would get help. The proviso was that the creditor nations were happy that the indebted countries could and would bring policies to their satisfaction (normally this has meant making things worse for the poorest groups in those countries, as in structural adjustment programmes). Gordon Brown promised that 11 countries would be ‘processed’ by April.

It is July and only 5 countries have seen any progress. Only Uganda (reward for its policies of supporting British imperialist interests in Central Africa?) has come anywhere near having its debt cancelled. Even here only \$629 million has been made available for Uganda in terms of debt relief. Overall only \$11.9 billion of debt has been expunged, and this came through pre-Cologne agreements.

Many promises have been made but the majority of G7 countries are waiting until the indebted countries fulfil the heavy requirements of the whole debt relief programme. This has meant, in the past, the virtual destruction of welfare provisions, education and health programmes and the hamstringing of their economies in favour of control by the multinationals of the capitalist core. This was illustrated by a recent Oxfam report. It showed that the poorest countries of the world lose \$50 billion in revenues a year simply because the capitalist class move their money out before it can be taxed. This is somewhat more than the richest nations give in aid. Hoping that some progress may be made through wiping away the debt of the poorest countries is just more of the wishful thinking promoted by reformists and grandly moralistic liberals. There will be no real debt relief until capitalism is ended.

See also:

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Revolutionary Perspectives 5

WTO in Seattle
The WTO
The debt crisis continues
Globalisation and imperialism
Globalised finance capital
Global debt
The WTO and imperialism

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deeply imbued with “anti-socialism” that it is no threat to capitalism at all. This can be seen in the views of the Canadian writer, Naomi Klein. Bookmarks, the retail arm of the SWP are selling the book “No Logo” which calls for unions to be developed to

capitalism already exists and it is called Marxism. Marxism hasn’t “got it all figured out” but offers us the only method for getting to grips with capitalism. It takes the essential nature of capitalism as its starting point. Although “globalisation” is an

expression of the level of concentration that capitalism has reached in our era it is not entirely new. It is a result of the same relations of production which Marx laid out in the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*, and in the *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. In the latter work Marx argues that

legal relations as well as forms of the State could neither be understood by themselves, nor explained by the so-called general progress of the human mind, but they are rooted in the material conditions of life...in political economy.

The kind of society we reached in different periods of history was therefore not the outcome of chance but due to the way in which human beings had tried to solve the problems of material existence (food, clothing shelter etc). For this “social production” human beings

enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society – the real

foundation, on which legal and political superstructures arise.... However these relations are constantly changing so that

At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or – what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they had been at work before.

This is the class struggle which at certain points in history breaks out into a revolutionary struggle which overthrows the existing mode of production.

And this is what makes Marx so relevant to the current “anti-capitalist” debate. Capitalism is above all else a **mode of production**. It is “the last antagonistic form of the social process of production”. Previously the other “progressive epochs in the economic formations of society” have been the Asiatic, the ancient and the feudal modes of production. Each one collapsed when it clashed with a newer, more dynamic mode of production. Ultimately all of them were overcome by the capitalist system which first grew up in Europe. So far no-one in the last 150 years has been able to come up with a valid refutation of Marx’s scheme of history. And for our current

anti-capitalists it begs the question: if we are really anti-capitalist what do we intend to replace it with? Marx was quite clear

The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production ...the productive forces developing within the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. With this social formation therefore the prehistory of human society comes to an end.

Real human history begins with a society without exploitation, without national frontiers, without a state, without wars and famines: In a word “communism”.

At any point in time there are not a thousand and one solutions to the problems of history. As Marx himself wrote in the same passage as that quoted above

...mankind only sets itself such problems as it can solve since, on closer examination, it will always be found that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.

This is why, there was no development of capitalism under the Roman Republic despite the fact that there existed a proletariat (the plebeians who had lost their land to the latifundist patricians) and financial capital.

*But what happened? The Roman proletarians did not become wage earners, but an idle mob, more abject than even the erstwhile ‘poor whites’ of the southern states of the USA. Besides them grew up a system of production which was not capitalist, but was based on slavery. Marx from an unpublished reply in French to Mikhailovsky, published in T. Bottomore and M. Rubel, (Pelican 1963) *Karl Marx Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy**

Internationalist Communist 18

Review of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

Control Over the Oil Market in an Epoch Where Finance Dominates

IBRP statement: The WTO is a Symptom, the Disease is Capitalism

War and Revolutionary Politics

IBRP statement: Revolutionaries Faced with the Prospect of War and the Current Situation of the Working Class

Idealism or Marxism: Once Again on the Fatal Flaws of the ICC

Review article: Sylvia Pankhurst: The Real Meaning of her Revolutionary Years

The ancient mode of production based on slavery was still adequate for the needs of the Roman ruling class. This prevented the development of the capitalist mode of production at that time.

Class and Class Party

But what of our own time? If capitalism is based on exploitation of free wage labour then it can only be ended when the ex-

ploited, the wage labourers, revolt. The other word what is missing from the "anti-capitalist" movement is the idea of **class**.

The demonstrations in Seattle, Washington, London etc. contained members of the exploited class but they are not fully acting as a class. As we have seen they were lined up alongside Christian do-gooders, reactionary trades unions and liberal

ecologists. Capitalism can cope with this kind of movement. As long as the unions drag us towards protectionism, as long as the liberals tell us capitalism can be reformed along humanitarian lines, as long as we believe Christians that the answer lies in suspension of third world debts, real "anti-capitalism" will get no further. But if demonstrations, resistance to environmental damage (which is almost totally inflicted on the conditions of life of the working class (see, for example, "Capitalism's Burning Issue" in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 17) are linked to resistance at the point where the workers produce the instruments of their own domination then capitalism is threatened. At the moment such resistance is not adequate to meet the level of the attacks made upon us. This will not last forever. The "anti-capitalist" movement might

even give confidence to workers to fight harder at the point of production. But this will come about more quickly the more conscious the movement is.

At the moment the deliberate acceptance of the bourgeois agenda means that anti-capitalists talks of "people" rather than "class". One of the more articulate semi-anarchist groups calls itself "Peoples Global Action". This is already a concession to the bourgeoisie. The French Revolution (which they seem to admire) talked of "people" but only to draw the lower classes into defending the bourgeoisie's struggle against the aristocrats. Once the exploited did the fighting and dying to get rid of the old order they soon find that there was a different society but not the one they wanted. There were new laws against workers' "combinations" and, strangely, you had to own a huge amount of property to get the vote! That was over two hundred years ago. Plenty of time, you might think to learn how to fight for our own interests.

However the defeat of the Russian Revolution and the passing over of the parties of first the Second International and then the Third International to the capitalist side of the barricades has left the working class disoriented. The twentieth century, which promised a new world order at the start, was the century of capitalist massacre and genocide. It is ending with the bourgeoisie still triumphant everywhere. For some the lesson to be drawn from this is that all political parties are reactionary. This is a dangerous generalisation. As Marx wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*

every class struggle is a political struggle
in which the

organisation of the proletariat into a class, and consequently into a political party
cannot be avoided.

The party is not a new ruling class in the making. It does not take power as a government. Instead it is the advanced guard of the proletarian army which leads the way in fighting the system. It fights all other parties who claim to defend some aspect of capitalism.

continued on page 8

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INTERNATIONALIST NOTES

June 2000

Internationalist
Notes statement
prepared for the
Toronto June 15
March on Queens
Park

Special Edition

We are reproducing here the majority of the special number of Internationalist Notes, distributed by our Canadian comrades on the occasion of a demonstration in Toronto against the attacks of capitalism on the working class, led locally by the Ontario provincial premier, Mike Harris.

Internationalist Notes (Canada) can be contacted at the address on page 13. Internationalist Notes (USA) is in preparation and will appear this summer. The article on the United Nations on p.12 is taken from that publication.

Capitalism's Global Crisis Kills

Comrades and friends,

Ontario workers, employed or unemployed, are presently under attack. The all-out state offensive against the living and working conditions of our class has no recent precedent and is sowing growing poverty, insecurity and death amongst us. Today's demonstration representing mainly unemployed and homeless workers will be an important occasion to express our anger and disgust with a system that treats working class people like cattle or unwanted trash. Following its 1995 21.6% welfare cut, the provincial government has created great hardship amongst hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers and, in addition to the federal government's cuts to unemployment insurance, has helped the bosses drive wages down in factories, mines and services. Proceeding from this, the state has now adopted even more repressive policies such as the lifetime ban from welfare of anyone found guilty of making an incomplete or "fraudulent" declaration to government officials. Similar attacks on rent control and social housing in addition to the 1997 passing of the pro-landlord so-called "Tenant Protection Act" have wreaked further havoc across the province. This has created a state of affairs where more and more people must make the inhu-

man choice of paying the rent or buying food, while those made homeless by this situation often pay for it with their lives. Toronto is now the epicenter of a spreading homeless epidemic with official estimates putting the number at anywhere from 50,000 to 75,000 people. Every winter people freeze to death on the streets of Toronto. In order to corral these masses of distressed and abused human beings spilling over into the streets, the state has also reinforced its repressive apparatus. It has thus passed a "Safe Streets Act" making panhandling and squeegeeing a crime. The city of Toronto has also developed a program called Targeted Policing in view of driving the poor and the homeless out of town or into the ground.

A State of War

Far from limiting its attack against the unemployed, we are witnessing an all-out war against the whole working class; a class war where the ruling class is certainly making tremendous gains at our expense.

Public sector spending has been reduced drastically. Even though Ontario's economy has been growing at a rate of more than 3% a year, spending in this sector has been cut

from 15.1% of the GDP in 1995-96 to 12.2% in 1999-2000; a whopping 20%! Major cutbacks and mass layoffs have been imposed on every service of any use to the working class. A partial list of these include:

- * an enormous \$1.307 billion less for hospitals with a scheduled 35 hospitals being closed province-wide and 10,000 workers being laid-off in Metro Toronto alone;
- * huge cuts to public schools amounting to \$1.5 billion to which must be added an additional \$400 million to colleges and universities with tuition fees rising from 10 to 20% and thousands of teachers being removed from the education system;
- * a minimum of 13,000 employees have already been or are on the verge of being fired from the Ontario Public Service and Premier Harris has admitted that up to 22,000 jobs are at risk;
- * the Workplace Health and Safety Agency has simply been disbanded which will increase workplace accidents and occupational disease.

Finally, the Walkerton tragedy has revealed to the world the deadly consequences these reactionary policies have for the day to day lives of the working class and the future of humanity as a whole. **In this small town, many lives have been lost due to the**

presence of E-coli bacteria in the public water supply and the absence of any clear regulations establishing immediate action and adequate public information in such a situation. This, after the provincial state apparatus had all but eliminated funding for building and repairing water and sewage treatment systems. In addition to this, the Ministry of Environment has been decimated as its budget was cut 36% with 752 workers axed.

Truly, getting rid of the capitalist system is a life and death issue that is getting evermore critical as capitalism's crisis of capital accumulation deepens worldwide.

A Global Offensive

Internationalist Notes supports this demonstration. We know many of the comrades who have worked hard to organize it and we respect their integrity and will. (1) But we do have important political differences on the strategy determined by this "anti-poverty movement" and think it is useful to criticize what we consider certain of its serious limitations. As the whole History of the workers' movement teaches us, a simple willingness to fight, however "radically", is unfortunately just not enough to win. If that were the case, we probably would not still be caught-up in this barbaric hell-hole. Besides its outrage and fighting spirit, the working class must clearly identify the enemy and its nature, as well as the basis and scope of its attacks and the general way towards a new and better society. In 1848, Marx and Engels put it this way: "understanding the line of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement" (The Communist Manifesto). This is where our class and this anti-poverty movement is principally lacking. We don't affirm these principles in a sectarian way to simply differentiate our

particular grouping from the organizers or some so-called left-wing circles; for internationalist communists these principles are practical and indispensable tools for revolutionary change. **Workers must draw the historical lessons from the past struggles and build an organization to point the way forward to practical activity that seeks to bring about the final downfall of capitalism worldwide.** In this spirit we put forth the following criticisms.



1 — This battle is Not Just about Mike Harris

Despicable, ignorant and petty as Mike Harris is, this battle is much larger than just getting rid of his persona. Ontario has perhaps cut some programs a bit more than other provincial governments, but this administration is not out of tune with cuts and lay-offs being administered by the federal state and every single provincial government in Canada and elsewhere in the world. Everywhere, Conservative, Liberal, Nationalist, Labour, Stalinist, Democratic, Green and Social-Democratic governments are applying with increasing unity, essentially the same capitalist program: beating up on the working class in view of attempting to keep up the profit rates.

Ask yourselves this question: Is the "Conservative" Walkerton tragedy any worse than British "Labour's" railway line massacres? Are "right-wing" Harris' welfare cuts any worse than "left of center" Clinton's poor-bashing? Do we absolutely need to minutely measure and differentiate the shades and hue of capitalist horror? Aren't these specific campaigns about getting rid of this or that Party, of this or that politician, the basis of bourgeois democracy and its lies. Putting the accent on "getting rid of Harris" or "getting rid of Chrétien", depending on the subject of the demo and its location, is subject to every parliamentary recuperation operation in the book. Unfortunately, despite radical and emotionally eloquent speeches and albeit loud and combative street demos, our anti-poverty activist friends usually put a lot of time talking about the crimes of this political misleader or that corrupt party. Whatever and however anti-capitalist the intentions of this leftist type of activism, one that is usually justified by tactical considerations, it only spreads illusions on the need for electoral alternatives rather

than a clear and united revolutionary one. It's a tactic that refuses to tell the whole truth to the working class. In Ontario, it clearly plays into the hands of the New Democratic Party (NDP), the Liberals and every single capitalist left racket hanging on to their coat-tails. General and practical conclusions must be made in relation to the absolute defeat of the parliamentary tactics adopted by revolutionaries decades ago. Elections are useless for gaining any kind of leverage or meaningful results. Moreover, "the working class cannot win political power by electing a majority in parliament. In the first place it is an illusion of "parliamentary idiotism" (Marx) to believe that the ruling class would peacefully allow socialism to be legislated in. Further, Parliament is merely a fig-leaf which hides the bourgeois dictatorship over society. The real organs of power in democratic capitalist societies lie outside Parlia-

ment with the state bureaucracy, its security forces and the controllers of the means of production. Parliament is no longer even "the executive committee of the ruling class". It is more useful to the bourgeoisie as a means of giving the illusion that elections provide a choice in capitalist society. In the polling booth, cut off from the awareness of their collective interests, workers can only choose which capitalist faction they wish to submit to."

Harris, Chrétien and Bouchard are merely conveniently replaceable henchmen; fig-leaves. For real progress we need to definitely get rid of the whole bourgeois state structure. There is no other way...

2 — This Battle Will Not be Won with the Trade- Unions

Uniting the whole class in struggle is essential if gains are to be made. The unemployed can't win the battle themselves. Iron links must be made with the workers in factories, mines and services to forge a formidable chain of solidarity. The huge potential of a unified working class in action was evident in the Ontario Days of Action. Whole cities were closed for a day, hundreds of workplaces shut down. The Toronto strike was accompanied by the largest political demonstration in Canadian history. And then...What happened? The unions that had militantly postured that they would shut down the province, effectively shut down...the struggle. Should we be surprised? Wasn't the historic two week protest of 126,000 Ontario teachers against Bill 160 also killed by the unions? Every major struggle worldwide from the Québec Common Front of 1972 to the French strikes of 95 were all ultimately axed by the trade-unions. They cannot be trusted and should not be invited to speak at our actions!

Though initially useful tools of workers' struggle for better conditions, the unions under imperialism have tended to become part of the capitalist state's

planning apparatus. Confronted by workers in struggle the unions have their own agenda and always attempt to control the struggle. More and more, workers are becoming critical of the unions but the great majority of militants think that all that is needed is a better leadership. "Those who argue that all we need to do is change the trade union leadership in order to change the unions don't understand that it is the function of the unions today rather than their leadership which determines their reactionary policies. They should ask themselves why even the most militant or honest shop-floor union members begin to be transformed as they rise up in the union apparatus." (3) In life there are fairy tales and there is reality. The reality of the unions is that they have become an essential tool in the politics of conserving capitalism. They are in fact state organs. However "radical" the speeches and the postures, the unions should not be trusted.

So how then do the unemployed reach other workers? We certainly don't need the unions for that as they are increasingly discredited. Plantgate leafleting is the best way for direct contact and a good place to organise collections to finance the struggle. Every picket line is an occasion to renew the links that modern capitalist society has smashed.

Every working class neighborhood street corner is a good place for holding public meetings. Of course this implies a lot of work, but results will be in consequence and a better guarantee of success than any bureaucrat's promises or donations.

Comrades and friends,

Capitalism is ruining our lives and threatening the existence of everyone and everything on this planet. We urgently need to organise to overthrow it. As we wrote in our MayDay 2000 statement: "Serious reorganization of class action has to start from the bottom through elected and recallable delegates from workplaces and neighborhoods; and with the creation of mass organs of struggle, in the struggle itself."

But History teaches that this is not enough to win. We also need a world revolutionary party that will fight inside these class bodies, giving voice to the revolutionary program, struggling against compromises and leading them in a revolutionary direction to ultimately smash this rotten and murderous system that is capitalism. The job of this future party will not be to take power in anyone's name as the Stalinists, Trotskyists and Maoists would argue, but to fight for complete workers' rule through workers' councils (soviets).

We urge all workers fed up with this life of wage-slavery and misery to join us in this fight for a better future for our class and indeed for all of Humanity!

INTERNATIONALIST NOTES/ NOTES INTERNATIONALISTES

Notes

1 One of the strengths of their mobilizing efforts has been to consciously try to encourage participation of workers from different cultures and regions, notably Mohawks and Québécois, to join their Ontarian comrades in today's demonstration. The capitalist class, aided by reformist and nationalist forces, always tries to set the workers of one land against those of another, in a sick and bloody game of "Divide and Rule". The internationalist aspect of this demonstration is a step in the right direction.

2 *Socialism or Barbarism, Communist Workers Organisation, U.K., 1994.*

3 Ibid.

Our Anti-capitalism and Theirs

continued from page 5

But is also not an artificial construct. It will come into being in the process of the self-organisation of the working class to give life to the words of Marx that the

The emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves.

Without this centralised, internationally co-ordinated body we will never achieve the cohesion to destroy global capitalism however many Seattles we have.

Jock

Sierra Leone: British Imperialism Second Time Around

The civil war in Sierra Leone has been rumbling on for a decade. It has cost the lives of 65,000 people and led to half the population of 4.5 million people becoming refugees. The majority of the atrocities are currently being attributed to the Revolutionary United Front, led until May 10th this year by Foday Sankoh. Its troops are often children drugged up to their eyeballs. Mutilation, amputation of limbs, of anyone who gets in their way is normal. However the current government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah supported by the British and other major capitalist powers is no stranger to torture as it includes the Kamajor militia headed by Johnny Paul Koroma, a former coup leader and torturer.

It was to keep the Kabbah government in power that the British sent first, paratroopers, then marines, into Sierra Leone. This was supposed to be just to evacuate British citizens in the face of an RUF advance on the capital Freetown. In fact the RUF had been halted by the UN forces a few days earlier. They may not have seriously had the intention of attempting to advance further. What the British presence was intended to do was to shore up the shaky UN forces and hold the line until a more serious UN force was installed in Sierra Leone.

The British press has been loud in its support for yet another "humanitarian" peacekeeping mission. But what the British troops were really doing was not to support the UN in its enforcement of the Lome Accord but to defend the interests of British capital. Britain is the former colonial power. It took over the territory from the Portuguese in 1787 and turned it into a major source of slaves. Decolonisation in 1961 did not alter

anything much for the local population. The most noticeable change was that black faces now occupied old colonial offices as the local bourgeoisie took over. Britain, like all former colonial powers, still basically controlled the country. Decolonisation simply meant it did not have to pay the costs of policing it. Imperialism became more profitable.

World Capitalist Crisis in Africa

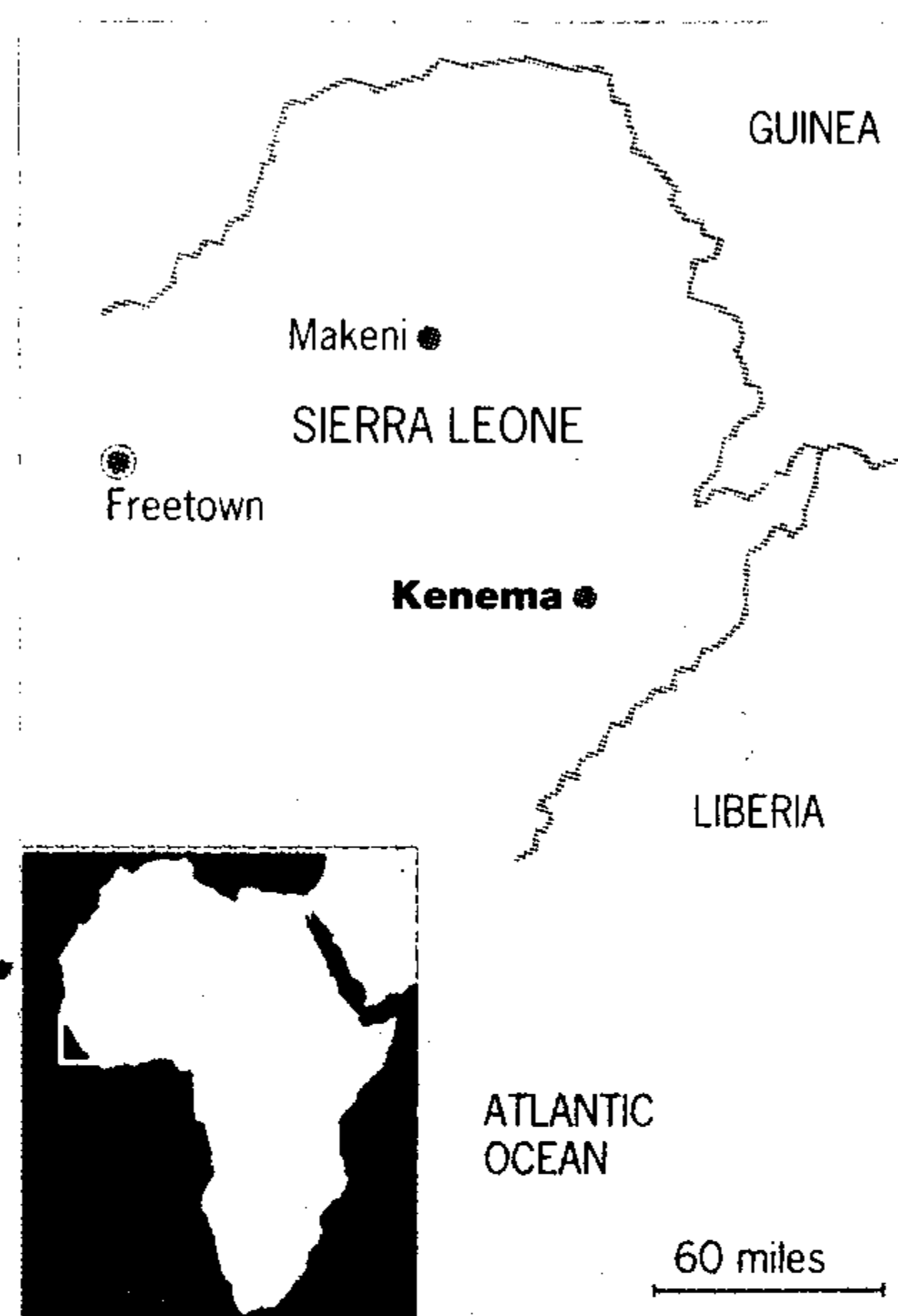
However the global capitalist crisis since the beginning of the seventies has hit these peripheral areas of the world capitalist

Africa as a whole is in meltdown. The wars currently being waged in the Congo (involving, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, not to mention their bigger imperialist backers in Europe and America), Eritrea, the Western Sahara and Angola are a direct consequence of the world economic crisis.

In the 1970's and 1980's the fault lines of these wars were clearer. On the one side the USSR supported the movements of national liberation and on the other side the US and other Western powers supported their opponents (who also styled themselves national liberation movements). But with the collapse of the Eastern bloc the rivalry within the western bloc has increased and individual powers and firms are now jostling for control of the major resources of the continent.

Sierra Leone's misfortune is that it has an abundance of mineral wealth. It not only produces gold but also a 70 million dollars worth of diamonds every year as well as holding the second biggest field of rutile* in the world. Additionally its bauxite (aluminium ore) resources are large enough to have an impact on world prices. These sources of wealth have only made it the target of multinational mining companies and the imperialist states from where they originate. The competition between them is the root of all the civil war factions that have fought to control the territory.

The RUF today controls most of the diamond producing territory but it was part of the deal signed in Lome in May 1999 that these areas should be handed back to the Kabbah Government. It was



economy hard. This has meant that many of the fragile and artificial states set up by the departing imperialist powers like Britain and France have lost the power to control their territories or the revenues from those territories.

for this reason that the British forced a reluctant Kabbah to do a deal with the RUF. And the multinationals rushed to sign new contracts with the Freetown government even though it did not yet control a single diamond.

Sierra Rutile, Rex Mining, DiamondWorks of Canada, Global Exploration Corp all filed claims whilst behind them all lurked the shadow of De Beers and Lazare Kaplan International, the real international power players in this game. Whichever side won these dubious interests would have a deal to get cheap diamonds.

However the British also wanted the deal policed on the cheap – by the United Nations. The British virtually run Sierra Leone (or at least the Kabbah Government in Freetown).

There is barely a government ministry that does not have some Whitehall bureaucrat checking the books or offering what is euphemistically called "advice".

(see "Whitehall launches second colonisation" in The Guardian, May 19th, 2000)

This is particularly true of the Ministry of Defence, the customs service and the police but extends to every financial ministry as well. However all this is discreetly hidden and a direct British military role at that stage might have been politically counter-productive as well as expensive. So instead of the old imperialist power coming in, the surrogate force of the UN was supposed to do its work. Governments of weak states in Africa seeking to curry favour with bigger powers like Britain would provide the troops. The only flaw in this idea was that the weak states provide weak and untrained, underequipped armies.

UN: Cat's-Paw of Imperialism

Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations has been particularly determined

sent troops who not only had no weapons but did not even have uniforms.

The subsequent surrender of 500 of these troops, without a fight, to a handful of boy soldiers is just the latest in a long line of humiliations for the UN (see article by our US comrades in this issue). For the British it meant that another cheap policing policy had gone down the plughole. In 1997 (and earlier) the British state had tried to support Kabbah through the use of mercenaries like Sandline International. Sandline International, led and organised by ex-British army personnel, is simply a privatised arm of the British Secret Services. It was the activities of Sandline which revealed the utter hypocrisy of the Labour Government's "ethical foreign policy" stance in 1997. A British civil servant was publicly blamed for the mercenary policy but he was only carrying out British Government policy.

However, the British Government were not the only actors on this stage using mercenaries. The mining companies themselves paid for Gurkha Security Guards (1994); Executive Outcomes (1996) and Sandline. Indeed in March of this year UN top officials met the leaders of a number of these private armies (including the Israeli Levdan) to try to coordinate strategy. Many top UN officials now realise that the nations that



Throughout Africa children are dragooned into the militias

to restore the power of the Kabbah Government. The force he assembled in Sierra Leone (Unamsil) was the largest UN peace-keeping force in the world with 9,000 men. It had the widest freedom in the use of the force (under Chapters 6 and 7 of the UN rules regarding peacekeeping). But Annan was disappointed with the commitment of the states (Zambia, Guinea) who sent troops. He denounced them publicly, noting that some states had

nominal support the UN are either weak states not capable of meeting their promised support or strong states using the UN as cover for their own imperial interests. The nations are not united and you don't need to be a Marxist to see that the UN can only operate within the framework dictated by the stronger imperialist powers. No wonder many of the UN bosses are turning to "soldiers of fortune" as peace-keepers!

Capitalism Means War

The misery in Sierra Leone is thus the result of the continuing career of capitalism. Diamonds, it would seem, are forever creating misery and mayhem throughout Africa. The three most desperate conflicts in Africa (Sierra Leone, Congo and Angola) are all fuelled and financed by the access to diamond resources.

In fact diamonds are a perfect illustration of the dominance of finance capital and imperialism. Contrary to a myth carefully fostered by De Beers since the beginning of the century, diamonds are not very rare (or why would the Sierra Leone cottage industry of alluvial plains alongside rivers be so productive?) Not only are diamonds found around almost all the westward flowing rivers of Africa south of the Sahara but there are also huge reserves in South Africa and Russia. During the Cold War De Beers was able to maintain the fiction that diamonds were rare because it had entered into secret deals with the Stalinists in the Kremlin to release the diamonds for cutting only through the De Beers outlets in London, Amsterdam and Antwerp. Since the fall of the USSR Russia has continued the agreement but the world capitalist crisis since 1972 has so undermined commodity production of primary products that it has led to the virtual collapse of the African state system left by the imperialist in the 1960's. Officially De Beers (set up under the arch imperialist Cecil Rhodes) controls 65% of the world diamond trade but in actual fact it exerts a monopoly which would make Microsoft jealous. And because De Beers enjoys the support (achieved through careful financial donations) of the major imperialist powers there has been no general embargo on the diamond trade from Africa. Instead De Beers have been awarded responsibility by the major imperialist powers for policing Sierra Leone's diamond sales through Liberia. This is a bit like asking the local burglar to look after your house while you are away!

At the same time both Britain and the US are permanent members of the UN Security Council so no embargo would escape their veto. Kofi Annan knows that a vote in the Security Council on an embargo would force the use of that veto. This would reveal even more clearly that the UN was just a cat's-paw of imperialism (see article by our US comrades that follows this one). The fiction that the UN represents peace and humanity has to be maintained so that is why no such vote has yet taken place. This has left the field wide open for the warlords to fund their fight against the Kabbah government with diamonds traded through Charles Taylor's Liberia. When it became obvious that this was happening the British tried to get an embargo on Liberia's exports. They were opposed by the US. Just as Britain is the former colonial power in Sierra Leone, the US remains the main power in Liberia (which was set up by President Monroe in the 1820's to send freed slaves "back to Africa"). Although the US does not have very good relations with the Taylor regime in Liberia it will not cut ties with Liberia (Britain already has) and so the only hope for the British is to destroy the RUF and re-establish its puppet in the whole of Sierra Leone.

This explains why British troops were sent to Freetown. They have now revitalised the Kabbah government forces and are training them for the next offensive into the interior. For his part, Charles Taylor has handed over the RUF leader Sankoh to the British (possibly as punishment for his attempt to do a deal with the British behind his back) in order to safeguard his own position at home. Now the British press are running stories claiming that the "people of Sierra Leone want us back" in order to restore an order that was disrupted by the British and their rivals in the first place.

In reality the British are already back and training the Kabbah Government army. The deployment of better-trained troops from India, Bangladesh and Jordan will bring the UN forces up to 13,000 – easily the biggest deployment of "blue berets" anywhere in the world. With this support the

British Government hope that the Kabbah Government will eventually be able to reassert control of the territory of Sierra Leone and destroy RUF control of the main economic resources.

The whole episode not only reveals the total hypocrisy of the idea that the UN is a force for peace and humanity but also highlights the fact that imperialist rivalries did not end with the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. In reality they have just become more twisted and complicated. Capitalism means war and the population of Africa are its primary victims.

AD

* Titanium dioxide, used in refractory and sealing processes.

UN — Peacemakers or Peacefakers?

It's Time to Wake up and Smell the Kofi!

The United Nations, according to the popular fairy tale, is an independent organization, a neutral arbiter that somehow magically stands above the contentious, often bloody, battlefields of international politics. Its mission in life, the story goes, is to protect the weak from the strong and champion the cause of Human Rights, thus bringing peace and harmony to an otherwise benighted planet. Far from it!

From its inception the U.N. was designed to be nothing but a cat's paw in the hands of the most powerful nations. To this end, its chief architects, France, Britain, the USSR and the U.S. (China was not admitted until 1971) have enshrined the principle of "might makes right" by granting themselves "permanent member" status in the Security Council along with the power to veto anything that conflicts with their interests. So, for example, a vote in the U.N. could be "180 to 1," but if that "1" happens to be the U.S., the measure is killed. Thus making it patently obvious that, although the members probably do have to check their guns at the door, this institution is not at all independent and is indeed merely a reflection of the very same hierarchical system of bullying and realpolitik that characterizes "international relations" in the real world.

Nevertheless, we would have to admit that as an instrument of propaganda, the U.N. has proven to be highly effective. It has provided a stage for the warmakers of the world upon which they shamelessly dress themselves in sheep's clothing in order to make endless public proclamations of their

eternal devotion to Peace and Human Rights. But meanwhile behind the scenes, these "apostles of Peace" have been arming themselves to the teeth as they carry out their insatiable drives for "spheres of influence" and world domination. Under a system of capitalism and imperialism there can be no such thing as a "Community of Nations" in any humanitarian sense, but only a war of each against all as nations are compelled to grab as much as they can for themselves while begging their neighbors in the process.

Any organization that claims to stand for Peace and Human Rights must be judged on the basis of what it actually does in the world and not by what it says. Therefore, it's important that we take a look at the U.N.'s track record.

VIETNAM: For nearly 30 years the U.S. was involved in a bloody war of aggression against Vietnam. It was described by the Department of "Defense" in the Pentagon Papers as a ruthless attack on civilian populations for strategic military and economic interests (see Howard Zinn, *A Peoples History of the U.S.*, p.555). During these three decades of mass murder the U.N. stood on the sidelines and watched as the U.S. dropped 7 million tons of bombs, dispersed millions of gallons of assorted chemical weapons over forests and food crops, killing an estimated 2-3 million people in the process.

EAST TIMOR: In December 1975, one day after the departure of President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger from Jakarta, Indonesian troops invaded East Timor where they

carried out a brutal 24 year campaign of warfare and terror that claimed the lives of 200,000 Timorese people. The U.N. "bravely" responded by issuing some paper condemnations of the Indonesian occupation, but took NO action, because that is what the U.S. wanted to happen. "As soon as the invasion took place the U.S. increased military aid... the U.S. in fact was supplying 90% of the arms, and as we move into the Carter administration the arms flow increased and was renewed in 1978 as the slaughter reached its peak." In his memoirs, Daniel Moynihan, who was serving as U.S. ambassador to the U.N. in 1975, recalled the events on East Timor: "The U.S. wished things to turn out as they did and worked to bring this about. The U.S. State Department desired that the U.N. prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook" (Noam Chomsky, *East Timor: Lessons of a Tragedy*, address given in Cambridge, Mass., 10/07/93).

PANAMA: In December 1989, the U.S. sent tens of thousands of troops to Panama as part of an invasion force for the admitted purpose of capturing ONLY one man, Manuel Noriega! In addition to "getting their man," they succeeded in bombing and demolishing entire sections of poor working-class neighborhoods, killing 220 innocent civilians by their own admission. The U.N.'s own Human Rights Commission estimated 2,500 dead, while the National Human Rights Commission of Panama estimated that more than 4,000 civilians were murdered as a result of this cowardly deed (see the documentary film "The

Panama Deception"). Even by bourgeois standards of "international law" this was an outrageous act of criminality. So what did the U.N. do to punish the criminal? Absolutely nothing!

IRAQ: In 1991, under the cover of U.N. resolutions, or what were actually nothing more than a "license to kill," a U.S.-led coalition of nations unleashed a rain of ruin on Iraq that killed at least 100,000 people. On its face, this massacre was carried out for no higher purpose than to reassert U.S. dominance in this oil-rich region. In the wake of "Desert Slaughter," a succession of cruel economic sanctions, dictated by the U.S. and carried out with the blessings of the U.N., have been imposed against the Iraqi people. Grotesquely, even the U.N. itself has admitted that these sanctions have contributed to the deaths of more than 1,000,000 people, including perhaps 600,000 children.

And if the U.N. were at all serious about ridding the planet of weapons of mass destruction, it would have no better place to start deploying its UNSCOM inspectors than the numerous U.S. military bases and weapons facilities scattered all over the globe.

RWANDA: In January 1994, Kofi Annan, who was then in charge of U.N. "peacekeeping" operations, was informed that the U.N. commander in Rwanda, General Romeo Dallaire, had information that led him to suspect that the Kigali government was planning to exterminate Tutsis. Despite being forewarned, Annan ordered U.N. "peacekeepers" not to intervene. In a letter to the Belgian government,

Annan refused to permit Dallaire to testify before a panel investigating the massacre because he thought it would not be "in the interest of the organization" (AP report, 5/98. Also see the PBS Frontline report, "The Triumph of Evil"). General Dallaire later said he could have stopped the genocide in Kigali with 5,000 troops and thus would have prevented its spreading. There was no shortage of soldiers available (*The Guardian*, 1/2/00).

It must be said, however, that Annan did express his remorse, saying he would work hard to ensure the U.N. would never again fail to protect civilians from genocide (KPFK Radio News, 12/16/99). Now that's some cold comfort for the 800,000 dead victims and for the survivors of the Rwandan massacre, as well as the thousands of Iraqis who continue to die each month as a direct result of the U.N. approved sanctions. Are there no limits to U.N.-generated hypocrisy?

Clearly, what unites this imperialist den of thieves is not any feigned concern for Peace and Human Rights, but rather it is their universal embrace of the "Right" of Capital to rob and exploit, even to murder, the workers of the world. As much as they try, no amount of phony "peace" proclamations delivered up on a powder blue U.N. shield could possibly conceal their bloody tracks.

S

IBRP sympathisers in
North America
**Internationalist
Notes (US)**
Write for contact and
a free copy to:
IN, Box 1531,
Eau Claire,
WI 54702, USA.

**Los Angeles
Workers Voice
[LAWV]**
For contact, write to:
Box 57483,
Los Angeles,
CA 90057, USA.

**Internationalist
Notes (Canada)**
For contact, write to:
C.P. 266, Succ. C
Montreal, QC, Canada.

Zimbabwe: Rival Capitalist Gangs Struggle for Power

The smouldering conflicts in Africa which periodically erupt into open warfare are an expression of the world's chronic economic crisis and the changing interests of the imperialist powers. Recent months have seen a resumption of the Ethiopia/Eritrea war, the civil war in Sierra Leone, and the continuing wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. It is, however, the crisis in Zimbabwe, which has caused the British bourgeoisie the most concern. This is not simply because Britain has enormous capital invested there but because the instability could spread to South Africa with much more serious implications for international capital. The Mugabe regime is at present defying the demands of international capitalism in a desperate attempt to hold onto power. This is, of course, a crime more serious than the tens of thousands being killed in the Ethiopia/Eritrea war. It is a crime for which the regime must either be removed or reformed.

The current situation

As we have explained in previous articles the ZANU liberation movement, which took power in 1980, used this power to convert itself into a new black bourgeoisie through its control of the state. As has occurred wherever national liberation struggles are successful, this new elite has enriched itself by exploiting the local working class and acting as the agent of international capital. (See "Zimbabwe — Class struggle threatens the regime" in RP 14) Zimbabwe's need for foreign capital brought IMF and the World Bank loans and subsequently their structural adjustment programmes, which consisted of privatisation, removal of state subsidies, open markets and so on. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), which has been implemented

since 1991, has brought massive hardship to the working class and peasantry. Such a programme is, of course, totally opposed to ZANU's programme, which is one of state capitalism. However, this did not matter as the ZANU elite and state functionaries siphoned off the spoils into their bank accounts. The arrogance of the regime is shown by the scandal, which came to light in 1997, which revealed that top functionaries were embezzling millions of dollars from the pensions of the war veterans. This is an indication of the regime's real concern for the "landless heroes of the liberation war."

The '90's saw a continuing deterioration of the economy, expressed through inflation, unemployment and shortages, which brought class resistance. In 1996 civil servants struck for higher wages. In 1997 war veterans protested against embezzlement and erosion of their pensions, and in 1998 there were 2 general strikes. The strike in November 1998 shook the regime and caused it to respond like bourgeois regimes the world over. Troops were sent against the strikers. One worker was shot and Mugabe, the president and leader of ZANU, introduced legislation banning strikes threatening for "3 years gaol of organisers of strikes." Strikes have, however, continued though on a smaller scale. The latest strike was that of the Harare council workers in March this year which brought the capital to a standstill.

In 1998 the regime entered the so-called "civil war" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supporting the new president Kabila, and committing 11,000 troops. This intervention is to prevent the victory of the Ugandan and Rwandan-backed rebels (who in turn are supported by Britain). For Mugabe this war has proved desperately unpopular and expensive. It is estimated to be costing \$1 million each day and

in 1999 absorbed 1/3 of the Government's budget. The war is enriching the top members of the regime and the top military men who are busily looting diamonds, cobalt and copper from the Katanga province of the Congo. The recent scandal about the listing of Oryx on the London Stock Exchange because of the concessions in the Congo and its connections with the Zimbabwean army gives an indication of what is going on. Meanwhile the death toll from the fighting is now numbered in hundreds and there is no prospect whatsoever of a quick end to the war.

The state's involvement in the war has led to the suspension of loans from both the IMF and the World Bank. This has compounded the economic crisis forcing the country to borrow money from banks at higher rates mortgaging the remaining gold reserves and even mortgaging next year's production. The economic crisis, which will be discussed more fully below, has made the regime massively unpopular as has its corruption and the war in the Congo.

It is in these circumstances that the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed. The MDC, which is a loose alignment of forces opposed to the regime, was only formed in September 1999. It has, however, attracted such support that it was able to defeat the February referendum on the amendments to the constitution; amendments which would have extended Mugabe's term in office and allowed the expropriation of white-owned farmland. The movement is an expression of the interests of global capitalism. Its leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, who is also the leader of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, led the general strike in 1998 and has survived several beatings and assassination attempts at the hands of Mugabe's thugs. The movement is, however, backed by various capitalist mining and power groupings including

Anglo American, National Power, Broken Hill, Ashanti Gold Fields etc., who have grouped together to form the Zimbabwe Democratic Trust which has provided publicity and finance for the MDC. The MDC plans to implement the IMF programmes, give the central bank independence, privatise all state companies, purge the civil service of thieves and withdraw from the war in the Congo. This, needless to say, is a programme, which could have been drafted by the IMF itself.

The Mugabe regime realised after the February referendum defeat that it could well lose the June elections. It was this realisation which provoked the farm occupations and the violence against the MDC. The regime gambled on using the land issue and widespread intimidation to swing the election result in its favour. It is terrified of losing power since this would not lead to their loss of the control of state patronage but also to a full investigation of its crimes, which include not only massive

corruption, but also the massacre of up to 20,000 opponents in Matabeleland in the 1980's.

The path on which the regime has embarked is a desperate gamble and it appears that one way or another the Mugabe gang intends to hold onto power. Even if ZANU had lost the election there was a threat to use the military. The narrow victory in June for ZANU may turn out to be a pyrrhic one. In the longer term international capital will further isolate the regime, whilst in the short term it could produce great regional destabilisation.

The Land Issue

Colonisation of Rhodesia meant, as elsewhere in Africa, that the land was taken from the indigenous population, who were engaged in subsistence agriculture, and given to the settlers. Rhodes, for example, offered every white settler 3000 acres of land. The local population were then

driven off the land and rendered destitute as their means of survival was removed. They were then forced to become wage labourers on the settler's farms, in the mines or in industry. Between 1908 and 1915, 1.5 million acres of the best land was passed to the settlers. This produced a class of landless wage labourers, which formed the basis of capitalist development of the country. Many of the descendants of this expropriation still live on the farms as agricultural wage labourers. The 4500 remaining white farmers employ 350 000 workers. However, many have been forced to less productive land and live in desperate poverty. According to government statistics 26% of the population live below the official poverty level.

The redistribution of land was a key issue raised at the Lancaster House independence conference in 1979. What is at stake is returning the land to the landless rural population via parcellisation of the large estates. This



Harare Airport. Kabila, the Congo President greets Mugabe. Supporting Kabila in the war in Congo is ruining the Zimbabwe economy

is the classic programme of the peasantry the world over and is fraught with danger for the bourgeoisie since it would mean dramatic decreases in production. Britain agreed to fund such a land redistribution programme allowing for compensation to the present owners of the land. So far Britain has provided £44 million towards the programme, however, the regime has been slow to attack the country's main earner of foreign exchange and the programme has not been implemented. This reluctance has been shared by international capital. In 1992 the government enacted legislation allowing it to take over any agricultural land for a price which it itself set unilaterally, but had to retreat from this because the international donors objected.

Since 1980 8.3 million acres have been bought for resettlement but the greater part of the land, which has been distributed, has been given to the new black bourgeoisie. It was revealed in March that 1.1 million acres of compulsorily purchased land had been given to just 400 people, most of them top ZANU officials or state functionaries. A black farm worker living in the Semukwe communal area, which borders some of these farms, remarked,

A few rich whites have been replaced by a few rich blacks. Only the colour has changed.

The land issue festered throughout the 90's with Mugabe making speeches and doing little else. In the 20 years since independence 91 000 families have been resettled, approximately half the number that were supposed to be resettled in the period 1980 to 1985.

Following the defeat in the February referendum Mugabe has now invoked presidential powers enabling him to seize 841 farms without any compensation. This is a blatantly populist electoral move had the short-term benefits of winning the rural vote for ZANU but, if implemented, land reform is likely to lead to longer term problems as production declines.

The state itself currently has significant land for resettlement. It owns 850 000 acres of commercial farming land which it has not settled anyone on. In addition a government agency Arda has approximately 1 million acres of underutilised commercial farming land which could be used for resettlement. However, the cost of successful resettlement including the rural infrastructure required is 4 times the cost of purchasing the land. This means the regime would have to borrow again on the international capital markets if the programme were to be successful. Agriculture, which amounts to 20% of the GDP, generates over half the foreign exchange earnings of the country. Tobacco alone brings in 40% of the total foreign exchange. The government's own figures show that the yield per acre from the large-scale commercial farms is 5 times that from the peasant holdings. Any large-scale resettlement is therefore likely to produce a fall in the planting of cash crops, such as tobacco, and dramatically reduce output. This in turn will reduce foreign exchange earnings and make the repayment of loans impossible, making the economic crisis worse. It is for these reasons that the IMF and World Bank

oppose the land resettlement proposals

Economic Crisis

The economic decline is producing an explosive situation. Unemployment now stands at 50% or 2.5 million workers!. Inflation is 65%. The country has an external debt of \$5bn, which it cannot now service. Foreign payment arrears are at present \$331 million and, as mentioned above, fresh loans are difficult to get and expensive. There is a desperate shortage of foreign exchange and imported commodities are difficult to find. The most important of these is fuel. To queue for 4 hours for a 5 litre ration of fuel is common throughout the country. Buses don't run because there is no fuel and workers don't get to work because there is no transport. This is taking its toll on production, which, in 1999, was the lowest, seen in industry for 15 years. Similarly mining output was only 2/3 of the average of the previous 5 years. The currency has only been prevented from collapse by the regime resorting to fixed exchange rates and foreign exchange controls. The Zimbabwe dollar is held at an artificially high rate of 38 to the US \$ in order to prevent another round of price increases fuelling rioting and strikes as happened in 1998. The real rate for the currency is estimated to be 1US\$ = Z\$60. The result of this is that farmers, and others who sell commodities in US \$ are reluctant to bring them to market until the currency is devalued. The regime has resorted to a disguised dual exchange rate whereby a proportion of the foreign currency earned must be exchanged at the official rate. All this is anathema to the IMF.

At the end of 1999 the average worker earned 67% of what he earned at independence in 1980. (See *The Economist* 22/4/00) The position of the rural workers is equally desperate. Although 70% of the population is rural much of the unemployment is in the countryside with many families relying on wages sent back by urban workers.

Battaglia Comunista

The latest issue contains the following articles:

D'Amato e Cofferati a confronto sulla pelle dei proletari

Sullo sciopero del 30 maggio

Strategie divergente al vertice Nato

Available from PCInt address
(inside back cover)

Workers response

The sorry state of Zimbabwe illustrates the total bankruptcy of the idea that workers should support the national bourgeoisie in their struggle for national liberation. There are no such things as national interests. There are only class interests and those of the working class have not been served by the bitter national struggle. National liberation has meant only that the black bourgeoisie has liberated itself, while the position of the working class is actually worse than before.

The June election represented a tremendous fraud. Both the Mugabe gang and the MDC are capitalist parties and simply express the interests of different capitalist factions. Mugabe and ZANU, who have looted the country for 20 years and dragged it into a foreign war for their own enrichment, express the interests of local capitalists linked to the state, while the MDC expresses those of international finance capitalism. Mr. Tsvangirai, is a puppet of larger capitalist interests and had he won would have necessarily turned against the working class he claimed to defend. Workers should consider what happened in Zambia where a popular trade union leader Frederick Chiluba defeated the corrupt and autocratic regime of Kaunda and now presides over a regime which is recognised as being just as corrupt as Kaunda's. As the French saying goes. The more it changes the more it stays the same.

Within the framework of capitalism workers can gain nothing from voting. The so-called Socialist Workers Party in Britain are currently trumpeting the election of one of their own number in Harare's Highfield township as a "victory for workers". But this is at best an illusion, and at its most cynical, a lie. Munyaradzi Gwisal was elected for the MDC whose programme is privatisation of the economy and support for the IMF. The SWP claimed though that he locally stood on a "socialist programme". What did this mean? He called for nationalisation of the bread and milling companies! But nationalisation would just deliver more power to the existing capitalist states. The workers would still be exploited. The SWP once again reveals that it has no

conception of what socialism is or indeed how it can be built. Not by electoral manoeuvres with international finance capital's stooges, not by nationalisation but through the clear and conscious self-activity of the working class itself. That is why the SWP stand both in Britain as in Zimbabwe (and elsewhere) as barriers to the development of the socialist programme. The June elections resolved nothing. The only certainty is that life will get worse in Zimbabwe whether Mugabe continues beyond the next two years (when his presidential term is up) or he is re-

placed. Workers have to struggle for their own interests. These cannot be satisfied under capitalism. For Zimbabwean workers to advance their historic and material interests they have to organise politically. As their interests are the same as those of the rest of the international proletariat they can only be expressed by creation of an African branch of a united and centralised instrument to fight capital (in all its forms) – the World Party of the Proletariat.

CP

Prometeo

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Il marxismo nel 2000

Verso la nuova Internazionale

La New Economy fra illusioni e vecchia realtà

Il disastro della Russia oggi

Ecuador tra dollarizzazione e utopie riformiste

Agli orfani dello stalinismo i conti non tornano. Recensione del libro Intervista sul nuovo secolo di Eric J. Hobsbawm

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Revolutionary Perspectives 17

Middle East - The Mirage of Peace

Just like a mirage, when you think you're pretty close it disappears. That's because what you've been dealing with is an illusion, just like the imperialist's promise of peace in the Middle East. The so called "peace process" is now 7 years old and the so called final settlement remains about as probable as an England football team winning a major international tournament.

The withdrawal from Lebanon by the Israeli army at the end of May ended a 22 year reign of repression and terror in Israel's self declared "security zone" in south Lebanon. Even during the process of withdrawal Amnesty International have documented a series of killings of Lebanese civilians by the Israeli army. On the face of it the departure of the Israelis from Lebanon would appear to be another obstacle removed from the road to peace. This withdrawal has been much vaunted as a victory for Hizbollah over the might

of the Israeli Defence Force, and their mercenary Lebanese stooges, the South Lebanon Army (SLA). However as the Israelis were planning on withdrawal in July anyway, there was no point in them hanging around. If they did they would only have incurred further casualties both for the military and the credibility of Ehud Barak's fractious coalition government. Whilst the Israelis could never have defeated Hizbollah without annexing the whole of Lebanon (which would be militarily and politically unfeasible) they could have contained them indefinitely if they had so wished, albeit at some cost both financially and in terms of casualties. The withdrawal must be seen as a calculated gamble by the Barak regime, the pay-off being that the Israelis, so often castigated as "the villains of the peace", can try to present themselves as the good guys complying with UN resolutions demanding their withdrawal from Lebanon. The

significance of the withdrawal from Lebanon is not so much the act itself but rather the way it will have an impact on the main issues in the Arab-Israel conflict, the Palestinian question and an agreement between Syria and Israel.

The Golan Heights

The question of the return of the Golan Heights to Syria is key to any prospect for an agreement between Syria and Israel. The Syrian state under the dictatorship of Hafez al-Assad has remained one of the few Arab states to refuse any accommodation with Israel. By withdrawing from Lebanon the Israelis will have hoped to wrong foot Syria, which has used the Hizbollah military campaign against Israel and it's SLA lackeys in south Lebanon to put pressure on Israel, to return the Golan. The Israeli withdrawal has undermined one of Syr-



The peace process has changed nothing for the Palestinian working class.

modation with Israel. By withdrawing from Lebanon the Israelis will have hoped to wrong foot Syria, which has used the Hizbollah military campaign against Israel and it's SLA lackeys in south Lebanon to put pressure on Israel, to return the Golan. The Israeli withdrawal has undermined one of Syria's bargaining chips in this respect. Also the withdrawal has left Syria itself as the only remaining foreign power with troops in Lebanon.. The Israelis will hope that their action may precipitate the growth of anti-Syrian feeling in Lebanon thus weakening Syria's position as a local imperialist power; a high risk strategy indeed which could lead to further conflict and instability. The risk of further war could be increased rather than decreased as a consequence of the Israeli withdrawal of it's troops.

Complicating the equation further is the death of the Syrian leader Assad in early June. Assad and his ruling Ba'ath Party have held Syria in an iron grip for the last 30 years. His ubiquitous secret police has crushed all opposition. The Syrian ruling elite will hope for a smooth transition of the presidency to Assad's son Bashar. Within hours of Assad's death they altered the constitution to reduce the age requirement for the presidency to allow Bashar, who is only 34, to succeed his father. However whether Bashar will be able to keep the lid on the internal pressure within Syria remains to be seen. Whilst regarded as more pro-western than his father, Bashar will be reluctant to offend the sensibilities of the old guard by making any significant concession to the Israelis. He will also come under intense pressure from the US. The Clinton regime in its last months is desperate for the kudos a big foreign policy success such as a peace deal between Syria and Israel. The US is however no "honest broker" between Arab and Israeli. Historically Israel has been America's most steadfast ally in the Middle East. Whilst Israel's role in this respect has diminished since the end of the cold war it still remains the linch-

pin of US imperialism in the region.. For this reason US pressure to cobble together a final peace agreement will inevitably mean far more pressure on Syria and the Palestinians than on Israel where, even the worst excesses of Zionism have only elicited a mild rebuke from Washington.

The Palestinian Question

It is conceivable that the Golan issue can be resolved within an imperialist framework. The main outstanding issue is a few metres of land on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, the return of which the Syrians demand and the Israelis refuse to concede. Whilst Israel and Syria have rival local ambitions it is possible that an uneasy "peace" could exist between them for the foreseeable future under the aegis of American imperialism. The issues at stake between Israel and the Palestinian Authority are far more intractable. As the Israelis planned to pull out of Lebanon talks between Israeli and Palestinian representatives in Stockholm were put on hold following events on May 15th. This saw the biggest outbreak of Palestinian unrest on the West Bank (ruthlessly crushed by the Israeli Defence Force) since the Intifada. In Gaza Palestinians marched under the banner "Lebanon Today, Palestine Tomorrow" Whilst a "final status" deal is scheduled to be concluded by 13th September, such is the lack of bargaining power between Yasser Arafat's impoverished, fragmented and corrupt statelet and the might of the Zionist state underwritten by the USA, that there is no real possibility of Palestinian aspirations being met. The main issues centre around the Palestinian demand for the return of Jerusalem as it's capital, a demand that the Israelis will never concede; even a derisory offer of a village on the edge of Jerusalem called Abu Dis threatened to destroy Ehud Barak's fragile coalition government.

The other main issue is the return of the hundreds of thousands of refugees and their descendants who fled after Israeli massacres of Palestinian civilians during the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. Few of them will be likely to be allowed to return to the places they came

from within Israel's pre 1967 border. There are 350,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon alone whose resentment at being sidelined by history could lead to further major instability. The May unrest is as much a protest against further acquiescence by Yasser Arafat as against Israeli oppression. The perceived military victory of Hizbollah against Israel in Lebanon can only bolster Palestinian militants who believe that Arafat has already compromised too far.

Even amongst the bourgeois commentators there is scepticism that a lasting and effective peace in the Middle East can be achieved. Internationalist communists know that peace is impossible within the framework of imperialism and nationalism, as war and national rivalry are as much an integral part of capitalism as the necessity to make a profit. We know that as long as capitalism exists workers will be called to massacre each other under nationalist banners. In the future the fate of humanity will be decided by the workers answer to capitalist demands that they defend "their nation". At the present time it is the task of internationalists to analyse and expose the cynicism and manoeuvrings of the ruling classes and their false promises of peace and prosperity and, offer the perspective of international class struggle for a stateless, communist society as an alternative.

PBD

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The Last Remnants of “Real Socialism”.

Indifference, not praise, for Vietnam, that myth of the left bourgeoisie.

From Battaglia Comunista 5 (May 2000)

25 years after the end of the Vietnamese conflict, little remains of the mythology so lauded by the official and the extra-parliamentary left. Now the bourgeois press is reflecting on those events, ironically recalling the old illusions in order to attack the intellectuals of that time. It assumes a simple equation: the collapse of the soviet bloc means the end of communism. Besides, they point at the last remnants of real socialism, such as China and Vietnam which in order to survive have had to open the economy to the market. The cards are on the table; capitalism is the only system capable of providing wealth and democracy, all else is pure fantasy and dramatic deception.

And it is certainly true that deception has occurred, but it is a deception which has benefited the international bourgeoisie and which has, on the level of consciousness, left the proletariat completely disarmed. In fact those who denounced, like us, the result, firstly of Stalinism, then of Maoism, were threatened and insulted. Many of those who yesterday falsified revolution are today placed in cushy, well paid, prestigious jobs, and frequently have passed over to the reactionary right, adopting a visceral anti-communism.

Vietnam was caught up in the game of cold war between the USSR and the USA, the two super powers divided the world amongst themselves, the former supported the ruling dictatorships, the latter supported the national liberation movements often breaking with the old western colonialism. In April 1975, the army of the North, soviet backed, occupied Saigon and thus victorious, brought an end to the very bloody war against the United States who had sided with the South. The economic model thus arising was the brutal copy of the

Soviet Union, with the realisation of the collectivisation of land and industry and the control of civil life via the dictatorship of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

After ten years of failure, the regime was constrained to change, one reason amongst others being the worsening of the USSR situation which would soon force its capitulation. So in 1986, Vietnam made the change, and adopted the Chinese model to begin “market socialism”. To compensate for the loss of the bloc it left, (Comecon absorbed 85% of its exports) a programme of privatisation was launched, as a consequence, private property was enshrined in the new Constitution of 1992. The internal market was opened up to foreign investment and in 1994 the USA lifted the embargo. It was a period of economic boom with growth rates of 10% per year, whilst international speculation was let loose in Asian countries, creating big business. Then in 1997 came the collapse of that area’s stock markets, capital left it and economic growth shrank to a more modest 4%.

The conclusion is that Vietnam remains one of the poorest countries in the world, despite its proletariat being offered as a sacrificial lamb to international capital by the red” bourgeoisie, given its characteristic gross exploitability in return for a starvation level wage. Thirty years after a tremendous war which saw the deaths of millions of Vietnamese, this is the outcome. The new rich almost all belong to the party nomenclature, whether in the public or the private sector, and the corruption of the state bureaucracy is enormous.

The real core of the question is that it was both a nationalist and imperialist

conflict at the same time. The local bourgeoisies confronted each other for internal supremacy, and at the same time, the great imperialists powers confronted each other for the division of the world. Historic circumstances put Moscow on the side of those who had to break with the old order to affirm themselves, that is, with the various national liberation fronts, passing this off before the general public as a moment within a more general strategy of progress, in contrast with the Washington gang who supported the most reactionary military dictatorships. Many, many examples show that the fact is, whether under the dictators or the guerrilla, little changes, the object of whoever has to manage capitalist productive relations is to guarantee, even with the harshest repression, the domination and the exploitation of the labour force by capital.

The bourgeoisie has pretended that everything belonging to the soviet camp was communism, proven by the fact that the ex-Stalinists now abjure their origins and the few remaining regimes which they came from in the very recent past. Real socialism, including all the many political cinders it produced, has now moved to the great socialdemocratic camp, in as much as it is an expression of one of capital’s modes of existence in order to perpetuate the slavery of wage labour.

Upon revolutionaries falls the task of reintroducing the red thread of the communist perspective, capable of moving the proletariat from its current state of puzzling passivity, to which the left bourgeoisie and the lies of so-called barracks socialism have contributed in a decisive fashion.

Cg

The Crisis Gripping Ecuador

This translation mainly covers the conclusion of an article examining the situation in Ecuador. The main focus is on the inadequacy of a bourgeois nationalist response to the crisis and the measures being implemented to combat it, which we covered in the last edition of Revolutionary Perspectives.

The collapse of the Ecuadorian currency covered in the previous issue of RP, and the attempts by new President Mahuad to negotiate a new "economic adjustment" with the IMF to "recover the confidence of the international markets" has meant the continuation of a brutal offensive against the working class, but also the practical sacrifice of various important sectors of the local bourgeoisie. These attempts include the plan to demote the national currency to less important

transactions and to dollarise the economy, as well as tripling the price of fuel last year, alongside attempts to raise VAT by 50%. These measures have produced a bourgeois split and an opposition movement, dressed in nationalist garb, the "Patriotic Front" which, as well as opposition in Parliament and the world of official institutions, is harnessing the anger and energy of the largely pauperised lower classes to block many of the initiatives. They demand a moratorium on the national debt, the maintenance of sovereignty against the IMF, fearing its intervention may lead to a catastrophe equalling that which occurred in South-East Asia. However, the schemes of both bourgeois rival factions spell disaster for the working class. The article concludes as follows.

Capitalism Today and the Internationalist Response

The complete failure of national liberation movements is plain to see. The affairs and interests of Capital are no longer contained within small provinces; the parochial citizen bourgeoisie has given way to an international and cosmopolitan bourgeoisie. Small, handicraft industry has been surpassed by large scale industry which produces for the entire planet. National economic systems, because of the connections amongst all countries in the international market, have come to form a complex network of interdependence which has its basis in the international division of labour and as its control centres, the great industrial and financial multinationals. The market, at the same time as it provides the means to unite individual activity with the general principle of actual world society, ties the fortune of every indi-

vidual, every capital, every class, every nation, to the general fortune of the capitalist economy. Founded on the interaction between the metropolitan centres and the periphery, the economic circuits created over decades become mega-structures of imperialist power which encompass small and weak States and capitals in united continental sized economic blocks. In this context dollarisation or, in general, the tendency to unite different monetary systems can be explained. Technically, dollarisation occurs when the residents of a country extensively use the U.S. dollar or another currency alongside, or instead of, their own local currency. In effect, amongst the consequences of the high concentration and centralisation of monopolistic capital and the increase in commerce and payments, can be seen the generation of a huge

demand for a greater availability of universally acceptable monetary symbols. According to the report of the USA Congress' Committee of Economic Affairs (Joint Economic Committee), made by Senator Connie Mack, there are two types of dollarisation: "Extra-official dollarisation occurs when individuals keep bank deposits or notes in the foreign currency to protect themselves from the high inflation acting on the local currency. Dollarisation is official when the government adopts the foreign currency exclusively or predominantly as a legal course of action. As in Europe, in the Americas dollarisation is part of the proposal to set up a single commercial area without barriers within which capitals and merchandise can circulate freely. Economic union is inseparable from the unquestioned hegemony exercised by

the most powerful regional economy, and no doubt, the competitive challenge which the imminent emergence of the European mega-state poses. The national liberation movement not only fails to understand the global nature of current capitalist society, but proposes that the revolutionaries will be determined on the basis of the distinction between nationalities or oppressing and oppressed societies. This position does not question the foundations of the existing order, the actual distribution of the means of production and social power which crystallises in the division between capital and the proletariat. In practice it has no other outcome than aligning the subordinate classes of society with one of the bourgeois fractions in the global capitalist struggle for financial income and its sources. However it is absolutely useless for attacking the capitalist dynamic which everywhere leads to poverty, super-exploitation and the worsening of oppression. In effect, there is no common ground between the national "anti-imperialist" movements and the proletarian class movement. Within a popular interclassist movement, the leadership is inevitably held by the superior classes, the workers are deprived of their autonomy, diluted in a plural organisation set upon building a coalition government which ends up respecting all the limits imposed by capital and applying the universal programme of economic liberalism. Only a class movement, based on the interests and antagonistic contradictions of

the material structure of capitalism, can unite the oppressed of all countries in a successful struggle against oppression. Precisely one of the first and most elemental lessons which can be extracted from the Ecuadorian events is that, in the circumstances of modern capitalism, the simple rebellion of a nationality or a national social group against a government remains completely impotent before the world economic organisation within which the various capitals and states are inserted and function. The political will of governments — as well as their social and economic options — are not independent, rather they are determined, by the network of international economic relations created by finance capital. In this framework there do not exist "national solutions", everything is involved in the world system and can only die with it. Only the international revolutionary organisation of the proletariat, united by the same capitalist evolution, can subvert the current dynamics and open a new social era.

Prometeo 18
December 1999

Tempi di guerra: tempo di ripresa della lotta di classe

Boom negli Usa: trionfo dell'economia di carta

Timor Est: pedina dell'imperialismo

Riassumendo sul sindacato

Il Capitalismo cognitivo e il neo riformismo

Idealismo consiliarista e stalinismo: facce diverse di
un unico processo controrivoluzionario

La riforma della scuola oggi

Available from the PCInt Address (inside back cover)

IMF Lies do not Match the Reality of Workers' Lives

In the debate on "globalisation" organised by Le Monde Diplomatique at Conway Hall in London in June Flemming Larsen, the European director of the International Monetary Fund completed his defence of the IMF, World Bank etc. with a bit of human interest.

It purported to be a letter from an IMF employee who came from Cochin in India. She wrote (supposedly)

To the common man 30 years ago globalisation meant Norwegian joint ventures for fishing. A decade or so later globalisation meant remittances from people working abroad in semi-skilled jobs. Today there are internet signs everywhere. Globalisation means the export of services. Networking with the earlier wave of emigrants, a host of small service-oriented firms has sprung up, taking advantage of the high literacy rate and competitive wages. These firms export IT services back to the United States and Europe.

Larsen smugly concluded that

...the people of Cochin are not only happy about the process of globalisation but would probably prefer more rather than less of it.

Leaving aside the probability that this letter was written by some spin-doctor working for the IMF there are two things to challenge here. The first is that the working class "globalisation" is no longer dominated by the remittances sent home (in this case by Asian workers in the Middle East). The second is the idea that working in IT in India is somehow a great leap forward for the Indian working class.

As corrective we are publishing two documents. The first is part of a letter from a CWO comrade currently working in Kuwait which shows exactly how the working class is treated in the global capitalist system. The second was sent to us by the group Kamunist Kranti in India. It has merit in its own right as a human document on the reality of exploitation today. Between them these two documents completely destroy the rosy picture the defenders of modern capitalism are trying to paint.

Kuwait Letter

... The complex is serviced by an army of Indians and Bangladeshis who are forever cleaning, watering, raking the beach, painting etc. I've even seen them washing the tiles on the roof after sandstorms. One fellow has the job of brushing the joints between the tiles below water in the swimming pool every day. They give him a stiff brush and a pair of goggles and he does it every morning. These labourers are paid 70 pounds a month so the Kuwaitis have no hesitation in employing as many as they feel like.

The Kuwaitis are officially 40% of the population and don't appear to do any work at all. I have been told, however, that they are trying to take over the production and refining of oil so they are not so dependent on foreign experts. I presume also that they must hold the top administrative jobs in the state, however the people with whom we deal are all Indian or Egyptian.

The petit bourgeoisie are Egyptians, Iranians or Indians, while the bulk of the working class comes from the Indian sub-continent. There are so many non-Arabs that one rarely hears Arabic spoken and the *Lingua Franca* appears to be English. The Kuwaitis through their control of the state manage to secure for themselves the lion's share of the massive wealth, which the oil brings in. They also manage to secure a share in the secondary activities by legislating that all businesses must have at least 51% of the capital owned by Kuwaitis and every foreign consortium must have a Kuwaiti partner.

This is the migrant system refined to the ultimate degree. Those who do the work have no rights and could be removed and replaced — as indeed happened to the Palestinians after the Gulf War when 400,000 were expelled. However, this applies to the petit bourgeoisie also, hence the class

contradictions are mixed with nationalism. The Kuwaiti bourgeoisie are certainly more divorced from the means of production than anything we see in Europe. I was trying to think of an historical parallel but eventually concluded that the differences with other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, apartheid South Africa or even Germany, in its use of Turkish migrant labour are really ones of degree. Labour is being moved to where capital requires it and the miserable pay is a reflection of the desperate conditions of the workers in the countries from which the labour migrates. This process is, of course, being controlled by the state but must be part of a slow equalization of global labour rates. I wonder also, looking at the 1.2 million foreigners here, how reversible this process is. Many have their families with them and some of the Indians and Egyptians have been here 30 years or more. There are Indian, Bangladeshi

and Philippino schools. Of course, the present state of affairs exists only because of the general approval of US

imperialism, and the Kuwaiti state is the US agent in the area. The US has bases here and flies over Iraq daily

from Kuwaiti airfields. US capital is profiting from work in oil, high technology and other fields...

Shopfloor Experience in the “Information Technology Industry”

A Personal Account

I worked in a prime Information Technology Company for two years. IT companies are said to be like heaven for workers. Freedom, creativity and play are the kind of words you get to hear in any description of an IT workplace. After all, it is said, this new workforce works in a state-of-the-art environment with luxuries such as an air-conditioned shop-floor, uninterrupted Internet connectivity, e-mail, music, free coffee & tea and so on. Working hours are said to be flexibly designed to suit the workers, and the work highly creative.

In the following write-up, I am trying to examine the truthfulness of these claims about the IT industry.

... Productivity Norms

One day, in 1997, our divisional manager called the workers from all divisions to tell us the story of China. There, he said, production is extracted at gunpoint. He then compared it to our good fortune of not being controlled by guns. But, he added, we have to find some method of increasing productivity without guns, since we have to match them output for output.

“So”, he said, “let us dream of major leaps in productivity. Say a 1000% or 2000% increase. It is only if we dream like this that we can manage a 500% or 750 % increase.”

Small groups of workers were then organised and commissioned to develop pilot projects to achieve such

productivity levels using tools technological development, process compression or any other old or new method. And this “challenge” was taken up by the creative and energetic workers...

After much research and experimentation, a great leap forward happened at all levels. New software was developed, the production process was redesigned, and discipline was rigorously imposed on leaves and office timings.

Pilot projects achieved 100% to 200% increase in productivity. Pretending disappointment, management implemented this increase in productivity all over the factory.

... The Deadline is divine; nobody can challenge it. It rings like a prophet's doomsday call.

If the server has crashed, a virus has attacked or any technical problem has occurred, it is obvious that it is the worker whose data is affected who has to work late and recover this loss of time. Extension of the deadline is beyond imagination.

If somebody takes leave, it means double responsibility for his/her peer. This results in internal conflict between workers, creating suffocating work situations. This is inevitable because one can only expect understanding from one's co-workers for a reasonable number of planned leaves.

Managements also connect the deadline to the contracts with their clients.

It is said that if the deadline is missed, the company has to pay a penalty to the client. And the penalty will obviously reflect on the workers' pay slip. This builds tremendous pressure on the workers. They try their best to finish their job within the deadline. Any delay by any individual worker puts the whole team in trouble. Thus every one is pushing each other all the time. The astonishing thing in this scenario is that often enough supervisors become replaced by the workers themselves. The supervisors have done their job only by fixing the schedule...

“Bugs”

The bug reports

**“After we die bugs
come to our coffin and
feast on our dead
bodies.”**

Each project has at least three to four levels of testing... From all these check points workers get thick lists of test reports i.e., bug reports. All bugs have to be rectified parallel to the already running projects. Often bug reports don't reach the worker in a systematic way. To meet the construction deadline, testing runs parallel to scripting and graphic creation. As soon as one section is done, it goes for testing and while the next section is under construction the report for the earlier section comes up. At the first level of testing, the possibility of changes is 60% to 70%. Thus the workload actually increases by double. And by the end of the last sec-

tion, bug reports pile up to such extent that they demand another project schedule altogether.

However, there are no extra days for these reports to be fixed. For the bug report and the changes no extra time is planned in the project schedule. These things have to be done within the same time frame. In truth, workers are actually working at higher levels than defined in any productivity norm.

All of these things result in long working hours, late night stays and a surrender of holidays.

“Soul capture” The automation of supervision.

Even though the workday is fixed from 9am to 6pm i.e., nine hours, but late night stays and sometimes skipping lunch make it ten to twelve hours long.

Through a computer network, a database is maintained to monitor every worker's productivity data on a daily basis. The software which is used for this purpose has built-in information about project code, kind of work, delivery options, etc. and the worker has to fill-in the time span s/he took to complete that particular job. Even tea and lunch breaks are defined in the software. Once the data is punched in, it cannot be changed.

Initially most workers used to avoid this data capture. But very soon it was made mandatory. Management may claim that this data capture has nothing to do with assessment, but it uses this data as a yardstick to estimate and plan future project time-line, so that they can provide the client with a more accurate date for the deadline. But every worker knows that when assessment time comes, this will become yet another management weapon.

I have tried to describe how my body and my mind were controlled in those two years. But I haven't even spoken of the other 'invisible' effects. The ever-increasing speed of productivity has taken its toll on my body. The hours

of constant keyboard and mouse manipulation have resulted in spondylitis and arthritic problems. My back, my finger tips, my neck have all suffered. Obviously, management had always been aware of these repercussions. They had constantly supplied us with tips on health through emails and graffiti. Even aerobics were conducted to enhance our physical capacity!

But the really sad thing is my present relationship to music. Since music increases the speed of work and lessens the monotony of repeated typing and punching, it became a repeated infliction. Now it's difficult for me to listen to music and not type on my non-existent keyboard...

The author wished to remain anonymous but the full document can be obtained from revelrytion@yahoo.com or by writing to Kamunist Kranti, Majdoor Library, Autopin Jhuggi, N.I.T Faridabad 121 001, India.

For those interested in other accounts we have published on working conditions under modern capitalism see

“In the Firing Line” in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 10 and 11

“The Condition of the British Working Class” in *Revolutionary Perspectives* 16

Tottenham Election — Disaster for the Left

The low turn-out at the recent Tottenham by-election has once again set bourgeois tongues clicking in disapproval at the lack of interest shown by the working class in Parliamentary democracy. Only one in four of those who had registered to vote did so, which left Labour's majority vastly depleted (from 20,000 in 1997 to 8,700). Parliamentary finger-waggers gave various reasons for the low turn-out, ranging from workers' disillusionment with Labour to the fact

that democracy in Britain is strong and so voters feel there is no need to defend it by taking part in it. They were particularly incensed by the fact that the Tottenham election took place at around the same time as the run-up to the elections in Zimbabwe, and wasted no time in criticising British workers for failing to appreciate their democratic process was free from violence and intimidation and for taking it all for granted. Some even called for voting to be made compulsory (as it is in Italy and Australia), just to make workers see how free they really are!

On a superficial level the two elections were worlds apart. Voting in Tottenham wasn't accompanied by the huge loss of life as in Zimbabwe, where 40 people died. Nor did the Tottenham candidate announce that the result didn't matter anyway, unlike the national chairman of Zanu-PF who stated the day before the election:

Zanu-PF will form the government whatever the results.

But the British and Zimbabwean systems have more in common than might at first appear. To have any chance of being elected in either state there is one essential pre-requisite — money, and vast amounts of it. As well as his personal fortune Robert Mugabwe is backed by individuals who have enough financial muscle to bribe and threaten their way to victory. In Britain, things are far more subtle, but the use of financial force is still the same. The winner of the Tottenham election, David Lammy, made much of the fact that he came from a low-income, single-parent family, despite the fact he is a barrister. But the party he represents is far from disadvantaged. The Labour Party is the envy of every bourgeois party in Britain due to its financial power.

Leaving aside the corporate donations it receives as deposits on future policy, it has a whole range of dodgy characters who are able to part with millions to get their interests voted in. From Bernie Ecclestone and Geoffrey Robinson to Lord Levy — who hasn't managed to pay the taxes of an average earner this year — we have some fine examples of what Lenin called 'millionaire treasury looters'. A few tycoons, it would seem, are essential for democratic success.

This was underlined by the spectacular failure of the left in Tottenham. The London Socialist Alliance, a mishmash of various left parties and organisations — didn't come anywhere near being a serious rival to the Labour Party. Needless to say the LSA isn't socialist (but represents the left wing of the capitalist class, with policies of nationalisation etc). Instead it tries to fill the role of the reformist party vacated by New Labour. It promises quick-fix solutions to capitalism's problems which sound popular. The LSA is playing the same game as the big bourgeois parties in trying to persuade the working class that it can use its vote to try to get the state to act in its interest. By reducing them to a number of individual voters capitalism encourages workers to follow individual, as opposed to collective class interests. And by persuading them to vote for socialism it keeps all aims limited to the state and locked into a national identity. Yet despite its faith in bourgeois democracy, the LSA didn't stand a chance when faced with the rich propaganda machine of the big parties and in the end managed only 5% of the votes. In a general election it could fare even worse. The last election cost Labour a fortune, and poor Lord Levy alone had to raise £7 million just to give Labour a starting chance.

As Engels stated, wealth exercises its power in democracy not only by cor-

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Rover Leaflet
Hypocrisy and Guilt in
the EU**

**The Haider Affair
GIK Leaflet**

**New Immigration Law
100 Years of Labour
Incinerators**

Welfare Blitz

**Oil and the New US
Economy**

US Leaflet: Fair Shares?

**Russian Capitalism
Changes the Guard**

**The Dollarisation of
Ecuador**

**Unions and Struggle:
Dispelling**

Misconceptions

ruption but by means of an alliance of the state and the Stock Exchange. Under modern capitalist conditions the state is the state of the ruling class. The capitalist class either influence or control all the mass media and these bombard the "citizenry" (including the working class) with the capitalist messages of the day. To even break into this cycle we would need millions of pounds. If millionaires like Eddy Shah (remember the failure of *Today*?) cannot do it there is little likelihood that a genuine working class force can do so. Today under the new centralization of capital called globalisation states and their policies are dominated by the need to keep the working class and its needs in check so that it can attract inward investment from the global companies which scour the world looking for the best opportunities to exploit workers. As a result all parties are united in their efforts to cut social spending, increase

both direct and indirect taxation on workers and ensure wages are kept as low as possible. Despite the fantasies of the LSA and their supporters, the state is not some neutral body to be won over. It is in reality an instrument for the exploitation of the working class, or, as Lenin put it in 'State and Revolution':

A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell... it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it.'

Democracy under capitalism is no democracy at all. By calling us to vote the LSA and the SWP who support it are simply giving credibility to an increasingly discredited system. They are no different from all the rich wind-bags

who are desperate to keep up the pretence they are representatives rather than repressors of worker's interests. Apathy and low turn-outs may take the shine off their individual victories, but the destruction of parliamentary talking shops and their replacement by working bodies like the workers councils is the historic task of workers themselves. The struggle for real democracy, for workers delegated by other workers, and instantly accountable and recallable, will take place outside the farce of Parliament, and against all its supporters and hangers-on, including the likes of the London Socialist Alliance.

RT

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Magazine of the Communist Workers' Organisation

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3: Middle East; Spanish War, 1936; Class Struggle; Germany's Crisis; Russia; Elections

4: Labour; Crisis and Welfare State; Unemployed Struggles; Middle East; Ireland; Leninism; Racism, Sexism and Communism

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8: The October Revolution and the Class Today; UPS Strike; ME War Process; Labour — Party of International Capital; German Social Democracy in World War I; Toothless Tigers

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Northern Ireland – Adams’ Sinn Fein and Trimble’s Unionists Play the Anglo-American Charade

In previous articles we have noted that the new “settlement” in Ireland is a proposal backed by both British and American imperialism. Its essential background was the end of the Russian-bloc which opened the way for the “Pax Americana” to be asserted throughout the world. It is also connected with the British bourgeoisie’s desperate indecision about its relationship with its American ally, on one hand, and the actual and potential realignments within the European Union as the German ruling class attempts to establish a rival centre of imperialist power, on the other.

In RP15 we identified that “The central features of that convergence [between US and British interests] are:

- The preparedness of the British bourgeoisie to abandon the state structures established in the early 1920’s.

- The desire to demilitarise the situation and to “normalise” investment opportunities in an area of low wages and a divided working class heavily imbued with varieties of bourgeois ideology.

- The absence of any significant imperialist power with the desire or ability to manoeuvre against the U.S.A./Britain in the area.

- The co-option of the bourgeoisie in the Irish Republic into the process.

- The full agreement of the main Loyalist terrorist organisations – unsurprising given their links to the British state – to support the imperialist “peace” process.”

As the “Good Friday” deal enters its third year the plan continues to stumble forward, with the line of march remaining unaltered. The main Orange and Green armed groups now concentrate on “policing” their own patches while David Trimble continues to deliver sufficient Unionist support for a settlement which will finally dissolve the six-county Northern Ireland set-up.

Although the deal is essentially an Anglo-American creation, the European Union also wishes to maintain an influence. Funding from the EU has been guaranteed until 2005. This builds on the previous agreements which committed more than £1 billion funding support from the EU Structural Funds to support capitalism in Northern Ireland during 1995-9 (source: British Information Service, a British Government source based in New York).

Normalisation and Cheap Labour — Good for Profits

An article in the *Financial Times* (6th February, 2000) outlines the prospects for the “new” Northern Ireland as a prime site for extracting profit. Concerned at the, then, latest snag in the new political settlement the paper observed that one result of the deal was that

the province’s economyhas gathered momentum in the last year and attracted hundreds of millions of pounds in foreign investment.

The article gave one example of that investment, a £29.4 million proposed

expansion by Fujitsu. Overall it reported that

Capital spending by overseas companies grew from an annual £255 million in 1994-5 to £530 million in 1997-8.

The same journal returned to the link between the settlement and profitable investment in a survey on March, 21st. The sub-head on their analysis of the economy stated bluntly, “The collapse of the power-sharing executive [since restored] poses a threat to investment in the Province”. Their front page headline reflected the same concern observing that, the slowness of the settlement at that time meant that “Business is snared by political stalemate”.

At the time of the FT report in March the Belfast shipbuilders, Harland & Wolff, appeared to be threatened with immediate closure. When the peace process lurched forward a few weeks later new orders appeared. The reality of the emerging settlement for workers in Northern Ireland was clearly shown in the details of that victory for the political process. **The shipyard workers’ share of the “peace dividend” is a three year wage freeze and strike ban agreed by the employers and the Trade Unions.**

Marxism or Scenario- mongering

In the May Edition of *World Revolution* the International Communist Current (ICC) published¹ thirteen theses on Northern Ireland. We have, in the past, characterised the ICC’s

method as being essentially "idealist"²². We have identified and criticised a tendency for them to identify schemas which may or may not relate to reality and then to attempt to squeeze reality into their ideological strait-jacket.

Their approach to Northern Ireland over recent years provides an example of that methodological error. In a discussion at a public meeting in London their comrades expressed their misunderstandings on the question of the state by declaring that the Provisional IRA were "part of the British state". Unfortunately (for any claim at coherence) they also have an obsessive belief that Blair's Government represents the most Anti-American layers of the British bourgeoisie. That particular myth forces them to locate the Irish Republicans as reliable clients of the US bourgeoisie against the British state. Thus they go full circle and "part of the British state" is now an agent of the U.S. and an irreconcilable opponent of the British bourgeoisie.

Their peculiar method leads them to ignoring the reality of Anglo-American connivance in the new dispensation in Northern Ireland. The ICC's spinning of fantasies leads them to trying to prove that the British ruling-class is, in fact, opposed to the settlement. Their bizarre method is unable to come to terms with the fact that the new settlement **is in imperialism's interest** and that the British and American bourgeois interests are able to accommodate to each other, using Northern Ireland as a source of cheap labour and a foothold for the U.S. within the European Union.

The ICC's "topsy-turvy" interpretation of history leads them to assert that

The gains of Sinn Fein/IRA, and the cause of republicanism In the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, have put the British bourgeoisie against the wall.

Far from being pressed panicking against the wall, the British bourgeoisie, having arrived there somewhat reluctantly, are now leaning contentedly against the structure alongside their American counterparts. For their part, the Irish republicans have achieved (one or two disgruntled elements apart) the aim of all modern national liberationists

– their place within the imperialist hierarchy. This has disappointed all their leftist backers in Britain who claimed, against all the evidence that IRS/ and Sinn Fein was not bourgeois but somehow "socialist". In fact what Sinn Fein and the IRA have done is grown of the backs of the particular oppression of the Catholic workers in Northern Ireland in the long decades of Orange discrimination. They have used this oppression to increase support but they will do nothing about ending the exploitation of workers of both communities. Instead they are now part of the new world order.

A Realigned Bourgeois Ireland in a Realigned Bourgeois World

We have regularly analysed the changes in the inter-imperialist rivalries which have developed in the decade since the collapse of the Russian bloc. Whilst the U.S. remains the single hegemonic power, its weaker rivals, particularly Japan and Germany, seek to defend their independent interests. In Europe, both the European Union and NATO have expanded into the vacuum in the East. Germany asserted its independent interests, notably by sponsoring the break-up of Yugoslavia. The launch of the Euro currency marked another significant move towards a German-led European bloc. The bourgeoisie in both Britain and Ireland are caught, in more than the geographical sense, between a German-led Europe and their old American links.

The tactical stances of the Irish and British bourgeoisies are of course not identical. The Irish were far quicker to build links with the emerging EU structures, particularly during the 1980's when the more pro-American stance of the faction around Thatcher kept the process at arms length. This resulted in the Irish being better able to tap into the various EU funding regimes with their entry into the Euro being a logical result. Despite those differences, the joint pressure from London and Washington ensures that Dublin engages in "the only game in town" as regards Northern Ireland. The abandoning of obscure constitutional claims is a small

price to pay to keep the island of Ireland as an investment bridge between the EU and the USA.

It is very likely that the new settlement will continue to roll forward at an uneven pace with stops, starts and lurches along the way. This year's "marching season" is almost certain to produce one or more flashpoints and/or stand-offs. The moves to relabel the RUC – to paraphrase James Connolly, an example of old wine in new bottles – will bring to the surface many of the totems and symbols which underpinned the previous phase of imperialist manipulation.

In terms of the factional line up, it appears that the dissident anti-settlement Republicans are largely stifled both by the relative lack of bankrolling support from American sympathisers and the increasing ability and preparedness of the Irish state to participate in the new settlement by playing "cat and mouse" with their activists.

Within the Unionist camp the Anglo-American machinations are still holding sway but only narrowly. The London-Washington axis can still use enough stick and carrot to carry the majority in the Official Unionist Party. However this is a very fragile arrangement and the position could collapse into chaos. For example, a General Election campaign in 2001 could produce a situation similar to the splits in Unionism around the 1974 elections. At that time the group around Brian Faulkner, supporting the British-imposed "power-sharing" solution, were effectively abandoned by the majority of the Orange bourgeois elements.

However the bourgeoisie, no matter how bigoted, invariably act instinctively to maintain their own interests. The "hidden hand" of maintaining profit-rates (see the comments from the *Financial Times* above) is more than capable of countering residual attachments to the Union Flag. If Paisley's DUP, in alliance with dissident Official Unionists around Donaldson, could snatch a temporary lead inside Unionist politics they would come under immense pressure from both within the Northern Irish bourgeoisie and from the imperialist puppet-masters beyond the 6 counties.

The Political Settlement — against Workers' Interests

Earlier in the article we identified the link between the political settlement and the bosses' search for profits. The Harland and Wolff deal is merely the tip of the iceberg for what the settlement has in store for workers. The new politics will assist the mushrooming of call centres and other sites for new intensive exploitation. The bourgeoisie also have great hopes for increased profits from the traditionally ill-paid and heavily casualised "leisure" industry.

In 1998, in RP11, we responded to the "Good Friday settlement" commenting that

.... It is irrelevant where national frontier lines are drawn by the bourgeoisie since the international revolution will abolish them all. Equally irrelevant are the constitutional forms which the bourgeois state adopts.

In opposition to the ongoing imperialist charades we continue to argue for the development of communist consciousness and organisation in the working class in Ireland as part of our international class struggle.

Notes

1 *World Revolution* is the paper in Britain of the International Communist Current (ICC), a Communist organisation which pays allegiance to the "left Communist" tradition but, whose theory and practice clearly distinguishes them from the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

2 The word "Idealist" is used in a particular way beyond its use in everyday English. Its use in this article reflects part of our theory and stems from debates in classical philosophy. For "materialists" the world of material reality is the essential pre-requisite for the development of ideas. Marxism ("historical" or "dialectical materialism") represents a materialist world outlook in which the history and development of class struggle plays a critical and essential role. "Idealists" invert the perceived relationship between ideas and material reality making the former the primary factor.

Leftism in Action – “Revolutionary Communism” and “Living Marxism”

Many people moving towards our positions will have previously been in contact with organisations in the Social Democratic, Stalinist and Trotskyist milieu. Trotskyism and Stalinism represent part of the left wing of capitalism. This means that an individual in the first stages of breaking with Trotskyism or Stalinism may pass through stages of confusion where such organisations are seen as flawed but essentially on the side of the working-class. Those confusions are, in the best cases, cleared up through dialogue and debate and through increased knowledge and direct contact with the theory and practice of the Internationalists.

Recently *The Guardian* newspaper highlighted the political trajectory of the group around the former *Living Marxism* magazine (July 8th, 2000 – “Life after Living Marxism – Fighting for freedom – to offend, outrage and question everything”). Whilst accepting that *The Guardian* has its own axe to grind against competing purveyors of bourgeois theory the cameo presented is a neat little case study of leftism as part of the capitalist order.

The end-point of these “Revolutionary Communists” was summed up more or less accurately by the *Guardian* journalists. “Until its closure, LM more or less aped the conservative, rightwing political, economic and cultural libertarian arguments being pushed heavily in the US by free market organisations like the Reason Foundation, the Heritage Foundation, the Hudson Institute and the Cato Institute”. The ability of that particular organisation to end up pushing out such bilge is particularly instructive because its origins lay with those who actually broke with a bigger Trotskyist organisation over the

supposed need for clarification against the International Socialists’ (IS, now Socialist Workers Party, SWP) contempt for Marxist theory.

The early 1970’s in Britain, and elsewhere in the metropolitan countries, was a time of relative political ferment. The Internationalist movement established a toe-hold in the shape of the CWO. Communist organisations in the Bordigist tradition also established a presence as did the International Communist Current. As against these numerically small, but historically significant, advances for the Marxist tradition the leftists experienced a much bigger growth together with a period of splits and fusions.

The Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) emerged from Tony Cliff’s IS/SWP as one of a number of expelled elements. The Group emerged with a degree of internal theoretical coherence which for *The Guardian* scribblers translates as “a monumentally unfathomable debate about the declining rate of profit and commodity fetishism”. The core group around their leading ideologue, David Yaffe, adopted an orientation towards Stalinism and National Liberation, particularly involving themselves in work around anti-racism and Support for Irish National Liberation.

A separate faction emerged with the academic, Frank Furedi, at its core. For some time their organisation, the Revolutionary Communist Tendency which then retitled itself the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), stayed within a more or less conventional leftist framework. Furedi, published a book which claimed to “demystify the Soviet Union” but, of course, did just the opposite by inventing a political and

economic entity whose dynamics were essentially none of the historic categories but were some sort of strange dead-end (Furedi’s theory was broadly in the same camp as Hillel Ticktin’s *Critique* magazine/group). They also enjoyed the usual electoral spectacles with candidates and even sponsoring an electoral “Red Front”.

Entwined with their leftist activities they developed peculiar presentational techniques, with elements drawn from corporate marketing, street theatre and academia strangely combined. As a fellow Trotskyist described them at the time, “The SWP with hair gel”.

At the time of the miners’ strike, 1984-5, they began to distinguish themselves from their leftist friends by supporting the bosses’ demand that Scargill should seek a fresh mandate by a ballot-box vote. Under the combined influence of post-modernism, creeping into academia and the shock to the leftists of the collapse of the Russian bloc, the RCP developed a new trajectory.

A new, expensively produced and professionally distributed magazine, “Living Marxism” appeared. The RCP name or references to any claim to a Marxist heritage where then progressively pushed further into the background – the magazine changed its name to the meaningless *LM*. Their lines of debate became increasingly as described in *The Guardian*, their presentations more and more like academic or business seminars and the magazine achieved a significant circulation. *The Guardian* certainly suggests financial and other support from “mainstream” bourgeois institutions but it is hard to ascertain the objective truth about this “chicken and egg” situation. It is certainly the case that one of the RCP’s

leading lights, Fran Eden, mysteriously reinvented herself with a leading job in a state institution.

LM magazine's nemesis came as a result of libel actions between themselves and ITN news producers as the latter's anti-Serbian propaganda, during the atrocities in the Balkans, clashed with the former's pro-Serbian propaganda.

Doing what they do best

The "loss" of the magazine has not stopped the cult leaders from doing what they do best. As *The Guardian* reported,

LM's co-publisher Claire Fox... And two colleagues formed a plan for... 'thought-provoking' conferences in London, Oxford, Manchester, Edinburgh, Paris and Frankfurt. As the Institute of Ideas, Fox and her team have drawn into their project many of

the leading cultural institutions in the capital: the Tate Modern, the British Library, the British Museum, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Institution, the RSA and the Arts Council.

As for Yaffe's group, who still retain the RCG label, their leftism remains unsullied by LM's post-modernism. Their chosen trajectory towards Stalinism and National Liberationism rolls forward. The June/July edition of their journal, *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* contains two pages singing the praises of Castroite Cuba with articles such as "May Day in Havana" and "Local communities: bedrock of Cuban democracy". Rather sadly (for the RCG!!) they have had to fall out with their old Stalinist and Nationalist chums because they've stopped being sufficiently Stalinist or Nationalist. The COSATU Trade Union in South Africa is criticised not for being a prop of capitalism but because it does not follow "alternative socialist [i.e. state

capitalist] strategies". In the case of the IRA, the RCG clearly prefers Nationalist "war, war" to Nationalist "jaw, jaw". Poor old Adams and company who have just manoeuvred themselves around the bourgeois table are criticised for backsliding and "issuing a historic statement pledging to open arms dumps to inspection".

The conclusion is clear. Realignments within a leftist framework, even when supported by planks of classical Marxist theory, may lead to all sorts of strange destinations. Only a complete and thoroughgoing re-evaluation of the nature of leftism will allow those who really "question everything" (everything which is bourgeois !!) to arrive at the Internationalist alternative. K

Our Basic Positions

1. We aim to become part of the future world working class party which will guide the class struggle towards the establishment of a stateless, classless, moneyless society without exploitation, national frontiers or standing armies and in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all (Marx): Communism.
2. Such a society will need a revolutionary state for its introduction. This state will be run by workers' councils, consisting of instantly recallable delegates from every section of the working class. Their rule is called the dictatorship of the proletariat because it cannot exist without the forcible overthrow and keeping down of the capitalist class worldwide.
3. The first stage in this is the political organisation of class-conscious workers and their eventual union into an

international political party for the promotion of world revolution.

4. The Russian October Revolution of 1917 remains a brilliant inspiration for us. It showed that workers could overthrow the capitalist class. Only the isolation and decimation of the Russian working class destroyed their revolutionary vision of 1917. What was set up in Russia in the 1920's and after was not communism but centrally planned state capitalism. There have as yet been no communist societies anywhere in the world.

5. The International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party was founded by the heirs of the Italian Left who tried to fight the political degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern in the 1920's. We are continuing the task which the Russian Revolution promised but failed to

achieve — the freeing of the workers of the world and the establishment of communism. Join us!

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The **Partito Comunista
Internazionalista (*Battaglia
comunista*)** can be contacted at:
casella postale 1753
20101 Milano
Italy

