[anti] capitalism









OUR WORLD IS NOT FOR SALE





from resistance to revolution

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from resistance to revolution
an action guide

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We are present at a t

From Seattle to Genoa. In less than two years the anti-globalisation movement has travelled a long and spectacular journey. Washington, Melbourne, Prague, Seoul, Nice, Quebec, Barcelona – to name only a few cities – have seen major demonstrations against corporate exploitation and environmental destruction as well as against the hollowing out of democracy by the governments of G8 and their pliant international agencies.

Along the way, the movement has got bigger and ever more clearly targeted on the real enemy: the capitalist system.

Since Seattle, tens of thousands of police, innumerable rounds of tear gas, batons, steel perimeter fences, vicious police dogs, exclusion orders, sealed borders, closed airports, blockaded roads, midnight raids – all have been deployed by the capitalist governments to stop our voices being heard.

But the movement is growing despite all that.

Seattle, 30 November, was a defining moment when the movement became conscious of its power. But it did not come from nowhere. Years of grass-roots collective action in the USA culminated in Seattle. Students had been at the heart of it, campaigning against the unleashing of corporate depravity that marked politics in the Clinton years.

A new generation of activists on campuses across the USA and Canada became politicised by the invasion of the mind-snatchers as the big corporations made their move to take over of education.

Faced with the hubris of money, student politics moved on from the politics of identity and introspection to anti-corporatism - to stem and turn back the agents of Nike, Coca-Cola and McDonalds dressed up as educationalists.

Heavy-handed attempts at censorship or blackmail in the face of criticism of the big brand names only radicalised them more. They investigated the operations of the big corporations away from their campuses and found that the money used to bribe their administrators was sucked out of sweatshop labour in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and China – the one-dollar-a-day impoverished billions of the Third World. Seattle put it all together. As Manning Marable said:

"The demonstrations in Seattle showed that growing numbers of Americans are recognising that all of these issues – Third World sweatshops, the destruction of unions, deteriorating living standards, the dismantling of social programs inside the US – are actually interconnected."

But the campus campaigns in the USA were only one strand of the emerging anti-globalisation movement. The Zapatista uprising on New Years' Day 1995 in the Chiapas region of Mexico was a rebellion against land hunger and violent autocracy and for indigenous rights and the end of the country's enslavement to US companies, exploitation and foreign debt.

Tens of thousands of new and old activists rallied to their call to support them and to open up many fronts of struggle against imperialism. A Zapatista internationalism was born in the Lacondа rainforests and quickly formed cross-currents with the North American and then European anti-capitalists.

Another strand that emerged in the 1990s was the radicalisation of some NGOs. In Britain, 1997 and 98 saw Jubilee 2000 mobilise 70,000 and 50,000 respectively to demand the G7 cancel the debts of the Third World.

In the South, many of the smaller, more independent,1 NGOs who were closer to the suffering caused by government and business alike signed up to the anti-globalisation movement. Paradoxically, the "privatisation" of healthcare and famine relief removed the shackles of apolitical humanitarianism and allowed a generation of NGO workers to become overtly radical.

But by far the biggest component of the emerging world anti-globalisation movement has been the millions of workers who have taken to the streets and gone on strike to resist the many attacks on them which originated in IMF "structural adjustment programmes" during the 1980s and 1990s.

The IMF has engineered cuts in health and education programmes, let rip state controlled prices for foodstuffs and fuel and downsized the public sector workforce.

But tens of millions have fought back time and again in South Asia, West Africa and Latin America. Sometimes they have won concessions. But often they have been betrayed by reformist and nationalist leaders. All too often they have not received active solidarity from trade unionists and leftists in the North.

Yet, until the mid-1990s, we were in an era of rearguard actions against the sweeping tide of globalisation and neoliberalism. US imperialism swept all before it in the wake of its victory in the Cold War. As Walden Bello noted, this era peaked with the founding of the World Trade Organization in 1994-95, "the apogee of capitalism in the era of globalization."

But it spawned a movement against itself and this connected with other movements. Success in stalling the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) gave it confidence.

Then came the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998, which Bello has called "the Stalingrad of the IMF" when it became clear that the IMF itself, "with its prescription for capital account liberalization, helped create the crisis, and with its cure of tight money and tight budgets, converted a financial crisis into economic collapse in Thailand, Indonesia, and Korea."

Across the WTO, IMF and finally the World Bank a complete crisis of legitimacy set in during the closing years of the 20th century. Their defensiveness and confusion only emboldened the movement against them, leading to the turning point that was Seattle.

The broadening of the anti-globalisation movement has been accompanied since then by its ideological deepening, in particular a growing sense of practical internationalism and conscious anti-capitalism.

The phenomenon of "summit-hopping" is one expression of this, as is the proliferation of counter-conferences and teach-ins with representatives from all over the world.

The broadening of the anti-globalisation movement has been accompanied since Seattle by its ideological deepening, in particular a growing sense of practical internationalism and conscious anti-capitalism.

rning point in history

The massive anti-Davos summit in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001, gathered toghether all wings of the anti-globalisation movement. The movement of "one no and many yeses" intensified the debate around alternative visions and programmes for a world free from exploitation and oppression and what alliances and tactics are necessary to get there.

That is welcome. But the course of the movement itself has posed the question of "which way forward?" far more directly than any forum could.

The buzz of success is giving way to a sharp debate over goals, strategy and tactics.

After the Gothenburg violence we are hearing loud pleas for moderation and compromise from a self-appointed layer of go-betweens in the movement. All they ever wanted was a place at the negotiating table - and their support for protests that put them there has to be understood in the light of that.

Susan George, an early icon of the movement who praised it last year for "doing more in one year than all her books have down in the last 25 years" was quick to "condemn plainly and clearly" the protestors' action on the streets of Gothenburg because "violence is invariably the game of our adversary. even in the case of provocation, even when the police is responsible for having opened hostilities"

Even those that proclaim to be revolutionary buckle under the pressure of bourgeois denuciation of street violence. The Socialist Party in Sweden – a so-called Trotskyist group - denounced those responsible for attacking police and property for "scar[ing] the life out of the population in Gothenburg". They criticise "several so called left organisations that still refuse to resolutely distance themselves from a direction which is totally stillborn . . Instead of total repudiation and contempt these organisations try to fish in the swamps of political street violence," said the Swedish section of the Fourth international.

The Swedish SP counterposes "work in mass movements" to street violence. The fact is, effective mass protest has always been met with police violence.

The fact is that those who denounce violence do not share our goal or that of hundreds of thousands of youth today: to smash the apparatus of capitalist repression that keeps our movement down and guarantees the continued rule of the big corporations.

Christophe Aguiton, leader of ATTAC, anxious also to distance himself from the violence at Gothenburg, claims that the coalition of peaceful forces inside the anti-globalisation movement has meant that "the question is no more, as in the 1970s, in the great majority of cases, to conquer the Power via revolutionary organisations, but to find other ways for radical protest."

We draw the opposite conclusion. The ferocity of the state shown in Gothenburg and Barcelona in June 2001, the removal or restriction of our democratic rights under way as we prepare for Genoa, show that this movement needs to raise its game. If we don't, we risk falling back to the isolated and fragmented protests over debt, pollution etc that characterised the 1980s and early 1990s. Indeed, that is where some of the NVDA activists are headed – as if frightened by the power of the mass movement they helped create that is shaking capitalism to its foundations.

Today, this minute, we have the best chance since the 1970s to build revolutionary organisations that have a mass base among young people and organised workers.

Today the "spectre" of anti-capitalism stalks the world's rulers literally – it is just yards away from their pampered international gatherings. So it is time the movement outlined its goals clearly. Anti-capitalism means expropriation of all the MNCs, banks, and the other large companies and landowners too, so that economic power is put in the hands of the workers and peasants without which rational economic planning will prove impossible.

It means fighting for the overthrow of the bosses and bureaucrats in G7 and G77 countries alike. It means workers and peasants taking power into their own hands by means of general strikes and armed militias. It means working class people running their own lives - through the forums of elected and recallable delegates in councils.

Let's grasp the opportunity to build a revolutionary international movement Globalisation has sounded an alarm call to the youth and activists at the base of the world's workers' movement.

The dramatic surge in the concentration and centralisation of capital, the size and velocity of capital movements, the power of the G8 dominated "world economic institutions", the downsizing or privatisation of social welfare – all threaten workers and small farmers and a substantial proportion of the lower middle classes.

But enormous new opportunities also lie ahead. The greater unification of the world economy – the higher levels of education and literacy called for by the introduction of new information and communications technology – means that workers can spread the struggles and the lessons of struggles "at the speed of thought", to use Bill Gates' phrase.

Anti-capitalism means expropriation of all the MNCs, banks and other large companies and landowners too without which rational economic planning will prove impossible.

"One no and many yes-es" will not destroy capitalism. A revolutionary fight that links the anti-capitalist movement with the multi-millioned organised working class will destroy capitalism. This pamphlet is an action guide for building that movement. ★

How did we get here?

the politics of globalisation

Globalisation is everywhere. It is about knocking down all barriers to the profit system working internationally. It is about revolutionary technologies that have blown away the time and distance factors that used to condition the workings of the profit system.

It's about big companies eroding wages and conditions in the developed world with a thinly veiled threat to move jobs and factories to cheaper zones in the South.

It's about the consolidation of power into the boardrooms of major companies, away from elected parliaments. It's about a massive increase in the power of global institutions like the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation.

But how did we get here? And who brought us this far?

A defining moment in the advent of globalisation was the USA's triumph over the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. It was not long before a new generation of pro-globalisation pundits came to dominate the think tanks, academic institutes and the columns of leading magazines.

The old era Kremlinologists and foreign policy "realists" were pensioned off in the 1990s to make way for the "globalists" whose job was simple: to celebrate the victory of the market over state intervention into the economy.

Thomas Friedman, Jeffrey Gerten, Daniel Yergin and a raft of others littered the bookshop shelves with purple prose in praise of US leadership, US values and above all the USA's right – indeed duty – to export these to the rest of the world.

George Bush proclaimed a "new world order" and in a rush of enthusiasm the pundits suggested that conflict between nation states was over – at least as a defining framework for foreign policy.

The USA could use its power to promote "democracy" across the globe, they said. But they had a funny idea of democracy: it meant locking every country into a global economy with clear rules that would, over time, bypass governments and establish clear bonds between citizens and corporations. Fukuyama's famous theory that we'd reached the "end of history" was the highpoint of this line of thinking.

But the wars in Iraq and Somalia in the early 1990s were a rude awakening. The vision narrowed and shifted: no longer could the US be expected to impose the rule of law and respect for human rights upon a lawless, chaotic and ungrateful world.

But nor could the US afford to disengage and withdraw to its tent. Rather, selective military engagement alongside the open promotion of US corporations became the new rationale of American diplomacy.

Clinton's Trade Secretary Ron Brown summarised his brief as "commercial diplomacy" – the intersection of foreign policy, government power and business deals". In the absence of a military rival "business is the natural basis of foreign policy".

The new prevailing orthodoxy insists that the USA is so powerful, has such superior "way of life" that it has the duty to press its interests on other nations and actively intervene in conflicts to secure its national interest.

It was now time to fight for the American way as the only way of doing business, said the gurus of globalisation.

The Bush and Clinton administrations of the 1990s took full advantage of their triumph over the USSR. They provided the route map for fast-track capitalist restoration in the ex-USSR and Central Europe; they pushed through new rules for world trade; subjected the United Nations to a make-over that put it totally in the hands of the Pentagon, and gained a windfall in economic assets after the Asian meltdown in the latter part of the 1990s.

The USA used unprecedented and unrestrained force to intimidate Third World states that refused to play ball. It overcame its hesitation and imposed repeated settlements in the Balkan conflicts by deploying US armed force.

So globalisation is not just a spontaneous tendency, driven by technology and economics. It is also about boosting the economic, political and cultural dominance of the world's only hyperpower, the most powerful imperialist

The movie actor who set the ball rolling

The groundwork for globalisation was laid in the 1980s by Ronald Reagan's twin policies: the new cold war and neo-liberal economics.

Since the 1970s the USA had been reeling from its defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese people. Reagan, a B-movie actor, was pushed the front of the world stage by a committee of powerful US businessmen and generals - to stop the retreat.

Through an intensifed rearamament programme the Pentagon helped to break-up the Stalinist elite that ran the USSR.

A reform movement emerged around Gorbachev, but that o.nly intensified the break-up of Stalinist command planning without furnishing any solutions to its economic stagnation.

In Latin America and the Middle East, the US once again started conduct diplomacy with a gun. CIA-trained and armed right-wing oppositions from Nicaragua to Afghanistan fuelled civil wars against regimes that stood in the way of US interests.

At home Reagan launched an all-out war on the organised labour movement and crushed the trade unions' fighting strength in a series of legal actions prohibiting strikes and removing elected leaders. As a result next generation of workers grew up knowing nothing but deregulation, insecurity, pre-emptive mass sackings and stagnant pay. The big corporations by contrast saw a big revival in profits as a result of these attacks.

Reagan used the Mexican debt crisis of 1982, and the subsequent bail out of the US banks, to transform the IMF into a weapon for US foreign policy. It was in this period that the IMF began systematically to impose "structural adjustment" programmes on dozens of Third World countries in return for debt relief.

Future finance was tied to package of economic measures designed to remove the state from economic decision making and make way for foreign owners, open up Third World markets to foreign corporations.

Reagan ended his days in power as a despised and flailing madman, but he had restored much of the USA's lost economic and political power.

capitalist nation on the planet.

The major corporations that bankrolled Clinton into office were handsomely rewarded: they increased their wealth and power during the 1990s more rapidly than at any time since the 1950s.

The Clinton regime represented the triumph of Wall St over Main St - and with this the agents of the financial markets and investment banks came to prominence inside the two Democrat administrations.

By 1995, stocks of foreign assets held by US companies topped $600bn, around three times their level of a decade before. Exports climbed from 9 to 13 per cent of GDP. As the *Financial Times* put it:

"US companies that once saw the world market as a place to channel their excess domestic production are now waking up to find that a third, or even a half, of their sales will soon come from abroad."

And with this global reach came a determination to fashion a more interventionist foreign policy designed to protect their assets.

Wall Street gained in the 1990s in an unprecedented manner from speculation on convertible currencies, on fees from managing privatisation programmes of state-owned enterprises and overseeing an unprecedented wave of mergers and acquisitions.

The Rubin-Clinton bail out of Mexico in 1994-5 to the tune of $38 bn –bypassing Congress in the process – was a gift to the Wall St bond holders who stood to lose massively if the Mexican government defaulted.

Clinton's free-market policies went even further than previous administrations. Traditional IMF sponsored structural adjustment programmes were aimed at countries in balance of payments crisis.

But Clinton bowed to corporate pressure to go further and apply "market discipline" to even the poorest countries in the world in the attempt to open up their resources and cheap labour to US companies.

The weapon this time was not denying them emergency loans to stabilise a currency or debt payment crisis – but taking a knife to official aid programmes.

In a visit to Africa in 1998, Clinton proclaimed "trade not aid" would be Uncle Sam's contribution to eliminating the continent's poverty. In fact, official aid to Africa had declined from $32 a head in 1991 to less than $19 by the time Clinton visited the continent.

The shortfall in aid would be made up by US corporate investments – providing of course that African governments privatised their state industries, reduced tariffs and taxes. Clinton even refused to donate public money to help combat Africa's AIDS crisis, urging these countries to turn towards corporate saviours.

Perhaps Clinton's biggest legacy in economic globalisation was overseeing the transformation of two key pillars of the post-war order: the GATT and United Nations, into more naked instruments of US global policy.

From GATT to WTO: In 1944 the USA prevented the creation of an international trading body with real power, preferring to leave General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade as a looser body. Through GATT, the USA could negotiate trade liberalisation but maintain powerful protection and subsidies for farmers in the USA and other developed countries.

But in the 1990s the USA wanted to scale back protection for agriculture. The Uruguay Round of GATT trade negotiations began in 1986 and aimed to massively reduce barriers to trade.

It also agreed to transform the GATT into the World Trade Organisation, realised in 1995. The Uruguay Round, and the formation of the WTO were a major step in advancing US corporate interests in trade.

Restrictions on investment have been reduced virtually everywhere in the 1990s. Across the globe there have been 570 rule changes governing foreign direct investment since 1991 – all of them removing barriers to the profit-mongers. By 1997, 1,330 bilateral investment treaties, involving 162 countries, were in place: three times as many as in 1992.

The WTO is a secretive executive body under the dominance of the G8 powers in which corporations can lobby to overturn national laws that seek to protect workers or the environment against the uncontrolled actions of big business.

And perhaps Clinton's biggest legacy was, by bribes and bullying, to bring the vast new markets of China to the point of joining the WTO.

Globalisation also meant redefining USA's attitude to Third World agencies. The US had agreed to the formation of UNCTAD in the 1960s – a Third World development agency that sponsored national industrialisation policies – as a lesser evil to these countries falling under the influence of the USSR.

But in the 1990s the USSR was history. Now, bodies like UNCTAD were obstacles to further US corporate dominance. UNCTAD has been gutted of much of its power.

With the United Nations, change came slower due to the spinelessness of Gorbachev and Yeltsin. They bent over backwards to help the USA get UN backing for its imperialist adventures in the 1990s. In return the USA bankrolled capitalist restoration and saw that the personal bank accounts of the Russian autocrats did not go empty.

For a time it seemed that Clinton might advance US interests mainly behind the facade of a pliant United Nations. But the disastrous intervention into Somalia changed all that. After Somalia. naked US power and interest came to the fore. The USA vetoed the renewed appointment of Boutros-Gali to head the UN in 1996: he was too critical of American policy. And Clinton crippled the UN's ability to intervene after the Bosnian war by refusing to pay $1.6 bn in debts.

NATO, by contrast, was transformed into the real world policeman – only it was a policeman paid for by the main criminals.

NATO was a creation of the Cold War, supposedly a defensive alliance to deter Russian aggression in Europe. But while the Cold War ended, NATO got stronger. The US administration argued for an enlarged and more global role for NATO. NATO enlargement was pushed for in order to "put pressure on communist backsliders" in East Europe, in secretary of state Madeleine Albright's words.

In 1998 NATO claimed a new right: to launch attacks first, including nuclear attack, "out of theatre", that is outside Europe, wherever the US detected "rogue states" resisting its power.

Marginalising the UN and enhancing NATO expresses the new post-Cold War freedom and power of the USA to act, – first and without restraint on the world stage.

It would be short-sighted to believe that only the USA has promoted the ideology of globalisation or only its corporations benefited from the extension of free trade and liberalisation of capital flows. The European and Japanese multinationals also stood to gain and did in fact prosper as Uncle Sam battered down barriers to foreign investment and foreign imports.

Globalisation is about the economic, political and cultural hegemony of the world's only hyperpower, the USA

The EU's most powerful countries certainly gained from the opening up of the ex-USSR and East Europe while Japan's big corporations greatly expanded their presence in East and South Asia during the 1990s despite a stagnant economy at home.

But US led the charge, swept aside objections, bullied to get its way in the multilateral forums, often against the doubts and objections of others.

By the end of the 1990s, with an economic boom in full swing, the USA seemed unchallengeable. The message was that military power and economic affluence gave it the right to impose its "successful" model on the rest of us.

To the sound of champagne corks popping at the launch of new dot.com companies, the pundits of globalisation began to cheer the arrival of a new form of capitalism: one where technology and neo-liberalism had abolished economic cycles of boom and bust.

So what happened next surprised them. ★

Globalisation - a new fo

Has globalisation changed the profit system fundamentally – or is it just a variant of 20th century imperialism?

One hundred and fifty years ago capitalism looked very different from the way it does today. Just a few countries in north-west Europe and North America were capitalist – the rest were struggling out of various forms of agricultural pre-capitalist society.

Manufacturing was the dominant form of capitalist activity; it was small scale and usually family-owned. Banks were involved with industrial firms only to the extent of providing some finance to cover their operating costs until stocks were sold.

Trade was the main or exclusive form in which the international economy was knitted together. Colonies existed but it was their markets, not their potential to produce things, that were primarily exploited.

By the time the First World War exploded, capitalism had changed completely. It had expanded relentlessly in the 50 years before 1914 and drawn all nations into the market nexus.

The typical form of a leading firm was a monopoly, cartel or trust - with a few firms dominating each market. This gave them influence to set prices, control their suppliers and their channels to market; they were able to suppress innovation if it threatened their dominance.

This was a qualitative shift to a new kind of capitalism. The world became effectively divided up between a handful of powerful capitalist nations whose big firms had saturated the "home market" and needed to capture foreign markets and sources of raw materials. Investment replaced trade as the main form of internationalisation of the world economy - though investment also boosted trade in its wake.

The previous relationship between production and finance was inverted. Banks ended their hands-off relationship to industry. They became the main suppliers of credit for investment. In many countries, banks and industry "fused". Banks now sought power and influence as owners and shareholders to protect their invested capital. Finance now predominated in the relationship with production.

These new monopolistic firms needed a state that was also "modern" - that is, prepared to build up a military and diplomatic machine geared to defending assets abroad from the claims of foreign rivals or national liberation movements.

Marxists dubbed this new global system "imperialism".

Imperialism built conflict into its foundations; wars and revolutions were the inevitable result of this new form of exploitation and oppression.

During the course of the last century the world did not stand still. Some countries climbed up the league table of dominant powers and others fell down; some small states that wanted to join the top table did not. Some countries, impoverished and overwhelmingly agrarian 50 years ago, are highly industrialised nations today.

Industries that were pivotal at the start of the last century faded into second place by mid-century and still others, which had not made an appearance by 1950, dominate the profits and sales league tables today. The last 15 years have seen the completion of the development of the imperialist system first laid down 100 years ago.

But the essential structure of the capitalist system remains as before: a few hundred corporations and a handful of countries monopolise the world's financial and productive resources and subject the lives of billions under their rule to repeated bouts of war, ethnic conflict, growing inequality and environmental despoliation. Growing speculative financial transactions destabilise the world as never before.

Globalisation, then, has not superseded imperialism as a stage in capitalism's development.

While the concept rightly suggests a higher degree of integration of the world economy, it does so in a way that neatly avoids the form and manner in which this integration happened.

For example, it hides from view the fact that the integration is extremely uneven, with a handful of rich countries in the North monopolising the bulk of capital and trade, leading to a reproduction of the relationships of exploitation, inequality and oppression between the G8 and OECD on the one side and the rest of the 150 nations of the world on the other.

It obscures the fact that the transcending of the limits of national borders is leading to greater regionalisation of the world economy rather than globalisation as such – that is, the creation of cross-border industry consolidation in the three big arenas: Nafta, the EU and Asia.

So globalisation represents an intensification of certain aspects of modern imperialism and not a whole new structure of capitalism.

But the changing form of this imperialist system is important since it has definite effects on the nature of the crises it experiences and on the shape of resistance to it.

We can summarise the key aspects of globalisation in this sense as follows:

- the power of the United States has insured that barriers to trade have come down and accelerated the speed and volume of foreign investment and international trade
- changes in the structure of international finance, which has powered further internationalisation of the economy, massively increased capitalist economic instability, hugely increased the role of debt and speculation in the operation of capitalism
- changes in the dominant business model employed by many leading multinational companies that have led to shifts in production processes towards less developed countries

International trade

The last ten years have witnessed an explosion in trade. During the 1990s,

Merger mania: c

The 1990s did not invent either the monopoly, competition or the global company. But globalisation in 1990s meant far-reaching developments in the development of all three.

Monopoly and competition go hand in hand. As Jack Welch, chief executive of General Electric, put it to the Financial Times in 1997: "There is excess global capacity in almost every sector. Pricing pressures are dramatic across sector after sector. One way of meeting such pressures is to go for the greatest possible scale - spreading costs and revenues across the world."

Global reach and market is fast becoming the minimally acceptable basis on which profits can be sustained for biggest players (e.g. cars, petrochemicals, electronics, pharmaceuticals).

Competition and wafer-thin profit margins are driving big corporations to strike alliances and swallow up rivals.

As a result we've seen a merger boom. Especially strong in the second half the 1990s, the unprecedented wave of takeovers was made possible by low interest rates and by a stock market bubble which sucked the money out of the middle classes and into company bank accounts.

The USA led the way in the 1990s with growth in size and power of corporations on the back of a long domestic econom-

rm of capitalism?

annual growth in world exports was three times that of the growth in output. At six percent a year it is double that of the years 1973-90. While the post war boom decades saw trade expand at around nine per cent a year this was only 2 per cent more than the expansion in output.

So, relatively speaking, more of what is produced is being traded on international markets than ever before.

The proportion of exports to output has steadily climbed throughout the century and has increased as much in the last twenty-five years as in the post-war boom years of 1950-70. The ratios of exports to global output were 9 per cent in 1913, 7 per cent in 1950, 11 per cent in 1973, 14 per cent in the early 1990s and over 20 per cent last year.

More than any other factor the lobbying of US corporations has led to this development. Since the mid-1980s the global multinational corporations (MNCs) have led a ferocious assault on barriers to their exports to the rest of the world. Under the agreement reached at the end of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations, average advanced country tariffs on imports of manufactures have been reduced to 4 per cent by 2001.

Import taxes set by the Third World fell, on average, from 34 per cent in 1987 to 14 per cent today. Between 1970 and 1997, the number of countries that eliminated exchange controls affecting imports of goods and services jumped from 35 to 137.

The US in particular has more than doubled the proportion of its goods and services that it exports over the course of the last ninety years, a trend that has been especially accelerating in the last twenty years. But all MNCs rely more and more on international trade to boost profits and mine the economies of scale that keep them ahead of the competition.

The reality for the Third World is very different. In volume terms there has been a sharp decline in the "integration" of the Third and First worlds through trade since the 1960s when it was around 46 per cent of the total and had been for most of the 20th century.

It began to decline and by 1990 it was only 27 per cent of total trade. Moreover, the nature of the trade changed as tariff walls were torn down. Growing international trade may have boosted the balance sheets of the big MNCs but the effect on those in the South who have "liberalised" their trading regimes has been generally devastating.

The prices of the commodities on which their exports depend have fallen sharply in the 1990s, exacerbating balance of payments crises. Domestic industries and employment have been savaged. Official aid has been cut on the grounds that increased trade will make up the shortfall in national income, but it has failed to do so.

Foreign investment

Japan is the world's largest exporter of capital today as a proportion of its GDP. But it shifts far less than the 5 per cent of GDP that Britain exported as foreign investment between 1870 and 1913.

But here it not such much the ratio of foreign investment to GDP that is significant as the ratio of foreign investment to domestic investment and the ratio of capital export to commodity export.

In 1996, the global stock of foreign direct investment (FDI) was valued at $3,200bn. Between 1986-96 FDI grew twice as fast as fixed investment as a whole.

And FDI flows grew at 12 per cent a year between 1991 and 1996, while global exports grew at 7 per cent thus proving that the driving force of international economic expansion in the imperialist epoch remains now, as 100 years ago the export of capital.

In addition, the content of investment today is quite different from 100 years ago. Britain's accumulated surplus capital, extracted from home and its huge empire, was mainly lent in the form of bonds as loan capital to foreign governments. The same was true for other "big powers".

Today, stocks (part ownership of companies) are as important as bonds but fixed investment (FDI) in plant and equipment is far more important than

mpetition and the centralisation of capital

ic upturn after 1991 and maturation of the Internet related technologies after 1995. In 1999 a record of $1,730bn, worth of mergers took place after 1,630bn worth in 1998. A big centralisation took place in the energy sector, airlines, investment banks and newspapers. Across the globe in 2000 $3.470 trillion worth of mergers and acquisitions took place.

By the 21st century fewer but bigger mega-corporations dominated a greater share of world production and trade than ever before.

Five firms control more than 50 percent of the global market in each of the following sectors: consumer durables, steel aerospace, electronic components, oil, PCs, media, airlines and auto-industries.

In the USA, two or three corporations control 90 percent of the market in computer software and hardware. The same goes for civil aviation and aerospace production.

The growth in size of the top few hundred MNCs has given them more power than ever before. Even rich nation states are unable to withstand the pressure. For instance, Canada's policy of allowing cheap generic copies of medical drugs fell victim to pressure from the pharmaceutical giants.

The tendency to monopolisation of production and fierce competition between them is an inherent feature of capitalism. Monopolies existed in the 19th century. But however powerful, their reach only extended over their own country. Multinationals were not the norm and for those that did exist none were dependent on overseas markets for the bulk of their sales then, nor did they have to have global ambitions to survive the competition.

Today that is no longer true. A number of the biggest players, such as IBM and ICI, rely for over half of their revenue on foreign sales. More than 98% of Nestlé's sales are outside Switzerland.

All firms in mass consumer or production goods have to have global presence

Even those operating in niche markets find they must have global ambitions or risk losing out. That is why the number of transnational corporations in the world has jumped from 7,000 in 1970 to 40,000 in 1995.

Despite the increase in number the real wealth and power resides in the three hundred largest corporations which account for one-quarter of the world's productive assets. Their CEOs meet in forums like the WEF at Davos to plan their next moves.

For this corporate elite even the world itself is beginning to look too small and cramped to operate the economies of scale to keep them ahead of their rivals and to generate huge annual profits demanded by shareholders.

Technology and globalisation

New innovations have made distance and time less of an impediment to location and movement of capital.

For example, behind the growing integration of the world economy lies the decline in the costs of transport and communication. Between 1930 and 1990 average revenue per mile in air transport fell from 68 US cents to 11 cents, in 1990 dollars. The cost of a three-minute telephone call between New York and London fell from $244.65 to $3.32. Between 1960 and 1990, the cost of a unit of computing power fell 99 per cent.

Technology and deregulation combine. The unit cost of sea freight, for example, fell 70 per cent in real terms between the beginning of the 1980s and 1996 due to technical innovations and increased competition.

But the same technology innovations that cheapen air travel and provide internet access allow more co-ordinated resistance: the summit hopping protests of the early 21st century is a new phenomenon that could not happen without it.

either. Pre-1914, most FDI went into railways and mining. Today, it is across the board in manufacturing and – increasingly – in services.

Restrictions on investment flows have been reduced virtually everywhere in the 1990s. Around the world, there were 570 liberalising changes in regulations governing foreign direct investment between 1991 and 1997. Some 1,330 bilateral investment treaties involving 162 countries are now in effect, a threefold increase in half a decade.

Of course, the direction and volume of investment is under the control of the richest nations and the biggest corporations. Access to the capital markets for future investment is also controlled by those who already dominate these markets.

The smashing down of barriers to investment has led to a big shift in the 1990s in the reasons why companies move production overseas. The trend to build a number of regional or local plants to serve each market was a choice imposed on many MNCs because of the high tariffs that countries imposed on imports of finished goods.

For example, much of the Japanese investment in the US and the European Union was a response to protection against its exports. The same is true of investment in many Third World countries - in car and truck production, for example.

Additionally, fear of fluctuations in real exchange rates encouraged the spread of production capacity across frontiers in the 1970s and 1980s. But, in the 1990s, many countries in east Asia and Latin America pegged their currencies to the dollar. In Europe, the euro has eliminated exchange rate fluctuations for those in the eurozone.

More importantly, by the 1990s the average tariff on imports was about 7 per cent, less than a fifth of what it was in the 1950s, as a result of the intense pressure from the US and Europe to bring down barriers to imports and exports of their products.

This has meant that there is no need to build in every market: they can be provided for from overseas. For example, in 1987, when import taxes were 57 per cent Australia imported just 15 per cent of its cars sold. Now, tariffs are 22 per cent and more than half the cars sold are imports. Nissan was able to abandon car production in Australia as a result.

A consequence of trade liberalisation in the 1980s and 1990s has been to focus corporations' investment decisions once more on labour cost advantages – which is why the electronic sector has shifted its plants from Hong Kong, to Taiwan and Korea and now to Indonesia and China.

The general trend is to focus on regions and build long term product development plants in developed countries and then have a series of low wage assembly operations that can be moved around the world fairly flexibly as the need arises.

Most high-tech investments, responsible for product development and hence the key to maintaining an imperialist club monopoly on high value-added processes and products, stays firmly within the North. This is why, in 1995, 75 per cent of manufacturing value added in the world was in the two dozen OECD countries, enabling them to keep and even widen the "development gap" with the South.

Two-thirds of all FDI in the 1990s went to the OECD countries - down from four-fifths in the first half of the 1980s. But in the 1960s the Third World received half of all FDI. This small shift back to the South in the course of the 1980s and 1990s was due to inward investment in high labour intensive concerns, owned by, or doing contract work for, OECD based MNCs. A lot was poured into speculative construction projects.

This investment in the Third World in the 1990s was highly uneven with China receiving 20 per cent of all Third World FDI and the ten largest recipients getting a mammoth 88 per cent.

How much these investment flows aided the rounded development of the Third World could be seen when the Asian financial crisis hit in 1997. The overwhelmingly short-term character of these investments was dramatically illustrated as the funds fled the stricken region's capital markets and banks and headed for the "safe haven" of the USA and Europe. There it continued to fuel an extended boom while the Asian masses suffered mass unemployment and loss of savings.

The pattern of investment flows has led to globalisation taking the form of regionalisation. Most FDI flows take place within NAFTA, the EU or East Asia rather than between them.

Finance

Imperialism means the rule of financial capital. That fact is illustrated by the power of chief finance officers inside the modern corporations: the main concern of the "bean counters" is to boost the share price and make a profit – they are not concerned with the line of business itself.

As the head of Corus said on announcing the closure of the Newport steel plant in South Wales this year, "We don't make steel, we make money".

The leading role of financial capital under imperialism is not new. It stems from the basic fact that by the 20th century banks were the only source of the large quantities of capital needed to finance long term fixed investments

Ownership of capital in the 1990s

During the 1990s the USA's model of business ownership has become more of the norm in countries which had different models, such as Germany and Japan. In the USA chief executives and boards are under greater short-term pressure from major institutional shareholders (e.g. pension funds) to maximise stock market value and annual dividends.

This has had several consequences. Making money not things becomes ever more critical i.e. finance dominates not product line. This in turn forces changes on the labour process such as the end of a permanent workforce labour and rise of contingent labour. This development was pioneered in the USA as it enables companies to be fast and flexible in driving down costs. Also it is a function of the globalised corporation since the less they depend upon home market and home labour force for sales and profits then they can afford not to care about loyalty to domestic workforce.

Changes in the nature of production and marketing

Singer sewing machine of the US was founded in 1850s. By 1880 it was making and selling products abroad; its biggest plant was overseas and had regional headquarters in New York, London and Hamburg.

It set the pattern for multinational companies for the next 100 years all over the world. Based in the US or Europe they were run through regional headquarters and most had a measure of autonomy although centre set basic product design and strategy. All of them owned the bulk of the plant and equipment that they used to produce their finished goods. Japanese MNCs followed suit in the 1960s.

Over the last thirty years much has changed.

In 19th and early 20th century we saw the beginning of a mass market for consumer goods, starting with basic foodstuffs. When this market was saturated capitalism moved into the next stage: white goods, cars, hoovers, radio, TV etc.

These had been luxury items in the inter-war period and then became mass consumer items just after the war; other household goods (e.g. consumer electronics and prepared foods) and cars followed.

By the end of the 1980s these markets in North were fast becoming saturated too. Where to go when facing fierce competition, pressure on profit margins and product lines are easy to copy?

Enter the branding revolution in the 1990s. There was no where else to go for big established companies but rack up profits margins by making consumer pay premium for brand. Many companies realised that production could be farmed out to low-waged Third World countries.

Nike is a virtual company in 1990s with market and management and design in home country and no workers who make their product; these workers are in TW. This in turn has a technological basis since the restraining nature of time and distance over production decisions are less in 1990s.

Companies like Nike, which have led the way on outsourcing, have certain real advantages such as not being constrained in their response to changing conditions by having physical plants to dispose of.

Yet there are real limits to this trend in that product design and development for many industries necessitates that they own plant and equipment (e.g. aeroplane construction, many pharmaceutical companies).

undertaken by the new corporate giants.

Rudolf Hilferding, the Austrian economist, in 1908 saw this leading role as a defining feature of "finance capital" when he noted the tendency of banks to convert credit into ownership of the firms they lent to so as to protect the value of their loans.

But finance has tightened its grip and it is more complete now than ever. Indeed the fusion is more pronounced than it was 100 years ago.

The hegemony of finance capital can be seen in the trend to convert the debts of Third World companies into shareholdings allocated to the lenders, throughout the 1980s.

Over the last twenty years, large industrial MNCs have used their cash surpluses to engage in banking operations, issue bonds and engage in speculation via hedge funds – the American giant GE being the most prominent example.

From the other side, financiers have consolidated their holdings of individual companies into huge "funds" that can dictate even to large public companies changes in direction of management strategy. While company AGMs often see a collection of pensioners, protesters and middle-class shareholders turn up, the real dialogue in business is between the company boards and these major securities houses – and it is usually one way.

The recent surge in the power and dominance of financial capital lies in the wave of deregulation that swept through the financial sector in the late 1970s. This removed many barriers to what banks wanted to do with their capital.

From the side of the big corporation, increasing uncertainty after the end of the long boom led many to seek to protect the value of their long term fixed investments from the vagaries of the business cycle and deep recession by spreading the risk in a series of new "financial instruments" (options, swaps, derivatives).

It is, then, the search for stability and certainty by industrial capital that has led to the qualitative growth in financial operations. They are not the malign product of some conspiracy to harm the interests of industry, as some economists suggest.

Industrial capital – if it makes sense at all to conceive of it so narrowly – needs the services of the big investment houses like Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and USB to tap the capital market for investment funds and to engineer mergers. It also needs the financial markets as a way of investing industrial profits in the stock markets and other high-risk, high reward financial vehicles, in order to compensate for the low industrial rate of profit – squeezed by the savage competition that liberalisation unleashed.

But the growth of the financial sector has brought with it a deep tendency to destabilisation. Money capital has its own relative independence and compulsion to make money. From the 1970s it achieved this in two ways.

First, through the steady abolition of exchange controls which invited massive speculation on the movements of currencies. This, more than anything else, has ensured that most investments now are short-term as opposed to long term.

As a result, more than $1.5 trillion a day is traded in the world financial system, a figure far in excess of the value of trade in physical goods. The vastly destabilising nature of this form of licensed betting was seen with devastating effect in the Asian meltdown in 1997.

Second, financial capital thrives on debt. Through the process of "securitisation" – the creation of a massive array of ways of going into debt – banks make vast amounts of money trading these. Naturally, they make even more money lending to impoverished Third World countries, safe in the knowledge - as with the Mexico peso crisis of 1994 - that an obliging puppet government is standing by to foot the bill if things go wrong.

The exponential growth of debt in the last 15 years is dangerous for capitalism. The US boom of the 1990s was largely financed by the growth of household debt – individual overdrafts, mortgages and credit card balances - to unprecedented and unsustainable levels. And the accumulation of unpayable Third World debt provokes one social crisis after another.

But so powerful is the financial oligarchy that the global institutions cannot contemplate any meaningful steps to control or rein in the financial markets.

In the 1990s, the dysfunctional nature of the financial explosion came to the foreground time and again.

Taken all together, these developments have led even a globalisation sceptic like the Financial Times writer, Martin Wolf, to admit that: "international economic integration has, on balance, probably gone further than ever before".

The point, of course, is that this integration has been uneven (marginalising hundreds of millions from economic activity) and enriched a handful of nations and a few hundred multinational corporations. ★

From anti-globalisation

Non-governmental organisations

The breadth of the new anti-globalisation movement and its heterogeneity is remarkable. On its respectable reformist right-wing are coalitions of NGOs fighting debt bondage and structural adjustment programmes - such as Fifty Years is Enough or Drop the Debt.

Today there are some 30,000 international NGOs. The origin of the term non-governmental organisation is the United Nations. The UN itself accredits some 1,500 NGOs. At one pole are groups like Oxfam, Greenpeace, Médecins sans frontierres, Save the Children, Amnesty International, Christian Aid and the World Wildlife Fund, which are huge global organisations with large professional staffs as well as extensive networks of volunteers.

At the other end of the spectrum are tiny groups of anti-globalisation vigilantes, running websites and monitoring and dogging the actions of corporations, international financial institutions or governments. NGOs - once called charities, voluntary associations, or campaigns – are nearly as old as capitalism itself.

Direct ancestors of today's American and European NGOs fought the slave trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. More recently, NGOs spearheaded the 1998 treaty banning land mines and the Rome treaty setting up the International Criminal Court and are key players in delivering aid in Kosovo.

NGO is a negative definition – all organisations not part of the state should (theoretically) be included in it. In practice, however, this definition excludes political parties, churches/religious bodies, and businesses.

NGOs are seen by themselves and their supporters as the organisations of "civil society" par excellence. The concept civil society was developed in the French and English Enlightenment where it came to mean the sphere of social life dominated by the economic interests of individuals and classes as opposed to those of the state which, it was claimed, represented everyone.

Alexis de Toqueville – an central early ideologue of political liberalism – saw early nineteenth century democracy in America as resting on a rich and varied network of voluntary non-state bodies.

During the second cold war of the early 1980s intellectuals in both Western and Eastern Europe took up the concept of "civil society" as a critique of and ideological weapon against communist totalitarianism. They proclaimed it as the inevitable product of a market economy and necessary to the flourishing of democracy.

Under Gorbachev's Presidency in the USSR (1985-91) and on into the restoration process of the 1990s the development of "civil society" was proclaimed as the way to westernise and bring the market to all the countries that had hitherto defied the spread of the US model.

Oppositions in the Third World also took up this term and goal against dictatorial or single party regimes. The ideology of civil society is in this sense a bourgeois liberal ideology, designed to cover up the reality of the division of society into classes and above all to cover up the class struggle. Populists and social democrats are only too willing to pick up this liberalism — showing thereby their greater closeness, when the chips are down, to the bourgeois order than that of the working class.

At the same time neo-liberal governments in Europe and North America were praising voluntary organisations, and encouraging them to replace state provision, arguing that this course was the only way to achieve a civilised society. G7 governments, and the many large corporate and private charitable foundations which fund the major NGOs, have as a result, considerable leverage over them.

Some function virtually as subcontractors to western governments, e.g. the U.S. Wildlife Fund gets over half of its budget from USAID, to do work that a government could do. Many governments are now "mandated" to consult with NGOs, as are the World Bank and the IMF. The World Bank for example involves NGOs in about half its projects.

The expansion of the role of the NGOs went hand in hand with the reduction of direct aid from the imperialist countries and the pressure by the IMF to reduce state spending within the semi-colonial countries themselves. The large well financed western NGOs worked hard to depoliticise the activists fighting poverty and debt in the third world.

Consciously or unconsciously they sought to replace national and international political and class movements and organisations with an amorphous "civil society". They also had the effect of promoting the "westernisation" of recipient countries and communities – i.e. advocating western style liberal democracy and western-style capitalism.

The élite NGOs set out to by-pass national governments, especially in Africa, seeing them as corrupt and inefficient. Whilst this was all too often true this failed to acknowledge that the source of much of this lay in super-exploitation, the role of western corporations, secret services, etc. Again failing to see things in class terms and precluded from honest and open political involvement, they could not see that only if the workers, poor peasants, the students took power from the corrupt semi-colonial élites could the question of development be addressed.

And from day one this would mean settling accounts with the corporations and the pro-imperialist government. Instead they acted more like the old "benevolent" colonial administrators or like an aid-dispensing MNC.

Many NGOs may have started out as independent of, and even in sharp opposition to, their own home states, but have become virtual agencies of them. Today they are providing the welfare services which the state has abandoned, receive money from it and are thus subcontracting "social work."

In the US they collaborate with MNCs in drawing up codes of conduct and standards of employment and deploy more inspectors than the government. But, whilst they may expose and report abuses, integration into the state's functions weakens their opposition to and campaigning against the state.

The international spread of the NGOs in the 1990s was dramatic. The involvement of many thousands of idealistic young people, the activist ethos and above all the fact that western democratic imperialism and its MNCs would inevitably betray their hopes and illusions, meant that a crisis was bound occur, sooner or later, in the relations between many of the NGOs and their imperialist masters.

The Earth Summit, held in June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, was a critical event in the evolution of their role and their tendency to interrelate and form coalitions. Representatives of more than 1,000 NGOs, approximately one-third of them from the Third World, attended the summit itself and even more attended a parallel NGO summit – the Global Forum – which took place simultaneously with around 9,000 organisations.

These gatherings produced thirty-nine "alternative treaties" to the official agreements on a wide range of environmental, developmental, social and human rights issues. Thus Rio marked the advent of NGOs as powerful players in international negotiations, the use of electronic communication as a democratising medium, and promoted "citizen

to anti-capitalism

one movement, many possibilities

activism".

Last but not least the sheer fact that, led by the USA, most first world governments began a cynical spoiling campaign against the very decisions and pledges they had signed at Rio. This radicalised many of the NGO activists and with the development of the internet in these same years, they began to organise across borders.

Prominent academics, journalists, and organisers of the NGOs have played an important role in the anti-corporate globalisation movement. In the USA Lori Wallach (of Ralph Nader's Global Trade Watch for Public Citizen), Mark Weisbrot of the Washington-based Preamble Center, and Charles Arden-Clarke of the Geneva-based World Wide Fund for Nature are among them.

Behind them stand thousands of activists and lobbyists working for the NGOs, sometimes alone, sometimes in coalition. It is they who have targeted the many negotiations going on around the world, often in secret, aimed at developing rules for the global economy which promote the interests of the great corporations. These activists are often outmanoeuvring the corporations, government officials and neo-liberal think tanks who until now have had rule-making all to themselves.

The self-appointed role of the NGOs is to burst into these negotiations, claiming to represent civil society and a democratic alternative. The problem is that they themselves are not really democratic organisations, they are themselves privately financed and in the last analysis are answerable, not to the recipients of their aid or campaigning but to their funders.

Their greatest victory to date, is the scrapping of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Six hundred NGOs working together defeated an attempt by 29 of the world's richest nations, including the United States, to write a treaty on foreign investment. They exposed how MAI would override local and national laws on the environment and the rights of women and minorities and would devastate the economies of many third world countries. The NGOs won and the talks collapsed.

After Seattle, the IMF and World Bank have launched a "dialogue" with their critics – which has amounted to little more than an attempt to draw in the more respectable and bourgeois NGOs into drawing up a common reform programme in order to rescue the legitimacy of these multilateral institutions in the eyes of those subject to their interventions. ★

ATTAC and Porto Alegre

The French acronym ATTAC stands for "the Association for a Taxation of Financial Transactions and for Assistance to Citizens" It was founded in June 1998 on the initiative of Bernard Cassen, director of Le monde diplomatique – a monthly supplement to the prestigious Paris evening newspaper.

It brings together 70 affiliated organisations ranging from popular education associations, unemployed movements and peasant confederations to NGOs and trade unions. But it is basically an individual membership organisation claiming some 35,000 members.

It has a national directorate and widespread local sections which are broadly autonomous. Susan George is one of its assistant presidents. Leader of the Confédération payanne, José Bové, is also a vice-chairperson and prominent figure in ATTAC.

Its self-declared aim is to educate the public as to harmful policies of neo-liberalism and to "to recover the position lost by democracy to the financial sphere". As such its local groups meet regularly to hear papers on various aspects of its proposals. It mobilised members for demonstrations like Millau and Nice in June and December 2000. Demonstrating in the streets is not however one of its main objectives. It is very much a think tank – albeit one with a sizeable membership and local as well as national forums.

An international version of ATTAC was created at a meeting in Paris in December 1998 drawing in organisations from Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, the Philippines, Senegal, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Finland, together with several international networks or co-ordination groups

Central to the work of ATTAC – as its full name suggests – is the question of the taxation of capital, the re-imposition of democratic control over financial markets. This makes it somewhat different to those bodies which concentrate on fighting IMF structural adjustment plans, Third World debt, or the WTO's free trade agenda. Since it is difficult to develop militant tactics to achieve such a nebulous proposal it has broadened its focus to include these areas to some degree.

ATTAC sets itself the following objectives: "to hamper international speculation; to tax income on capital; to penalise tax havens; to prevent the generalisation of pension funds; to promote transparency in investments in dependant countries; to establish a legal framework for banking and financial operations in order not to penalise further consumers and citizens; to demand the general annulment of the public debt of dependent countries; to use the resources thus freed up on behalf of populations and sustainable development."

Its more general goals are: "to reconquer space lost by democracy to the sphere of finance, to oppose any new abandonment of national sovereignty on the pretext of the "rights" of investors and merchants, to create a democratic space at the global level."

In short, ATTAC is a radical movement to reform capitalism.

The core objective of ATTAC is the introduction of a "Tobin tax". Named after the American Nobel Prize-winning economist James Tobin, this was intended by its author as a means of bringing stability into the financial and currency markets after the collapse of the fixed exchange rates system in 1971.

ATTAC estimates that a tax levied at a rate of about 0.1 per cent on each currency transaction would raise a sum anywhere between ten to a few hundred billion dollars. ATTAC wants the proceeds to be invested in developing the second and third worlds. But it freely admits that "it will not be enough to finance all the needs of the planet".

ATTAC also realises that no one country could impose the tax without provoking financial institutions into relocating their operations somewhere where the tax was not levied.

The problem is that it could not even be applied simultaneously under capitalism. Who would do this? The United Nations? Who would enforce it? There is no international law for the simple rea-

Another world is possible. . . only by destroying capitalism!

Since Seattle, at Washington, London, Milan, Melbourne Seoul, Prague and Nice, tens of thousands of anti-capitalist youth have denounced, by their direct action, the great monopolies and international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, WTO, and the European Union.

These institutions are responsible for the exploitation of millions of workers, for the destruction of the environment, for relegating millions of persons to dire poverty.

Now, here, in Porto Alegre, at the World Social Forum, the NGOs, the union bureaucracies, and the directors of the institutionalised political parties are changing the content of the struggle of the young anti-capitalists into the reactionary policy of "humanising capital".

Humanising capitalism with the French government ministers who persecute immigrants, who form a government that, together with NATO, bombed Yugoslavia, killing thousands of people and repressed the anti-capitalists in Nice? Humanising capitalism together with the bankers and the multinationals?

Humanising capitalism together with the governments who, like the PT [Worker's Party], continue paying the foreign debt, who repressed the strike of the teachers of Rio Grande do Sul and the occupation of a federal building in Porto Alegre, and who continue repressing the street merchants and the homeless on their squatted land? Governments that continue to make payments to the multinationals?

In truth the "stars" that lead this government and mayoralty, who proclaim themselves "democratic and popular", are only interested in the 2002 elections, and in acting as a test tube for a new capitalist order; one sustained by a social democracy that permits continued bourgeois exploitation.

One that sets out to please the middle-classes with democratic play-acting such as the Participatory Budget which aims to impede protests via the co-option of popular movements. Rounding out the picture are the various "left" parties that even while criticising this policy, capitulate before a more thorough questioning. Humanising capitalism is utopian and reactionary.

Therefore, we, anti-capitalist youth from the Youth Camp, form a part of the anti-capitalist movement and stand in solidarity with the youth denouncing the World Economic Forum in Davos.

We say: The World Social Forum is a ruse of those who wish to divert the anti-capitalist fight towards the policy of class collaboration and elections, continuing to apply the poverty of capitalism. Thus we continue our efforts in the construction of an international anti-capitalist network under the cries of:

Down with the World Economic Forum, IMF World Bank and WTO. The World Social Forum is no alternative.

- Down with the Plan Colombia!
- Long live the Palestinian Intifada!
- Repudiate domestic and foreign debts!
- No to Privatisation!.
- Capitalism kills, we will kill capitalism!

Signed

Juventude e Luta Revolucionaria, Jornal Espaco Socialista, Comite Marxista Revolucionario, Anarco-Punks, Movimento Che Vive (RJ), Coletive pela Universidade Popular (Porto Alegre), Secretaria Estadual de Casas de Estudantes de Goias, Movimento Nacional de Meninos e Meninas de Rua, Federacao Anarquista Gaucha, Grupo Cultural Semente de Esperanca, Acao Global por Justica Local, Resitencia Popular RJ/PA, Nucleo Zumbi Zapatista - ABC Paulista, Estrategia Revolucionaria, Socialismo Libertario Brasilia, Federacao Anarquista Uruguaia, Acao Revolucionaria Marxista (RJ), Frente de Luta Popular, Juventude Avancar na Luta, Ligua Bolchevique Internacionalista, Espaco Cultural Quilombola - Aracatuba - SP, e demais ativistas anti-capitalistas.

son that there is no global state to enforce it. And all the G8 regimes tolerate tax havens.

Effectively ATTAC concentrates on trying to get the European Union, the United States and Japan to adopt it, to become in effect a G7 "Tobin tax zone." ATTAC admits that even the European Union (EU) could not take this initiative alone. Due to the risk of a mass flight of capital the USA must be signed up to it from the start.

This is, in effect, asking the chief neoliberal poachers to turn gamekeepers. But who will convince them? ATTAC sees no other solution but to mobilise the collective hot air of "civil society" – the intellectuals, the NGOs – to blow the governments, bankers, corporations towards this scheme. Recently ATTAC has concentrated on a campaign against the 40 or so main tax havens around the world as a stepping stone.

ATTAC's biggest project to date was its to co-spponsor the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Nearly 5,000 delegates came from 117 countries, who mixed with 165 VIP guests including Danielle Mitterrand – wife of the former president of France. A series of academic lectures were held before huge audiences in the Catholic private university of the city. Politicians from reformist parties of the Latin American centre left —such as Ignacio Luis da Silva (Lula) of the PT and Cuathemoc Cárdenas of the Mexican PRD spoke, as well as writers, academics, economists, parliamentarians, even "social entrepreneurs" figured, including several government ministers from France too. This was clearly the most respectable, reformist, even the most bourgeois, gathering associated with the anti-globalisation movement.

Ignacio Ramonet – a leading light in ATTAC in an article in Le Monde Diplomatique, January 2001, made it clear that the purpose of the WSF was not to protest "as in Seattle, Washington or Prague (...) but to try, this time with a constructive spirit, to propose a theoretical framework and practice that allows us to advocate a new globalisation and affirm that a new world is possible, less inhuman and more solidarity-based."

Debate centred on whether the cancellation of the Third World debt should be total or partial; conditional or unconditional; on the technical feasibility of the Tobin tax, on "fair trade not free trade"; on the "ecological debt" that the rich countries could repay to "reduce inequality"; and the so-called democratic-popular experience of the "participatory budget" which the ruling PT city government carries out in Porto Alegre.

There was widespread dissatisfaction among many delegates with the French intellectuals constantly pushing their "constructive plans" to reform the world economic authorities - and with the absence of debate on militant action.

While "official" Porto Alegre was a concerted attempt by ATTAC to prove that "another reformism is possible", those speakers who did defend socialism and the validity of a revolutionary struggle received thunderous applause. As did José Bové when he was arrested and threatened with deportation for leading a demonstration that destroyed genetically modified crops during the conference .

The struggle to build a militant mass international movement against global capitalism and imperialism is inseparable from sharp criticism of the policies of the NGOs and the Sao Paulo Forum (the organisation of the Third Way Latin American parties) who co-sponsored Porto Allegre. Their aim – a pretty naked one at that – is to "humanise" global capitalism, not overthrow and replace it.

Even the forces at in Porto Alegre that organised direct action aimed at genetically modified crops – the leaders of Via Campesina and José Bové - have a reformist programme, even if one tied

to direct action of a NVDA character.

Their programme is centred on humanist slogans such "Agriculture is not a business" and that "food should not be treated as a commodity, but as a human right". How this can be realised without the expropriation of the plantations of agri-businesses and the ranches of the latifundists, without the seizure of the technological and scientific resources from the big corporations, without the co-operativisation of peasant agriculture, they do not tell us.

Porto Alegre's positive side was that it provided an assembly point for militants of some of the sections of the anti-capitalist movement. But only in the "peripheral" camps was there any echo of the militant struggles against the austerity policies of the IMF in Latin America over the last four years.

On the other side of town 2,000 youth and 700 indigenous people camped in the city parks in far less luxurious conditions than those enjoyed by French ministers like Chevennement. But it was to the camps that one had to turn to find any sort of radicalism and genuine anti-capitalism.

The militant critique of the reformist forums was embodied in the declaration of the youth groups (see box).

It is up to these youth, the workers, and the poor anti-capitalists, loyal to the spirit of Seattle, Nice, Prague and Gothenberg to prevent the hi-jacking of the anti-capitalist movement and its being steered into the calmer waters of reformist "anti-globalisation".

ATTAC and the PT have announced that in 2002 they will hold an even bigger conference in Porto Alegre. They have invited Sub-comandante Marcos and the Zapatistas to attend. They have talked about Porto Alegre becoming a "Rebel International". If it remains dominated by these forces this is far from what it will be.

Clearly an event of the scale of Porto Alegre – held in the "global south" – does present enormous opportunities for networking, for bringing together militants from the semi-colonial countries and the imperialist heartlands.

But this will be ultimately fruitless unless an organised and militant revolutionary alternative is mounted to "official" Porto Alegre.

Militant class struggle forces – trade unions, poor peasant organisations, the organisers of mass strikes and road blockades rather than of academic seminars are what is needed if there is to be a "rebel" international. ★

Peoples Global Action

The explicitly "anti-capitalist" wing of the movement has coalesced from various distinct components. On the radical wing of the movement are the anarcho-ecologist groups such as, Earth First (US), Reclaim the Streets (UK). United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), Corporate Watch.

Credit for first pulling these strands together must go to the Zapatistas (EZLN) in Mexico. The EZLN was founded in the mid-1980s out of the self-defence militias of the indigenous (Mayan) peasants in the Chiapas region against the hired guns of the latifundists.

It was from the outset predominantly peasant-populist, not Stalinist/Maoist. Like many populists it refused to accept the designation "left" or "Marxist" and developed a revolutionary democratic programme for the solution of the land question and the destruction of the 60-year old stranglehold of the ruling PRI on the Mexican state. Likewise its military tactics were, it insisted, subordinated to the poor peasant communities and to a wider mass political struggle.

The Zapatistas' occupation of five Chiapas towns in January 1994, its encouragement of strikes and land occupations, its democratic basis in mass assemblies of the peasant communities, all drew it "third worldist" admirers in North as well as Latin America.

They took up the EZLN's slogan "Ya Basta" ("enough is enough"). Sub-commandante Marcos' astute use of the mass media and the internet, the claim to be struggling not to seize state power but to empower the people led The Economist to dub it the first "post-modernist" guerrilla movement. Indeed there is a large amount of truth in this jibe.

Zapatismo is far from revolutionary in its refusal to target the state power of the Mexican bourgeoisie. This drew it the admiration of European left social-democratic reformists, US populists, and anarchists alike – all of whom had different reasons for renouncing the "struggle for state power".

They all saw this as a great step forward from Marxism or Leninism. It is not. The EZLN's anti-statism is passive and abstentionist, for all its talk of building up an alternative to the state from below. It is a sign of how far even the most radical of the mass movements in the semi-colonial world retreated ideologically and politically as a result of the triumphs of imperialism in the 1980s.

The world situation into which the Zapatistas erupted was favourable to the spread of its influence. The Mexican currency (peso) crisis of late 1994 – called by some the "first crisis of globalisation" – came hard on the heels of Mexico's admittance to the OECD and entry into NAFTA.

The devaluation of the peso impoverished millions, increased unemployment. It had a "tequilla effect" on other Latin American countries, like Argentina and Brazil, leading in turn to popular resistance. Likewise in the USA and Canada various forces, but most notably the trade unions had launched an anti-NAFTA movement which, whilst being protectionist was sensitive to the charge of ignoring the poverty stricken masses of Mexico.

In a series of declarations issued from January 1994 onwards, the Zapatistas linked their fight for land, language and cultural rights and autonomy for the indigenous inhabitants of Chiapas against the ruling PRI, to a global call to coalesce the various movements fighting neo-liberalism and globalisation in the Americas and beyond. The Zapatistas have organised 32 autonomous municipalities, and emphasise the struggle for women's liberation combined with a libertarian rhetoric on sexuality.

But their main ideological influence on the developing anti-capitalist movement is the glorification of diversity, the deliberate refusal to advocate or fight for a common aim. "We want a world in which there are many worlds a world in which our world, and the worlds of others, will fit, a world in which we are heard, but as one of many voices."

Of course, as a justification for promoting the cause of oppressed peoples or supporting democratic debate this is unexceptionable. As a counterblast to capitalist bonapartism, the stifling of dissent by the media, the baleful legacy of Stalinist totalitarianism, it is very understandable.

Moreover, in a movement which is an alliance of workers and small peasants it is vital that the working class speaks with a clear distinct voice and does not sink its differences in a cross class ideology or programme that talks falsely of the common interests of "the people" (i.e. populism) – but that is not what Marcos means at all.

The influence of Zapatismo can be seen in its motto that the "movement is one with one no and many yesses". But the EZLN's own "yes" – a strategy of reverting to small-scale property ownership, exchange based on barter or an idealised market in which there is no exploitation – is a blind alley.

The renunciation of the struggle to bring the working class to the head of the anti-capitalist movement struggle for state power is also self-defeating. The enemies of the oppressed and exploited do not hesitate to use the armed power of the state to crush those who resist it. Those who renounce the need to break up this apparatus of repression are condemning themselves in advance either to harsh repression or to in effect limit their goals to a series of piecemeal reforms which do not threaten the basic structure of exploitation.

The EZLN understandably reject the overthrow of one bureaucratic state power only to see another authoritarian monster built in its place. But the answer is to fight for a semi-state, based on workers and poor peasant/small farmers' councils – for democratic representation of all parties which the masses

Is violence on demonstrations ever justified?

The anti-capitalist movement nearly got its first martyr on the streets of Gothenberg in June. The police opened fire on a protestor, wounding three people. Dogs were set on people to disperse the crowds. Faced with this violence of the state what should we do?

One wing of the movement says: "non-violent direct action" (NVDA) is the key. Basically this amounts to unlawful blockading and obstruction, occupation of property. Its advocates say that whatever the police do against us will only rebound on the state itself in terms of sympathy for the cause.

Another wing, the anarchist-dominated black bloc, says the only answer is to go to every demonstration tooled up for a fight with the cops.

Both approaches are self- defeating .

Unfortunately for the pro-NVDA wing, the day after the shooting in Gothenberg 90 per cent of the residents - deeply imbued with Swedish style reformism – which hates anything that strays outside "legitimate" protests – and uninvolved in the protests said they backed the police and many said they should have killed demonstrators. Lesson? People back or condone the violence of those they agree with.

In Prague on S26 the dominant force on the demonstration – INPEG –advocated Ghandi-style mass civil disobedience, organised by affinity groups.

Clearly INPEG hoped that most demonstrators would turn up days in advance and be drawn into the formation of affinity groups, would learn NVDA tactics and ideology and adopt non-violence . This proved a utopia.

Its petit-bourgeois character hits one in the eye from the start. Individualistic, moralistic, utopian. Most demonstrators – even those who considered themselves anarchists – came in groups, whether recently formed campaigns to mobilise for Prague or pre-existing political or trade union organisations.

NVDA broke down the moment it became clear that police lines could or had to be broken, that the violent attacks of the robo-cops could only be resisted by force.

All INPEG's preaching about non-violence did was to prevent some demonstrators being adequately prepared for the inevitable violence. All the "non-leadership" structures meant was that the actions were badly co-ordinated or unco-ordinated.

The black bloc strategy on the other hand, guarantees we will be cut off from the mass of workers who do not want to live a semi-legal lifestyle. The black bloc gives up the fight for the right to legally protest in advance. It ignores most demos and holds the non-balaclava'd masses in utmost contempt.

The most decisive event in Seattle and in Quebec was when the organised workers joined the protest. Trade union activists are well aware of the dangers of police violence – but we don't accept that every demo has to become a riot.

Our aim is a mass, peaceful, legal but effective demo. Ensuring it takes place involves organising democratically controlled self-defence units that can repel police attacks and also stop individual idiots giving the police an excuse to wade in.

Both NVDA (however self sacrificing the participants) and black block riots are vastly inferior to the methods of the united front, developed in the early twentieth century by the revolutionary workers' movement.

At the centre of such proposals for common action is the need for organised self-defence units, capable of defending a mass demonstration against police attack and in the right conditions taking the offensive against the obstacles placed in our way by the state.

Only if the revolutionary left vigorously advocates this and puts it into practice on a preliminary basis can the disorganising and disruptive influence of anarchism (and police provocateurs) be combated. Those "revolutionaries" who refuse to do this because it is too advanced will only hand the movement over to the Black Bloc anarchists or to the pacifists.

support who recognise the authority of these councils. In this way we can avoid the terrible fate that befell the USSR under the dictatorship of Stalinism.

A key event in the spreading of the EZLN's influence was the "First International Encounter against Neo-liberalism and for Humanity" which assembled 3,000 delegates from 43 countries in the Lacondon forest region of Chiapas in southern Mexico in April 1996.

Present were environmentalists, human rights activists, peasants, indigenist and tribal peoples' activists and trade unionists – importantly from the USA and Canada. Thus immediately they linked into the pre-existing anti-NAFTA free trade area movement in Mexico itself and in the USA and Canada.

This movement had already drawn together the widespread and well-developed network of radical ecologist circles ("deep Greens"), the anti-third world debt campaigners and the more radical of the NGOs.

These forces were increasingly turning away from lobbying governments or relying on the international agencies clustered around the UN. The UN – faced with US hostility – was increasingly underfunded and powerless and governments likewise pleaded impotence in the face of global market forces.

This drove NGOs, Greens and trade unionists alike towards public campaigning and even direct action. In the two former movements anarchist-libertarian ideas had made considerable progress in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

After the second Zapatista encuentro, in August 1997, some 50 representatives of varied movements – including indigenous groups from Nigeria and Mexico, and farmers' organisations from India, Brazil, Bolivia, and Indonesia agreed to plan worldwide protests against the World Trade Organisation, as the prime symbol and instrument of corporate globalisation.

To facilitate organising, they created an ongoing network, which they called Peoples' Global Action Against "Free" Trade and the WTO, or PGA for short. The first of the PGA's Global Days of Action took place in late May 1998, coinciding with the WTO's Second Ministerial Conference, held in Geneva.

Simultaneous actions took place in 28 countries. Five hundred thousand people rallied in Hyderabad in India, to denounce the WTO. In Brazil, an anti-WTO march drew some 50,000 people, including members of the country's Movement of Landless People, Sem Terra.

In Geneva, on the first day of the WTO meeting, 10,000 protested militantly around the venue. In what was to become a repeated pattern the more militant youth trashed banks and a McDonalds and the police attacked demonstrators with clubs and tear gas. Actions continued for three more days.

The "Third Encounter" of the EZN took place in Belém in Brazil in 1999 with 3,000 delegates present. On 18 June 1999, the PGA co-ordinated a "Global Day of Action Against Financial Centres," also called a "Carnival Against Capital", to coincide with the G8 summit of the major industrial powers being held in Cologne.

This co-incided with a day of action by Jubilee2000 calling for the cancellation of Third World debt. If the 1998 actions were large and widespread, J18 was enormous. There were events in well over 100 cities in 41 countries : from Australia to Zimbabwe, from Sweden to

South Korea, from Chile to the Czech Republic.

The groups involved were indeed diverse: environmentalist groups in Zimbabwe, Poland, Israel and Portugal; peasant unions in Indonesia (North Sumatra Peasant Union) and in Senegal; trade unions (including the 1.5 million strong Bangladesh National Garment Workers' Confederation and the Indian Fisherfolk Union); indigenous and popular movements such as the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements in India. (NAPM) and Chikoko, the network of indigenous groups resisting the oil industry in Nigeria; as well as unemployed organisations in France and beyond.

The events which captured the headlines of the world's media took place on J18 in the City of London, a mass protest which escalated into what the media called an "anti-capitalist riot", a protest that directly inspired the actions in Seattle.

In the USA – where the new movement was somewhat slower in coming together – J18 was also an important catalyst. Action took place in eight major cities. The numbers of demonstrators were in the hundreds rather than the thousands but J18 probably marks a qualitative leap –the coming into existence of a new worldwide movement that was from then on increasingly dubbed "anti-capitalist" - made up of workers and youth many of whom proudly accepted this badge of honour.

PGA pledges itself to a "clear rejection of the institutions that multinationals and speculators have built to take power away from people" and to "a confrontational attitude" based on "a call to non-violent civil disobedience and the construction of local alternatives by local people".

In addition it adopts "an organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy." These methods of struggle and organisation clearly reveal the inspiration of the movement's populist, anarchist and radical ecologist originators as well its infusion with a type of Gandhian mass non-violent direct action NVDA.

For all its radical rhetoric this clearly remains a reformist strategy, indeed its advocates openly renounce the idea of the "struggle for power", some because of anarchist prejudices (don't touch the state: authority corrupts those who hold it!), some from pacifist ones.

However, it is not primarily a parliamentary or electoralist reformism. Rather than capturing state power via a revolution or smashing/abolishing the bourgeois state – as both revolutionary communists and revolutionary anarchists espouse, this strategy sets out to transform the world from the bottom up, by defending or creating local communities, occupying lands or housing – in short replacing the state.

It talks not of workers' but "peoples' control and power over both production and consumption." It emphasises that "capitalism's mischief on nature has to be stopped". It calls for "the revival of traditional knowledge systems and traditional technologies, and the strengthening of traditional local market systems by developing producer-consumer linkages and co-operatives (and developing similar linkages internationally)." It proclaims that "the only alternative left is for the people to restore for themselves a life with direct democracy" and "strengthening peoples' power is the manifesto of this new global alliance of peoples' movements."

This fusing of first world "third worldism", the romanticisation of indigenous communities and their traditional production and social systems, the fusing of peasant and US-style populism with anarchism (radical and social ecology acting conveniently as the catalyst) requires a heavy degree of ideological blurring of ideas.

Its overall character can be best described as petit-bourgeois populism – hostile to class analysis, hostile to the hegemony of the working class in struggle, hostile to parties or political formations which fight for this, totally unclear as to what sort of society will replace capitalism. In short its ideal is impossibile: anti-capitalism without socialism and the abolition of capitalism without a revolution.

Reclaim the Streets

In Europe the two organisations most central to PGA are Reclaim the Streets (UK) and Ya Basta (Italy).

Reclaim the Streets (RTS) Britain, from the outset wielded considerable influence within the radical wing of the anti-capitalist movement and was a co-founder of the PGA, based on its pioneering of direct action tactics (e.g. street parties, carnivals, mass cycle demos) plus its willingness to form alliances with third world forces and sections of workers in struggle.

The main organiser of the events in the City of London on J18 RTS itself originates from the nucleus of British "Earth First!" activists who themselves took inspiration from the organisation of the same name in the USA.

Its key leaders were all "green anarchists". Tactics centred on symbolic trashing of cars, painting cycle lanes on London streets, "subverting" car adverts. They played a major role in the campaign against the anti-M11 Link Road.

Here an important development took place. The M11 campaign emphasised social and political issues: the defence of existing urban communities and of the social, not just the "natural" environment.

Partly as response to this new wave of direct action around the roads campaign the Tories forced through the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. The campaign against it generalised and brought together a whole series of disparate activists: anti-road protesters, New Age travellers, squatters, Rave organisers, hunt saboteurs as well as the left and the rank and file of the unions.

All of them saw their right to protest under attack and provided a new mass basis for resistance and a new counter-culture. Street parties/carnivals combined mockery and exposure of the actions of corporations and the state, and gathered together a milieu in which pre-prepared largely non-violent direct actions could be organised.

It combined militant (indeed illegal/unlawful activities) and mass civil disobedience with what was in effect a festival of music and dance. In short, they were a lot of fun for rebellious youth – many of whom became more politicised as a result.

The final years of the Tory regime (1996/97) witnessed the more than one year long Liverpool dockers' strike/lock-out. This section of organised workers exerted an influence on RTS as did their use of flying pickets, occupations and the new technology to spread their fight around the globe.

RTS activists became involved in actions against Shell in solidarity with the Ogoni people of the Niger Delta at the time of the judicial murder of Ken Saro Wiwa. With the exception of Workers Power/REVOLUTION and the supporters of Workers Press, the British socialist far left largely ignored these developments, thus leaving the field open to anarchism.

RTS worked in support of the tube workers and Workers Power/REVOLUTION involved them in actions in solidarity with the Colombian oil workers' struggle against BP. RTS's collaboration with the labour movement culminated in the second march for social justice in April 1997.

However, at this time a struggle was taking place within RTS between different anarchist groups (the Anarchist Federation, Solidarity Federation and to a lesser extent Class War) over both tactics and orientation.

During these years (1997-99), the anti-capitalist movement began to emerge. It also saw the differentiation and eruption into prominence of a militant direct action oriented wing (as opposed to the Jubilee 2000 NGO-style mobilisations with their silent vigils, cross-bearing marches, human chains, etc).

This wing's social agenda, tactics and organisational methods were very strongly influenced by libertarian anarchism. It saw global capitalism and the big corporations as its main enemy.

Its methods of struggle focused on mass mobilisations of young people – within which groups of activists utilised humour and spectacle, and above all the element of surprise to wrongfoot the police.

It drew its inspiration, from the Parisian situationists of the 1960s (e.g. Guy Debord) or from the libertarianism of the Amsterdam "panic" movement of the early 1970s, (e.g. Hakim Bey).

Other anarchists were much more attracted to the tactics of "trashing"

symbols of corporate power, the consumer society and of course the state. These had more in common with the "street fighting" approach of the US "Black Block" or the German "Autonoms".

Hence the targeting of Macdonalds, the stock exchange, etc – and open defence of "violence against property". Whilst the J18 "carnival against capitalism" in the City of London made world headlines, for the RTS is was a Pyrrhic victory. It exacerbated to breaking point the tensions between the Panic elements and the Black Block elements.

A ferocious polemic between "fluffy" versus "spikey" strategies erupted, centring on the role of violence. This prefigured the divisions over tactics in Seattle, London May Day 2000 and Prague (where the two wings formed onto separate sections of the march).

The entry of the SWP into the anti-capitalist movement after Seattle also prompted a reaction and hard-line "anti-authoritarian" and "anti Marxist" elements gained the upper hand in RTS.

Some of its founders decamped. Added to this the arrest and heavy sentences imposed on many activists in the six months after J18 forced many of their core activists underground. Also anarcho-ecologists – who felt their environmentalist agenda had been overshadowed by social activism reasserted their influence, as against those who oriented to the labour movement.

This turn by the inner core RTS "leadership" represented a fear of a democratic mass movement to which they might be accountable and a fear that "Marxist" organisations, with their centralised organisation methods, might speedily outmanoeuvre them. RTS began to seek bans and exclusions of Workers Power/REVO and the SWP as a result.

Ya Basta!

The Italian Ya Basta movement – co-sponsor with RTS of PGA – has its origins in the "self-managed social centres" for young people and the socially excluded. Its militants were also heavily involved in the squatters movement and set up a radio station (Radio Sherwood).

It was formed after Italian militants participated in the first Zapatista Encuentro in Chiapas in 1996.

It sets itself the dual purpose of supporting the Zapatista struggle and spreading the struggle against neo-liberalism in Europe. They attended the Amsterdam 1998 demo, "squatting" a train, and have repeated this tactic from Prague to Nice.

In 1998 they set up the tute bianche (or white overalls, meant to symbolise/challenge the "invisibility" of people on the margins of a "normal" life). It demands a "universal basic income and better conditions of life for everybody".

Ya Basta and the tute bianche were involved in the international INPEG meetings held in Prague, in the S26 demonstration, in Nice, Davos, Naples, Gothenberg and sent a delegation to Mexico to accompany the Zapatistas caravan to Mexico City early in 2001. Ya Basta has inspired others in Spain, USA, Belgium, Finland and Britain to set up groups.

Ya Basta's tactical innovation is to head demonstrations with lines or contingent of militants in white overalls and protective gear, (plexiglass shields used Roman "tortoise" style, foam and inner-tube rubber "armour" and mobile barriers and gas masks) to ward off police batons, gas and pepper spray.

This equipment is manifestly "for defensive purposes only" and its purpose is to show "who starts the violence" as well as to assert the "right to self-defence". There are however serious defects with their strategy of non-violent confrontation with the police.

When the objective is for demonstrators to penetrate police exclusion zones the presence of a row of Ya Basta/tute bianche – if their non-violent pushing fails to move the obstruction – becomes willy-nilly a barrier against the more active elements.

De facto they become an extra row of police preventing those not inhibited by NVDA prejudices from exercising their chosen means of struggle.

In their own way they are thus as one sided and dangerous as the Black Block and the autonoms, who also have a fetish – for violent offensive tactics, even when these can be used as provocation.

In fact, the expedient use of non- and violent methods, offensive and defensive tactics is vastly superior. But for this you need leadership, command structures, even in the context of a united front. That is why Ya Basta should not be allowed to hegemonise tactics on anti-capitalist demonstrations and why their "new tactic" is basically a blind alley.

At a European meeting held in Venice in 1997, they adopted positions – adapted they claimed from the Zapatista struggle – based on "fighting for a 'social Europe', where people not money come first". They say they are "trying to escape the isolation which many radical groups find themselves in, and to connect with 'civil society'".

To this end and to their credit they denounce state racism and the criminalisation of immigrants, including Albanians. They have been instrumental in founding Razzismo Stop – an association for the defence of immigrant rights. Also they claim to have built the ADL (Workers Defence Association), which is based on workplace collectives, and is linked to one of the Cobases. Ya Basta also works with the MPs of Rifondazione comunista.

Nevertheless, they claim to have "abandoned old ideologies" and "cut the chains to Marxist orthodoxy". They claim to be "Zapatistas", ideologically. That is, they have abandoned the language of class and the struggle for state power. They celebrate the plurality of "visions" rather than aspiring to any single programme. They have adopted the "discussion until consensus" model as opposed to democratic decision-making. Like Sub-commandante Marcos they talk of popular empowerment and eroding the power of the state. ★

Temporary autonomous zones

The PGA favour the creation of "temporary autonomous zones" – streets parties, guerrilla gardens – within which people can become empowered or inspired.

Yet they beg the question, how do we make them permanent? The only way is to impose a new authority against the oppressors and exploiters. We may temporarily, through skillful manipulation of other forces, hold off the enemy, but if we grant time and space for that enemy to dismantle our protection and regroup and remoralise their own forces for a counter-offensive.

The Zapatistas' struggle in the Chiapas in southern Mexico or the squatters' movements in Western Europe and North America can lead to democratic experiments with alternative lifestyles and societal structures. But they cannot survive as liberation zones in a sea of capitalism – especially if they lower their sights and begin to see this stage as their endgame.

Marxists refuse to lower our sights. We believe that individual freedom is impossible without the abolition of classes. Class society fragments and distorts the individual personality, forcing us to live our lives as members of one class or another. That is why our goal must be to liberate the whole of humanity through bringing the class struggle to its conclusion. For one to be free we must all be free!

Anarchism at best sees the class struggle as only a tactic, not the motor force of history. This makes it prone to reformist solutions. It will not seek to establish a workers' state in alliance with the other oppressed classes because this will, it says, lead to a new exploitative society. So it is forced to seek autonomy within the existing order.

If this means signing agreements with the Mexican government which leave the multinationals and bourgeois institutions in control of the rest of the country, so it must be. If it means living in a communal squat-cum-social centre while Berlosconi and a bunch of semi- and not so semi-fascists grab the reins of Italian government,then that is how it has to be.

The international labour movement

Globalisation is radicalising not only youth but also trade unionists who realise that restricting themselves to action within the nation-state is totally inadequate when facing global employers. Important sections of trade union movement – both in the third in the first worlds have joined the movement – usually the rank and file activists and local organisations.

But even the official leaderships have occasionally been willing to take to the streets and to build more active links with unions abroad. The US United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers allied itself with the independent Mexican union, the FAT (Authentic Labour Front), to organise workers in both countries. The United Steelworkers build international solidarity networks with unions in Europe.

Since the election of John Sweeney as its chief in 1995, even the AFL-CIO has been willing to give cautious nominal support to mobilisations, from Seattle to Prague, aimed at pressurising the international financial institutions and the big corporations. It also supported Jubilee 2000's campaign to cancel the debt for the most severely affected countries.

Of course this support is largely based on protectionism. As a result the AFL-CIO concentrated enormous resources on its campaign to keep China out of the WTO "because of its human rights violations, sweatshops, imprisonment of union activists". To do this it was willing to link up with right-wing anti-communist Republicans.

Teamsters were to the forefront in anti-WTO mobilisations, famously the "Teamster-Turtle" alliance in Seattle. An ecological organisation – Earth Island Institute – had issued 500 sea turtle costumes to marchers because the WTO had ruled that the US Endangered Species Act was a barrier to free trade and had to be rescinded.

On the first of five days of demonstrations 2,000 young marchers were joined by Steelworkers and Longshoreman (dockers). One placard they carried read; "Teamsters and Turtles. Together at last!"

Seattle was put under a state of civic emergency. Police attacked non-violent demonstrators with tear gas, pepper spray, volleys of rubber bullets, concussion grenades, and merciless beatings with riot batons. Yet the street fighters held the streets long enough to cause the WTO to cancel its first day.

The next day a 30-40,000 strong trade union march led away from the convention centre by the AFL-CIO leaders when the militant demonstrators were confronting the cops. No windows were smashed until six hours after the police had started using extreme violence against unarmed and unprotected demonstrators. Eventually several contingents of trade unionists – Steelworkers, Electrical workers and Longshoremen - broke away from the "peaceful" march and joined the "rioters". It was of course the police who were "rioting."

Eventually in Europe too, despite the presence of Social Democrats and Labour governments in 12 countries, the European Trade Union Council felt obliged to mobilise 80,000 workers in Nice to press for Labour and social rights. But they did so on the day before the Eurosummit began and transported most of the workers out of Nice the day before 5,000 strong the militant demo on D7 which tried, unsuccessfully, to besiege the summit.

Why are the union leaders obliged to take some action, or at least to condemn the rise of corporate power and the demolition of controls? Certainly these bureaucracies have no wish to lead their memberships into an anti-capitalist movement. From Seattle to Nice they did their utmost to keep them separate from the more radical youth seeking to besiege and if possible close down these conferences.

Because globalisation is seen by their members as the key force in lowering their wages and undermining job security. Throughout the first half of the 1990s the corporations and their media, governments, both neoliberal and "third way", all joined in the chorus that such concepts as "full employment", "job security", state pensions and "free" healthcare were now things of the past.

Insecurity and "risk" was proclaimed as the inescapable nature of modern, global capitalism. Competition for investment forced corporations and states to offer the best possible environment for profit making.

All taxes on profit to pay for social provision had to be cut to the bone. "Shareholder value" – the bottom line – made the post war compact between capital and labour simply unsustainable. In the early nineties it was the vision of entire factories, even industries, being whisked away to East Asia (or Eastern Europe) that was used to intimidate workers.

Thus today's widespread fear and hatred of globalisation are the product of a decade or more of hard experience. This is true not only in western Europe and North America but also in the former Communist states and the Third World – indeed in all countries that followed the neoliberal injunctions and opened up and sold out their statified or protected economies.

Kim Moody, author of Workers in a Lean World (1997) comments that "By the 1990s it was enough to utter the word 'globalisation' to obtain the submission of many workers' unions, or even nations to the needs of capital". In the United States the unionisation rate among US workers in private industry which had risen to over 30% in the 1950s by 1996 was down to 10.2 percent – about the level of 1930.

Quebec April 2001: Seattle PLUS

Quebec showed the way in April 2001. Perhaps as many as 80,000 people took part in three days of militant action and demonstrations. Around 11,000 took part in direct action on 20 April., and 70,000 on the main trade union march on 21st, organised by the Canadian Labour Congress and an alliance of US and Latin American Unions, plus popular organisations and NGOs.

Hundreds of yards of the concrete and steel mesh - dubbed the "wall of shame" - were pulled down in three days of repeated assaults. Thousands of workers went from the official "peaceful" march to participate in the confrontation around the perimeter fence of the conference. Over 400 people were arrested. Eyewitnesses said a huge cloud of teargas and smoke hung over the city.

Truly this was Seattle PLUS. It saw a unity of the forces of young anti-capitalist protesters with the most militant elements of organised labour on a larger scale than in Seattle. As such it gave an enormous boost to the growing global movement.

Carol Phillips, CAW International Director said. "In the next demonstrations our members are demanding a far more militant response than the peaceful march away from the fence We will be looking at the direct action, non-violent methods of the youth movement and offering training to our members."

Quebec showed that an alliance of trade unionists, the Marxist "far left', the anarchists of both the Black Bloc and the NVDA variety can work together against a common enemy.

The key task is to draw in more and more and more organised workers, - workers who know that trade liberalisation will be used to slash their wage levels and social rights, break their union organisation. The answer is international solidarity, not protectionism or immigration controls for the first world.

Bolivian workers and peasants fight against privatisation

Bolivia has been under the direct control of the IMF since 1985. It has been subjected to the full range of neoliberal "experiments" with no success in terms of development. On the contrary it has seen its industries decimated. In September 1998 it received an IMF loan for US$138 million, which set out "plans to privatise all remaining public enterprises", including the water industry.

In February 2000, the IMF granted another US$46.1 million loan in addition to US$1.3 billion in debt relief under the Enhanced HIPC Initiative. These are granted on the strict condition of Bolivia's continued "progress in the implementation of structural reforms."

In December 1999 "progress" led to water prices in Cochabamba, Bolivia's third largest city, rising by as much as 200 per cent. In a city where the minimum wage is less than $100 per month, many families were hit with increases of $20 per month and more.

Cochabamba's public water system was sold to a private corporation (Aguas del Tunari), owned by International Water Limited. It turns out that the main financial power behind that water corporation in the Bechtel Corporation, based in San Francisco

In January, an alliance of factory workers, farmers, students and environmentalists, known as La Coordinadora, led a massive protest these measures. After the protesters shut down the city for four days, the Government promises to reverse the rate increase. La Coordinadora exposed the contract and the finances behind the water company's new owners; it emerged that foreign investors paid the government less than $20,000 for a water system worth millions!

But in February 2000 the Government announced that could not fulfil its promises due to the IMF conditions. More than 1,000 protesters again took to the streets and were confronted by a similar number of riot police and soldiers, who dispersed them with baton charges and tear gas.

More than 175 people were injured and two were blinded. The government again promised a price freeze until November when they promised to re-open negotiations.

Yet the water prices were not lowered. In April, enraged by the governments series of broken promises, protesters took to the streets once more. But this time they were joined by more than 1,000 rural peasants fighting the privatisation of rural water supplies.

Protesters blocked roads and fighting erupted when police tried to forcefully clear them and the town hall of Cochabamba was stormed. A general strike and road blockades shut down Cochabamba - a city of half a million inhabitants.

The President, former 1970s dictator Hugo Banzer, declared a state of emergency, restricting civil liberties. Protest leaders were arrested and rubber bullets replaced by real ones. Eight people were killed, including two farmers, two soldiers, one police officer and three protesters. Bolivian television showed an army captain firing into an unarmed crowd.

In the capital La Paz, there were also scattered protests in which 30 people were injured and 11 students arrested. In a separate incident, hundreds of police officers went on strike in the capital, demanding salary increases.

Fearing a national uprising the government hastily revoked the concession to the multinational controlling the city's water.

Jubilant, La Coordinadora leaders, announced the victory to the thousands of demonstrators, many waving the red-green-and-yellow Bolivian flag, as the bells of the city's cathedral echoed triumphantly through the city centre "We have achieved an important economic victory," Coordinadora leader Olivera told the delighted crowd.

Bolivia has set a dramatic example of how it is possible to defeat privatisation. Workers can build and organise a powerful coalition of popular forces to reject takeovers by the multinationals.

But as the 1990s progressed unions began to realise that they had to reverse this trend or they might disappear altogether. The launched organising campaigns. Pioneers in this field were the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Communication Workers of America.

They began to develop an "ideology of organising" based on community-supported "contract campaigns".

Led by action teams, whose task was to build alliances with local communities, college students, churches, environmental groups, etc, they set out to conduct courses for their members and lead recognition disputes.

Another key sectors has been the telecommunications workers mentioned above. In 1998 Bell Atlantic workers in New York and New England, the Middle Atlantic part of the same company and workers at US West all struck to redress grievances that had accumulated as the industry's major unionised employers merged, reorganised, took on new services, and cut costs in an increasingly competitive industry.

The major union, the Communications Workers of America (400,000 members), deployed a number of mobilisation and public outreach techniques it had been working on the since late 1980s.

Moody names this trend "social movement unionism." Part of the fruits of the new alliances was the anti-sweatshop campaigns which drew students, trade unionists in the USA and in the third world, NGOs and churches together.

In 1998 the AFL-CIO reported modest growth – somewhat over 100,000 in 1998, taking its total membership from 16.1 to 16.2 million. California alone accounted for 87,000 of this net increase of union members.

Although the levels of unionisation remained pitifully low compared with Europe, a real increase in the number of struggles occurred in the mid-to-late 1990s. 1998 saw more days lost through strikes in the USA than in any year since 1989 (over 2 million).

Another important factor is the rise of the more recent waves of immigrants from central and south America within the US workforce and, increasingly on the militant edge of the labour movement.

There are now 10 million Latino wage and salary workers, mainly, in the lower waged industrial and service sector (subcontracting and outsourced sector). Though these industries are far from traditional strongholds of labour it should not be assumed that they cannot be organised – only that they cannot be organised by the old bureaucratic methods.

The Latino workers have assets that many other workers no longer have. They have concentrated, mobilisable support in their communities, their pro-capitalist/pro-imperialist prejudices are far less ingrained that most US workers because of their sympathy for their original homelands in the south ("anti-imperialism") and their more tenuous links (if any) with the Democrats or Republicans.

June 1996 also saw the foundation of the US Labor Party. But so far it has not challenged the Democrats by actually fielding "independent labor" candidates. In all probability it would require a major influx of newly politicised militants into the unions and/or a major crisis in the AFL-CIO's rela-

tions with the Democrats to give them the courage to do so.

However Al Gore's "defeat", the strident anti-union stance of Bush, and the threats to of the oncoming cyclical crisis – if combined with the anti-capitalist ethos of the new movement create the best conditions in generation to bring about a major break between national unions and the democrats.

But in both the USA and Canada the revival of workers' struggles was due in no small part to the changes brought about by the effects of the NAFTA free trade bloc.

In Ontario, the industrial centre of Canada there was a sort of rolling general strike in 1996-7- one million on strike and 300,000 on the streets-a resistance to the effects of joining NAFTA (anti-union laws, cuts in the Medicare and other public services). The Canadian postal workers union is a long time left dominated union and has even affiliated to People's Global Action.

The threat of globalisation and the supposed weakening of the nation-state has even pushed some national union federations to proclaim the need for a mew internationalism in trade unionism. Probably the most advanced form of this is COSATU.

The South African union federation now advocates putting more resources into international work,

It advocates the establishment of world company councils, the strengthening the existing ICFTU International Trade Secretariats so that they can undertake negotiations with big TNCs in sectors like motor, petroleum, food and pharmaceuticals.

They also advocate tripartite negotiations on a world or regional scale to generalise labour standards like European Union Social Charter and action against repressive governments.

All this is bureaucratic and based on the well worn principles of class collaboration but it indicates the direction of developments. Militants must fight to make these links democratic and the strategy a militant one.

From the AFL-CIO to COSATU the unions are holding conferences on globalisation and calculating how to negotiate with/ pressurise the MNC'c to prevent them shifting production to low wage non-union countries. AFL-CIO unions are concentrating on union links in Mexico, central and South America. Protectionism is seen as a declining option for them.

The idea of international links and even action has been boosted by e-communication which means the individual worker or workplace organisation does not have to go through the official channels and the international department of their own union.

Without succumbing to the confused semi-reformist ideas of "social movement unionism" or illusions in the internet as solving all workers problems— action in the factories offices and schools, in the streets is central and will remain central—the move to common actions against multinational employers is immensely progressive.

This trend to international organisation is creating newly favourable conditions for renewing the national labour movements that have suffered heavy defeats and declines. It is the task of revolutionaries to give a conscious and militant expression to this kind of solidarity between workers in countries as different as Colombia, Germany Russia and Indonesia.

A community of class interest can exist between workers in the imperialist countries, trying to save their jobs being lost to cheap labour destinations and workers in those countries with staggeringly low wages, brutally repression against their trade union activists, etc.

Providing, that is, the unions in the imperialist countries drop completely the protectionist slogans (embargoes, high tariffs etc.) and provide financial aid without strings to worker's fighting for union rights and higher wages in the semi-colonies and in the former Stalinist states.

Only on this actively internationalist basis can links can be forged within the MNC's different local enterprises or between workers of similar industries when they are called to scab on or undermine one another's struggles. These links can and must be built, on a united front basis, not only between official trade unions but also and most importantly at workplace level, between ordinary rank and file workers.

But to do this effectively it must be around a clear anti-capitalist strategy. This must based on concerted multinational action against an MNC for jobs and wages of course but also for workers control and socialisation.

This will require an extension of co-ordinated tactics aimed at the production links and the marketing systems of the MNCs,

It will demand the development of transitional demands, of workers control and inspection, of workers planning to meet these new conditions. And for all this something more is needed than rank and filism or syndicalism.

That something is a political force active in the unions around a revolutionary action programme, re-elaborated to meet the needs of globalisation, able to confront, oust and dissolve the bureaucracy during the struggles that lie ahead; in short a revolutionary international party.

But the immediate watchword, in the anti-capitalist movement and in the unions, must be to orient the former to winning mass working class support for its struggles and at the same time transforming the latter into a strong anti-capitalist stance once again. ★

Argentina: four general strikes in one year

Argentina has experienced four general strikes in the course of a year of resistance against the dictates of the IMF. A wave of strikes hit the government of Fernando De La Rua shortly after it was elected in December 1999.

In March 2000, the IMF offered a US$7.2 billion three-year stand-by credit on condition that the government continued with severe fiscal and structural reforms. Within the agreement, there was a specific reference to the importance of "the proposed labour market reform and deregulation", and to "the further reform of the social security system". In short, attacks on workers' rights and more austerity.

The package of labour reforms was finally passed by a patently bribed Senate on 27 April 2000. But thousands of demonstrators massed outside, leading to clashes with the police. On 5 May the first one day general strike was called by the unions.

But this was accompanied by militant demonstrations, road blockages and demonstrations by the unemployed. Especially in Tartagal and Mosconi, initially peaceful blockades erupted into violence after demands for unemployment benefits and severance pay were rejected by local officials who said they had no money to pay for them.

The protesters set fire to public buildings before being subdued by armed riot police, leaving dozens injured and many arrested. Rural communities in a similar situation blocked roads and organised protests. On 31 May protests against the IMF austerity plan, again culminated in 80,000 people taking to the streets. This was provoked by a visit of IMF economists to inspect the government's record of compliance.

Protesters accused the IMF of imposing a "financial dictatorship" and threatened to refuse to pay taxes, which have jumped from 8 to 22 per cent.

On 9 June 2000 a second 24-hour general strike was supported by more than 7.2 million workers. De la Rua claimed the government simply had no choice but to meet IMF targets.

The Argentine government duly went on to slash $938 million from planned expenditures to help control its runaway fiscal deficit, including $590 million from public sector wages. On 29 August last year teachers and scientists went on a one-day strike to protest against a 12 per cent cut in their salaries.

On 23-24 November Argentine unions launched a third - this time a 36 hour - general strike against the IMF package. Demonstrators blocked bridges and roads across Argentina, drawing in the unemployed and rural communities on a massive scale. Roadblocks were set up in Buenos Aires and other parts of the country to disrupt transport.

In March 2001 another major crisis erupted. The finance minister Ricardo Lopez Murphy produced another austerity plan that called for $2.2 billion cuts from the state budget by attacking mainly education, the public sector and the regional economies. This time the explosion was immediate. On 20 March students occupied the university campuses, the unemployed marched on the centres of the cities or set up roadblocks, teachers went out on strike and on 21 the unions called a general strike.

The crisis was only defused by the resignation of Lopez Murphy and the ignominious withdrawal of his plan.

Another reformism is the publicists

Susan George

George has been a prominent critic of the IMF/WB since 1970s. Her big achievement has been " taking debt off the financial pages and onto the political agenda". She began to spotlight issues and causes in the 1970s that were later taken up by thousands of activists.

She makes many strong points in her work on debt which were to become axioms of the anti-capitalist movement:

- Debt is "a mechanism by which the poor in the poor countries can be forced to finance the rich in the rich countries." But it is also a mechanism by which a handful of countries control the economic structure and development of the vast majority of other countries to make them adopt trade and production patterns that serve the big Transnational companies (TNCs).
- Debt causes resources to be taken away from poverty reduction and health and education programmes, which has led to seven million extra children's-deaths a year.
- George understands the causes of debt to lie in the determination of private banks to foist loans on Third World governments in order to make profits - against development needs of the poor in those countries.
- She has a clear understanding of the role played by the Third World's ruling class in facilitating this and themselves drawing immense wealth from it while causing misery for the population.
- She shows how the IMF/World Bank policies have directly aided the big banks of the USA. "The IMF is a funnel for channelling public money to private banks," she writes.
- George shows the way in which Third World debt rebounds back on the west in the form of drugs wars, mafia underworld violence and refugee smuggling.

She is also against partial solutions to the debt crisis, such as the like HIPC debt-relief scheme that has been in force since 1996, rightly seeing in this a device to help the commercial banks write off bad loans rather than help reduce poverty.

Recently George has turned to a more general critique of globalisation. In *The Lugano Report* (1999) she uses satire. George introduces a "report", supposedly written by a multidisciplinary working party appointed by world leaders and the multinational corporations. Its aim is to address the problems which will face capitalism in the 21st century.

Population growth, they decide, will lead to massive upheavals because capitalism will not be able either to stem this growth or satisfy the basic needs of all these people.

So they come to the view that what is needed is a massive population reduction programme. Fortunately, the methods and measures needed for this just happen to be precisely the results of globalisation itself such as the soaring death rates in countries subject to structural adjustment programmes. Susan George calls this "the war of a system against humanity".

At the end of the book she offers an alternative set of solutions. These are a crisp summation of the programme offered by the radical wing of the NGOs - which is at the same time the reformist wing of the "anti-capitalist movement".

George is not an anti-capitalist and does not claim to support a vision of society in which non-market socialist or communitarian methods dominate. Instead she wants to reform and reforge the global institutions of finance.

Because of that, she has to appeal in two directions. She wants to see cross-class activist alliances of citizens and NGOs to pressure for change:

"The answer – the only answer – lies in the citizen's movement, also known as social movements, or NGOs, or civil society, which has a difficult but not impossible task. This movement is international and it is broadly based. The different national coalitions that make up the citizens' movement are workers and unions, small farmers and their organisations, consumers, environmentalists, students, women, the unemployed, indigenous people, religious believers."

But at the same time she appeals to the self-interest of the banking community. In the 1980s she had illusions in the ability of Third World leaders (such as Alan Garcia in Peru) to lead the fight against the banks by unilaterally capping debt payments or repudiating debt altogether. But the failure of Garcia and others to win led her to be wary of proposing unilateral debt repudiation by single governments. Since then, she has advocated a bargain between governments and the banks.

She outlines a three pronged approach - "the 3-D solution: debt, development and democracy." On debt she wants "creative reimbursement", by which the principal and interest is paid back to the banks over longer time in local currency and into a development fund in which local people have influence.

But George does not envisage a wholly different system. And there is no Plan B for what happens if the billionaires reject a new solution for the Third World? Because she sees the road of reform as open she sees protest as sufficient means to reach this goal.

Democracy will take care of it if enough people protest, she thinks. But if the corporations and the big banks are as powerful and as ruthless as George and the other anti-globalisation publicists describe then a heterogeneous "people's movement" will not prove powerful enough for this task.

But no amount of rational finger wagging at the major corporations or the IMF to make them see sense will make them change course. They will quite literally drag the world into the abyss, themselves included.

Debt is not divorced from other issues of exploitation and oppression. As a result the solution does not lie in an isolated strategy to solve the debt crisis alone but must embrace a programme that takes ownership of factories away from the MNCs, ousts the compliant and corrupt rulers.

Against her utopian vision, we argue that the very foundations of the system must be destroyed to bring down the structure of exploitation and oppression. This means mobilising the the urban and rural workers, on whose systemic exploitation global capitalism rests. ★



Susan George: Born in the United States she is now a French citizen, associate director of the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam, and president of the Observatoire de la Mondialisation in Paris. She is also a vice-president of ATTAC France (Association for Taxation of Financial Transaction to Aid Citizens). Her nine books include *How the Other Half Dies* (1976), *Ill Fares the Land* (1984), *The Debt Boomerang - Faith and Credit: the World Bank's Secular Empire* (1994), and most recently, *The Lugano Report: On Preserving Capitalism in the 21st Century*, (1999).

s possible?

s of the anti-globalisation movement

David C Korten

In *When Corporations Rule the World* Korten describes how the processes of corporate expansion, deregulation, and privatisation – unleashed by Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s – led to a transfer of power from most of the world's national governments to global financial institutions and corporations.

The results, he predicted, would be an increasing social crisis where a tiny minority become wealthy beyond their wildest dreams whilst billions live in poverty and insecurity, and where the critical life support systems of the planet fail.

When Corporations Rule the World is divided into six sections. The first section, "Cowboys in a Spaceship", presents evidence that the present direction of world economy is "unsustainable". The basis of this is that there are in his view severe environmental limits to growth.

The second section, "Contest for Sovereignty", chronicles the rise of corporate power in the United States at the expense of democracy. The third section, "Corporate Colonialism", explores the impact of this corporate power on the world with the exploitation and weakening of the countries of the global south.

The fourth section, "A Rogue Financial System", outlines the global "casino economy's" of share and currency speculation. In the fifth section, "No Place for People", Korten looks at the human costs of corporate power.

The final section, "Reclaiming Our Power", presents his alternatives to the current system. Self-avowedly conservative, in his general outlook Korten attacks centralisation, whether in corporations or in the former Stalinist states. Korten has ultimate faith in the market as the co-ordinator of human activities, in its morality and equity – with one proviso: that economic units must stay small and markets remain fundamentally local. He proposes abolishing the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation, but suggests replacing them by United Nations bodies such as UNCTAD.

Korten defines himself consciously as a populist which he defines thus;

"I believe it important to be clear about what it means to be a populist. True populism, as Ronnie Dugger reminds us, rejects both big government and big business. It is neither left nor right. It is at once both progressive and conservative. In other words, our natural constituency is the mainstream of the American electorate that believes in local control and a market economy and is suspicious of both big business and big government."

Korten's model of what society's economic basis should be is an idealised version of Adam Smith no less! He says the choice is between,

"a true market economy comprised of small local businesses as envisioned by Adam Smith and an economy centrally planned and controlled by distant, unaccountable megacorporations."

He goes on :

"Part of our task is to rebuild local economies and delink them from the dependent system of global finance and corporate control."

The methods Korten sees for doing this are "local banking and local currencies, through community organic agriculture initiatives, holistic health practices, cooperatives and worker-owned firms, buying local merchants, community forestry, living simply, recycling local waste, using renewable energy and promotion of pedestrian and bicycle transport."

The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism, a sequel to *When Corporations Rule the World* describes this vision in great – indeed in utopian detail.

Korten's populism means that he has no time at all for a politics based on the class struggle. The unions, whose struggles he certainly does support, are simply to be a part of a broad popular alliance. He sees the struggle as between "the giant corporations" and "the people" or "civil society". Marxism he sees as an outmoded nineteenth and twentieth century phenomenon.

"Viewed through the lens of twentieth century leftist analysis the global democracy movement is a classic conflict between the working classes and the capitalist classes to be resolved through political struggle grounded in class consciousness. Yet the global democracy movement is more readily defined by shared values and world view than by class."

Who are the key players in the conflict for Korten?

"One is the force of corporate globalisation being advanced by an alliance between the world's largest corporations and most powerful governments . . . The second force is the global democracy movement advanced by a planetary citizen alliance known as global civil society."

What Korten ignores is the work of Marx who demonstrated and predicted the laws of capitalism that made the growth of monopolies inevitable. All attempts to stop or reverse this on the basis of the market and private property in the large-scale means of production have proved a total failure. This includes those promoted by the early US Populists in the 1890s and early 1900s – trust-busting and cheap money schemes.

The reasons why "one capitalist devours many" were explained by Marx in Capital. It lies not in faults in the market or in the credit system, in unfair competition, though that is how it appears to the bankrupted small businessman or woman.

The enormous scale and international scope of industries, commercial undertakings and banking is progressive in that it is a step to a planned world economy.

All the negative features – amply described by Korten – in capitalist monopoly are related not to sheer size or

David C Korten is the founder and president of The People-Centered Development Forum (PCDForum) based in New York. PCDForum is a research, educational and campaigning NGO which works closely with the Asian NGO Coalition. He was for many years an academic specialist on alternative development theory - a former faculty member at Harvard, staff member of the Ford Foundation, and advisor to the United States Agency for International Development. He also spent 14 years working in Southeast Asia. This background enabled Korten to become one of the most prominent anti-globalisation writers of the 1990s - one who expresses the viewpoint of the more radical NGOs. His 1995 book, *When Corporations Rule the World,* was one of the seminal works of the new movement. It reached a huge audience, first in the United States and then internationally, having now been translated into 13 languages.
(All quotes from *Populists Distrust Corporations* and *Progressive Populist,* January 1996)

to global spread but to private ownership.

Yet Korten wants to save private ownership. He wants to create a tiger without teeth and claws. That is why his schema is a backward looking utopia. It is why his programme is petty bourgeois in the purest sense of the word.

Korten may not recognise the force of the Marxist analysis of class yet it can recognise him. Likewise his "civil society" is made up of classes, all the classes – minus the 474 billionaires in the world. Such an alliance – which includes petty and not so petty exploiters in its ranks – will prove completely incapable of taking on the megacorporations. The financiers and the CEOs do not exist suspended in mid-air.

They lead all the other smaller exploiters and a big proportion of the privileged middles classes too.

The only solid leader of an alternative alliance of the poor and exploited of cities, towns and countryside in the "three worlds" is the wage earners – the working class.

The working class can and does assemble around it, draw into its fighting ranks individual idealists of all classes, mass organisations of the rural and urban poor and the small working farmers.

This alliance is in a real sense "the people". But to be effective it must exclude the bourgeoisie – even the smaller and medium sized bourgeoisie.

If it does not, if it concedes to them the preservation of private property, (and without this concession it will not play ball) then the "lower classes" are bound to be cheated, demoralised and defeated.

This is the lesson of the people's fronts – generated by the Stalinists and the left social democrats between the 1930s (Spain) and the 1970s (Chile).

More usually however it simply leads to class collaboration where the workers and small farmers give their votes and the bourgeois politicians rule for the big corporations.

That is why Populism in the United States ultimately provided the votes for the Democrats.

Korten's populist programme – if it were to dominate the US anticapitalist movement – would simply repeat this story. What is needed is a class analysis and class independence. ★

George Monbiot



George Monbiot is a journalist on the *Guardian* in Britain who has written a regular column which exposes big corporations and has solidarised with the developing anti-capitalist movement. In a book - *The Captive state: the corporate takeover of Britain*(2000, he has focussed criticism on Tony Blair's New labour, showing how for all the talk about a "Third Way" its policies essentially continue the neoliberal agenda of Thatcher and Major.

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) was developed by the Tories as a means of financing large road, hospital and school building schemes without either burdening the treasury with debt or limiting the scope for tax cuts for the rich and the upper middle classes. At the same time it hands over areas of the public sector to private companies to extract profit from.

Monbiot shows in his book *The Captive State,* by a mass of examples, how this works. The story of the Skye Bridge in Scotland , one of the first PFI deals is a good example. Islanders on Skye used to rely on a 24-hour ferry service for getting to and from the mainland. The service was run down, starved of public investment until the proposal for a privately financed toll bridge seemed very attractive.

Once agreed, however, the terms began to change. Firstly, the bridge cost £25m to build and the private consortium received at least £16m in subsidies from the government. The private companies in fact only invested £500,000 of their own money.

Then the toll was raised to £5.60 each way, making it the most expensive toll road per metre in the world and far more expensive than the government ferry, which stopped running a week after the bridge was opened, thus giving the toll bridge a monopoly. Finally, the consortium was guaranteed the toll would last 18 years, bringing in an estimated £37m.

The people of Coventry lost their easily accessible city centre hospital and got a new one on the edge of town courtesy of PFI. This reduced the number of beds by 25 per cent and the number of staff by 20 per cent. Of course, the city centre site can now be redeveloped at a huge profit. The new hospital will cost far more than the residents' preferred option of renovating their two hospitals: renovation would cost £30m; the PFI scheme will cost £36m a year for the next few decades plus £25m for new equipment.

As with PFI, many of the details of consultation exercises and planning applications are shrouded in secrecy; "commercial confidentiality" weighs heavier in the scales of New Britain than public accountability.

This is well illustrated by the story of the victory of Monsanto and the invasion of genetically modified organisms. Despite the fact that millions of consumers are concerned about the levels of toxins that may be in foods containing GMOs as well as the effect GM food production may have on the environment, it is illegal for any retailer to label foods as such.

But the real scandal of GMOs is the way governments, both here and in the USA, have colluded with multinationals like Monsanto, AgrEvo and Zeneca to force their products on the population.

These companies have gained an absolute majority on boards such as the Food and Drug Administration in the US and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council in the UK. As a result, the very bodies which are supposed to regulate corporations, defend the public interest and direct public resources to areas which will benefit society as a whole have been taken over by those same corporations.

Monbiot dedicates a whole of chapter to what he calls a "Fat Cat's Directory" – a table of those who have benefited from New Labours opening up of the public sector to private greed.!

One of the strengths of *The Captive State* is that, while focusing on Britain, it also demonstrates Britain's role within globalisation. New Britain has played a key role in pressurising the European Union towards policies of the United States on free trade at the expense of health and safety regulation, environmental concerns and trade union rights.

Britain was the EU member that supported the Multilateral Agreement on Investment most vigorously - a treaty which would have allowed corporations to override government legislation and force the privatisation of the NHS and the education system.

But the weakest aspect of *The Captive State* is its concluding chapter, where Monbiot outlines a strategy for fighting back against what he describes as a creeping corporate coup d'état – the capture of the state by the multinational corporations.

The recipe is simply a series of reversals of policy: abandon PFI, cut the links between the huge corporations and government and limit the size of the biggest monopolies by breaking them up and cutting their executives' pay packets.

Monbiot counterposes to big monopolies (bad) – not social ownership but small capitalist companies (good).

This is plain wrong as any active trade unionist could tell him. Small businesses are often among the worst anti-trade union firms and oversee some of the worst working practices even if they may have less direct leverage on government than the multinationals.

And as for the old US populist policy of Trust Busting (breaking up monopo-

lies), Monbiot faces a dilemma. In the new high tech sector Bill gates of Microsoft was once – not so long ago either – just another one of these small entrepreneurs. Through the inner laws of the market, it is now a giant corporation. To break it up into small pieces – as its rivals are trying to do today, will only lead to a rerun of history, the emergence of a new mega-corporation – in all probability one of Gate's rivals.

If there is constant government intervention to limit the scale of operation then other results emerge: inefficiencies are locked in, trade with foreign countries has to be restricted or prevented in order for smaller companies not to lose out, investment would go elsewhere etc. etc. It is not the scale of operation but the form of ownership that is decisive. Either you have an economy run for profit or one run for human need. You cannot have both!

Similarly, Monbiot's idea that the state was once fine and can be returned to being a disinterested judge, presiding impartially over the economic affairs of all its citizens, is to ignores the nature and history of the state.

The state: executive, legislature, the civil service, the courts, police, prison service and the military – are intrinsically an instrument of the ruling class. The dominance of capital comes not only from outside the state – from corporations – but from inside it as well, from its very bureaucratic-hierarchical structure, and from the elected and unelected servants of capital who staff it at every level.

Monbiot, like Klein and George was happy to associate himself with the anit-globalisation movement while it was still relatively "fluffy". But as violence of the state against the growing movement has provoked a more and more violent response from the protestors Monbiot is only too ready to denounce violence "on all sides".

The demonstrations and action in Britain on May Day were prefigured for weeks beforehand with a steady police orchestrated propaganda campaign warning of plannned violence by the activists. It was designed to criminalise political protest and prepare the public for when the police attacked the marchers.

On May Day itself, before any actions had taken place Monbiot joined in this chorus of baiting, claiming that "Violent activists are stealing the political space whihc peaceful protestors have worked hard to secure. They are squandering the goodwill we have accumulated. . . Like the police they compress our protests...".

He even advocates disarmingthe protestors facing the police.

This is the clearest expression of the differences between the reformist anti-globalisers and the anti-capitalists. The latter recognise that the bosses' state is the source of organised violence under capitalism.

The violence of the protestors is not equal and opposite. It is often provoked by the state and its agents in order to discredit opposition. More often it is a legitimate response to planned aggression by the police.

Sometimes it is dysfunctinal and diversionary, but only because those who carry it out fail to recognise that the organised violence of the state will only be deterred by the mass organised violence of workers.

Professional middle-class whingers like Monbiot only reveal their illusions in the state by complaining of violence within the protest movement. Does he really believe that the state – held capitive by the big corporations – will peacefully relinquish its grip? ★

Kevin Danaher

Danaher is an anti-capitalist activist as well as a anti-globalisation publicist being present at all the major mobilisations and discussing tactical and organisational questions associated with the movement.

Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach's *Globalize this! The Battle against the World Trade Organisation* really hit an international audience in the wake of Seattle. It is a set of essays by prominent anti-globalisation activists. Danaher's introduction to the book starts with a dramatic proclamation, "November 30th 1999 marked a turning point in history". It provides accounts of the Seattle protest at the World Trade Organisation in November 1999 and follows this up with contributions on the debates within the Seattle movement.

It gives an excellent picture of part of the American movement which brought about Seattle. Organisers like the Direct Action Network (DAN), a broad coalition committed to non-violent direct action planned to halt the conference by bringing ecologists, NGO supporters, indigenous organisations, women's group etc. They were enormously aided in this by the fact that the American trade union federation, the AFL-CIO, was also organising for Seattle, for its own demonstration and rally. Thousands of rank and file teamsters, postal workers,

Kevin Danaher is the editor of a series of popular books and collections of essays which exposed the main targets for the anticapitalist movement, which developed first in the United States and which reflect its tactical and programmatic concerns and debates. He is co-founder of Global Exchange. *50 Years is enough: the case against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund* (1994) and *Corporations Are Gonna Get Your Mama; Globalisation and the Downsizing of the American Dream* (1996) gained a wide readership in North America and then in the wider English speaking world. Short essays by prominent writers and activists outlined the crimes of the corporations and the international economic institutions.



machinists, refused to follow their leaders away from the confrontations to a rally elsewhere in the city and joined the blockade.

Inside the conference the Third World governments for the first time refused to bow to Clinton's charm offensive or threats and the conference collapsed. Danaher does note the radicalisation of the unions, due to their organising drives and the emergence of "social movement" or "community-based trade unionism". But the book gives little emphasis to the Teamster-Turtle alliance.

The key lesson that the organised workers have to be won to the anticapitalist movement, first through their rank and file activists, receives no mention. Instead the pattern of affinity groups/clusters/ spokes councils/ consensus decision making, and Non-Violent Direct Action are described in essays by Anarcha-feminist witch Starhawk.

Decisions in the organising committees were taken by consensus, "Minority views were heeded and included. The basic rules shared by all were: no violence, physical or verbal, no weapons, no drugs or alcohol". The participants were organised into units called "affinity groups" which were empowered to decide how they would participate in the blockade. Affinity groups themselves were organised into smaller "clusters" to take on specific tasks.

Co-ordination was carried out at "spokescouncil meetings" where affinity groups sent along representatives "empowered to speak for them". Paul Hawken, in one of the essays, describes how this worked out on the day:

"Protesters had divided the streets around the convention centre into 13 sections and individual groups and clusters were responsible for holding these sections. There were also 'flying groups' that moved at will from section to section, backing up groups under attack as needed."

The blockade was effective, but the revenge was swift. The demonstrators were subjected to sustained violence from the police, they were tear-gassed, hit with batons, shot at with rubber bullets, squirted with pepper spray and driven away from the Convention Centre. One protester describes what happened after being tear-gassed:

"We all sat down, hunched over, and locked arms tightly. By then the tear gas was so strong our eyes could not open. One by one our heads were jerked back from the rear, and pepper was sprayed directly into each eye. It was very professional. Like a hair spray from a stylist. Sssst. Sssst."

The question of violence on the day provoked the most disunity amongst the coalition at Seattle. The media concentrated on "anarchist violence" to deflect from, or justify, the massive police violence against the demonstrators. The "civil disobedience" strategists condemned the anarchist black bloc because of this.

Fortunately most of the demonstrators, who included thousands of trade unionists used to defending themselves, followed neither the pacifists, nor the window-breaking anarchists. Barricades of burning "dumpsters" hindered the police charges, while tear gas canisters were hurled back to police lines as fast as they were fired. For socialists, "self-defence is no offence" and it should be organised, as far as possible in advance.

The weakness of this book is most clearly seen its last section on "ways to restructure the global economy". It calls for reform of international institutions like the WTO, the World Bank and the international financial system. Predictably the Tobin Tax, a tariff of less than half a percent on foreign exchange deals, is peddled as a solution to foreign exchange speculation and international economic crisis.

Another essay suggests that the crisis in the WTO should be a signal for the United Nations' Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to reassert itself, and for the "South to push for the creation of institutions which truly serve its interests", a proposal that presumes that the workers and peasants of the "South" have the same interests as the rulers and local exploiters in these countries.

"Ten ways to democratise the global economy" argues that corporations must be accountable to public needs and suggests that "shareholder activism is an excellent tool for challenging corporate behaviour".

It isn't. Nationalisation under workers' control, an alliance with the rural and urban poor and the creation of councils of delegates to lead mass struggle, the fight for a workers' and poor farmers' government, the spread of revolution internationally – THAT is the answer.

N30 in Seattle will only be a "turning point in history" if the anti-capitalist workers and youth who braved tear gas, pepper spray and rubber bullets can build on their radical methods of struggle and organisation.

This means arming themselves with a clear understanding of the nature of international capitalism and the weapons to destroy it. The weapon is revolution, not reform. ★

Naomi Klein



Naomi Klein's *No Logo*, is a chilling description of working and living conditions for Nike, Levi and Gap textile workers in the Far East.

The very firms which promote themselves in the West as champions of individualism and freedom reduce whole generations of young women in the East to abject poverty. It was a sense of injustice and outrage at such practices that encouraged North American students to start the anti-sweatshop campaign in the early 1990s.

Their relentless activism resulted in some tangible reforms, raised awareness among many thousands of youth and linked up the anti-capitalist movement with the organised working class. In the process, the students have also developed a damning critique of capitalism at the turn of the twenty-first century.

However the anti-sweatshop campaigning was not started by students. The campaigns involved human rights groups, trade unions such as the SEIU (Service Employees International Union), third-world non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community organisations such as churches.

They took on the brand name giants in the clothing and shoe industry such as Nike and Gap bringing to light the third world sweatshops that lay behind the trendy adverts and high street stores. Their actions were mostly demonstrations and consumer boycotts.

This wasn't unique to the USA – in Britain groups like Oxfam, Christian Aid and the World Development Movement were also raising the issue of sweatshop labour in the 1990s, but with no real union involvement and with much less flair and success.

Part of the reason for this difference lies in the specific situation in the US, where there is a much larger pool of immigrant labour from Latin America and South East Asia bringing sweatshop labour conditions right into the "land of opportunity". For instance, in 1995 the Department of Labour raided a barbed-wire compound in El Monte, California, where 72 Thai migrant workers were held captive and forced to work 18 hour days for $1 an hour.

Many Hispanic workers, such as the janitors in California, are actively organ-

ising unions. They are aware of the sweatshops "back at home" in El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and so on and are eager to use the union to improve conditions for their families and friends.

Coupled with this, US unions are also keen not to see their own wages and conditions undermined by direct competition (especially with Mexico, which is inside the Nafta free trade zone) with sweated labour.

In the US these campaigns culminated in the Clinton government forming the Apparel Industry Partnership (AIP) in 1996, composed of unions, consumer groups, human rights groups and the companies themselves.

This was a victory in the sense that the industry was forced to accept the idea of corporate responsibility, of the companies' accountability for the conditions under which their goods were produced. In addition the AIP was to design mechanisms to prevent the worst excesses of sweatshop labour. What it designed was the Fair Labour Association (FLA), set up in November 1998 to monitor and enforce an agreed code of conduct.

Yet this code is very weak. If enforced it would do little to improve the conditions of the workers in the sweatshops. It is voluntary: corporations monitor themselves. Lastly the corporate giants sit on the board and have a veto. And for all this they then get to sew a "no sweats" label in their clothes!

Shortly after this agreement was reached it became clear that the FLA was just a cover for business as usual, and a public relations coup for the sweatshop giants. As a result, the major unions and NGOs withdrew from the FLA. UNITE (the Union of Needle, Industrial and Textile Employees) has been in the forefront of continuing the campaign against sweatshops and linking up with the student movement.

Up till the autumn of 1997 students didn't play any distinct, organised role in this growing movement. But that summer the unions took students from the campuses, trained them as union organisers and sent them out into some of the most union-hostile areas to knock on doors, hang around outside factory gates, and argue for people to join the union.

These activists went back to campus and started the Sweat-Free Campus campaigns in 20 colleges and universities. So in the US the unions were very much the originators for this student movement.

Universities selling the rights to produce clothes with their college logo is a $2.5 billion industry in the USA. The students demanded that their university administrations take responsibility for the conditions under which the clothes bearing their logos are produced.

This meant adopting a code of conduct that the businesses would be obliged to abide by if they wanted their licenses renewed.

The movement took off in the Spring of 1998 with students on dozens of campuses organising teach-ins, demos and sit-ins. In July 1998 these campus groups formed United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS).

This has adopted four main provisions for the code: full public disclosure of factory locations, enforcement of the rights of women, independent monitoring, and a living wage. Some campus groups have added the right to organise unions.

Imaginative ways of building the campaign have included mock fashion shows, knit-ins, and bringing sweatshop workers to speak on campuses. But it is the occupations that have really done the business.

These typically begin with a march of a few hundred to the university president's office and demand that s/he sign the USAS code. If refused, a small nucleus of 20 to 30 occupy the administration block or president's office until s/he agrees to sign the code.

At the University of Arizona a march ended at the president's office demanding a commitment to the USAS code. When he refused, 35 students sat in the administration building for eight days until he finally gave in and signed the code.

At the University of Wisconsin, Madison, 30 activists went into occupation on the back of a rally of 250. It lasted five days, growing every day until it was 300-strong. The unions and students organised rallies outside in support. Within less than a week they had won three out of four of the demands.

These successful sit-ins at a handful of campuses launched USAS as a national movement. After a half-dozen sit-ins it spread to 150 campuses. As of autumn 1999, 15 universities agreed to full public disclosure of sweatshop locations and 17 agreed to living-wage provisions.

But 100 University administrations have signed up to the FLA as protection against USAS campaigns, which argues against joining the FLA. The Department of Labor met with USAS leaders in July 1999 to try and get them to support the FLA – and failed.

Now the struggle has moved on and generalised its aims, with sit-ins and protests at the Department of Labor. In October 1999 USAS organised a day of action demanding that all universities withdraw from the FLA. To make its code enforceable, USAS has developed its own monitoring organisation – the Workers Rights Commission (WRC) – with support from unions, including UNITE, and Third World human rights groups.

A campaign has begun on the campuses to force administrations to withdraw from the FLA and join the WRC. The University of Pennsylvania was the first to do so in February, followed by five more the same month.

This focus on the workers' low pay and the issue of subcontracting as a way of avoiding direct corporate responsibility has meant that these campus struggles have also begun to relate to university workers – some campaigns have added demands that all workers on campus are paid a living wage, including those employed by subcontractors. These demands have been won at John Hopkins University.

This is yet another step away from the attitude of "victims in the far away Third World" towards a clear internationalist, working class orientation. Another good offshoot has been reaching out to build anti-sweatshop groups in the local high schools.

The Seattle anti-World Trade Organisation protest was a key boost to the movement, both in terms of highlighting its existence and of making the activists already involved more militant. One of the most famous photos coming out of Seattle is a group of youth sitting down and being pepper-sprayed by a robocop – they are from a Californian anti-Gap group, mostly high school and college students.

These groups participated in Seattle, helped build it, and have been totally fired-up by the experience of it, taking that energy back into the campus campaigns, with the sit-ins and lock-downs. Most importantly it is being re-exported through the world-wide anti-globalisation movement. ★

Walden Bello

Walden Bello, executive director of Focus on the Global South, is the scourge of the IMF, World Bank and WTO. He has not only documented their record in deepening poverty, marginalisation and inequality, but refuses to have any truck with the idea that they can be reformed.

He openly advocates abolishing the World Bank and the IMF: "an institution that has made a big business out of ending poverty". He argues against NGOs being drawn into the process of reforming the IMF, World Bank and WTO. He wants to "deglobalise" the world economy, ending economic regulation and direction at a world level and proposes a series of regional institutions and pacts that would allow for national and cultural diversity to be respected.

Bello is a passionate and incisive critic of the "three sisters" and the Washington consensus. He has charted the crisis of legitimacy that befell globalisation after its high watermark was reached with the formation of the World Trade Organisation in 1995. This was the year of the highest ascendancy for neo-liberalism, for unquestioned abeyance to the unfettered laws of free trade and corporate power.

But then came the Asian financial crisis of 1997 when the 100bn dollars of largely speculative capital that had poured into the region in the previous four years flooded out within a few weeks during the summer.

The IMF's failure to predict the crisis was compounded by its intervention which made matters worse by creating a

liquidity squeeze in the form of structural adjustment programmes in South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia. The masses paid dearly, but another result was that it put the final nail in the coffin of the reputation of the IMF.

Already, in the 1990s, the IMF had come under increasing attack because of the results of its structural adjustment programmes imposed on over 70 countries in the 1980s and 1990s. As Bello reports:

"After over 15 years, there were hardly any cases of successful adjustment programs. What structural adjustment had done, instead, was to institutionalize stagnation in Africa and Latin America, alongside rises in the levels of absolute poverty and income inequality.

"Structural adjustment and related free-market policies that were imposed beginning in the early 1980s were the central factor that triggered a sharp rise in inequality globally, with one authoritative UNCTAD study covering 124 countries showing that the income share of the richest 20 per cent of the world's population rose from 69 to 83 per cent between 1965 and 1990.

"Structural adjustment has also been a central cause of the lack of any progress in the campaign against poverty. The number of people globally living in poverty, that is, on less than a dollar a day, increased from 1.1 billion in 1985 to 1.2 billion in 1998, and is expected to reach 1.3 billion [in 2000]."

The World Trade Organisation's first few years of operation massively advanced corporate power and it was not long before many woke up to its full implications. In Bello's words:

"By signing on to the Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs), developing countries discovered that they had signed away their right to use trade policy as a means of industrialization.

"By signing on to the Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), countries realized that they had given high tech transnationals like Microsoft and Intel the right to monopolize innovation in the knowledge-intensive industries.

"By signing on to the Agreement on Agriculture (AOA), developing countries discovered that they had agreed to open up their markets while allowing the big agricultural superpowers to consolidate their system of subsidized agricultural production that was leading to the massive dumping of surpluses on those very markets, a process that was, in turn, destroying smallholder-based agriculture.

"By setting up the WTO, countries and governments discovered that they had set up a legal system that enshrined the priority of free trade above every other good, above the environment, justice, equity, and community.

"In joining the WTO, developing countries realized that they were not, in fact, joining a democratic organization but one where decisions were made, not in formal plenaries but in non-transparent backroom sessions, and where majority voting was dispensed with in favor of a process called consensus- which was really a process in which a few big trading powers imposed their consensus on the majority of the member countries."

All this focused anger on the Seattle Ministerial in November, 1999, which proved to be a turning point in bringing together the anti-globalisation movement. 50,000 demonstrators blockaded it, European and US delegations could not agree on important measures and more than 100 Third World countries were outraged by the marginal role assigned to them in the whole process. It collapsed in ignominy and discredited the WTO as an institution.

And finally, in 2000, the Meltzer Commission on global financial architecture roundly criticised the World Bank . As Bello noted:

"The Commission came up with the devastating conclusion that with most of its resources going to the better off countries of the developing world and with the astounding 65-70 per cent failure rate of its projects in the poorest countries, the World Bank was irrelevant to the achievement of its avowed mission of global poverty alleviation. And what to do with the Bank? The Commission urged that most of the Bank's lending activities be devolved to the regional developing banks. It does not take much, however, for readers of the report to realize that, as one of the Commission's members revealed, it essentially wants to abolish the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank."

Bello also has the merit of seeing that these institutions, as discredited as they have become, are too important to world big business to be allowed to disappear. They have mounted a counter-attack to restore their legitimacy.

At the Davos WEF summit immediately following Seattle, Klaus Schwab said: "Globalization is leaving the majority behind. Those voices spoke out in Seattle. Its time to bring the fruits of globalization and free trade to the many."

The Davos elite decided that the best way to rescue the reputations of the three sisters, according to Bello, was through dialogue, consultation, and the formation of partnerships between TNCs, governments, the United Nations, and civil society organizations.

The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, produced the Global Compact. Signed by 44 multinational companies, the Compact supposedly commits them to respect human, labour, and environmental rights and provide positive examples of such behavior. In reality, despite a Compact provision that membership will not be given to business entities complicit in human rights violations, the founding membership includes some of the worst corporate transgressors of human, environmental, and labour rights: Nike, Rio Tinto, Shell, Novartis, and BP Amoco.

As Bello notes:

"The Compact will provide a great public relations venue for these corporations to promote a clean image very different from the reality since compliance with the Compact will be self-monitored and no sanctions exist for violating the Compact's principles. The corporations will be able to use the UN logo as a seal of corporate responsibility, thus appropriating the UN's image of an international civil service not only for short-term profit but also for the long-term business goal of a positive brand image."

The first tactic used against the NGOs was to set them against each other by distinguishing "reasonable" NGO's, who were interested in dialogue, from the "unreasonable", who were not. To the former, a working partnership for reform was offered.

Bello says the model for this ruse was the NGO Committee on the World Bank and other joint World Bank-NGO bodies set up by Wolfensohn and his lieutenants in the mid-nineties. While the NGOs that joined these bodies may have done so with the best of intentions, Wolfensohn knew that their membership, in itself, already helped to legitimise the Bank and that, over time, these NGOs would develop a stake in maintaining the formal relationship with the Bank. Wolfensohn was not only able to split the NGO community in Washington, DC, but also to harness the energies of a number of NGOs, many of them unwittingly, to project the image of a Bank that was serious about reforming itself and reorienting its approach to eliminating poverty.

By 2001, NGOs were being deluged with requests to join this corporation's NGO advisory committee or that company's NGO consultative group. In February, 2001, even the IMF held its first NGO consultation in Singapore.

Bello condemns the NGOs for falling into this trap and calls instead for the abolition of all these "partnership" bodies,

"...what developing countries and international civil society should aim at is not to reform the TNC-driven WTO and Bretton Woods institutions, but, through a combination of passive and active measures, to either a) decommission them; b) neuter them (e.g., converting the IMF into a pure research institution monitoring exchange rates of global capital flows); or c) radically reduce their powers and turn them into just another set of actors coexisting with and being checked by other international organisations, agreements, and regional groupings. This strategy would include strengthening diverse actors and institutions as UNCTAD, multilateral environmental agreements, the International Labor Organization, and evolving economic blocs such as Mercosur in Latin America, SAARC in South Asia, SADCC in Southern Africa, and a revitalized ASEAN in Southeast Asia. A key aspect of strengthening, of course, is

making sure these formations evolve in a people-oriented direction and cease to remain regional elite projects."

Bello rejects the idea of replacing one centralised global system of rules and institutions with another, calling this a techno-optimist variant of Marxism that, he says, infuses both the Social Democratic and Leninist visions of the world, and produces what the Indian author Arundathi Roy calls, "the predilection for gigantism".

But, in rejecting "Marxism", Bello does not hesitate to embrace the Republican right in the USA as allies. He concedes that:

"The motivation of the incoming Republicans in criticising the IMF and World Bank lies in their belief in free-market solutions to development and growth. This may not coincide with that of progressives, who see the IMF and World Bank as a tool of US hegemony. But the two sides can unite behind one agenda at this point: the radical down-sizing, if not dismantling, of the Bretton Woods twins.

"With many Republicans and Democrats in Congress evincing similar sentiments, international civil society and labour unions might add their weight to form a critical mass that would determine the future of these institutions."

Bello is wrong on both counts. For him, the abolition of the international economic bodies which are under the domination of US imperialism is a way of allowing the semi-colonial regimes to exercise greater autonomy and to use the United Nations bodies such as UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) to aid their development.

But this would still leave the handful of powerful imperialist states with a monopoly over the sources of capital and technological development. While Bello is often implicitly critical of the craven nature of the "Third World elites", he is still prepared to leave political power in their hands under his strategy of "deglobalisation" even if they are to come under greater popular scrutiny.

Moreover, he has no intention of suggesting anything more than a redirection of trade and investment flows. He does not countenance the expropriation of big companies and banks, not even nationalisation of foreign MNCs.

At best, this could only be a recipe for 1950s and 1960s-style import-substitution industrialisation. This discredited strategy was only "successful" in big countries which could mobilise sufficient domestic investment funds through repression of the standard of living of the mass of workers and peasant farmers. Even then the projects were often corrupt and inefficient.

At worst, such a deglobalisation project would lead to further impoverishment as small countries were forced to fall back upon limited and inadequate domestic resources.

Against deglobalisation, it is necessary to posit a global economic strategy that seeks to maintain a high level of global integration, especially with the most developed nations. The key is not to loosen the ties that link the Third World to the economies of the advanced countries but to build an international movement that wrests ownership and control of industry, commerce and finance in the G8, as elsewhere, from the current class of exploiters.

Then, democratic planning could deliver the Third World from its impoverishment. How centralised or decentralised such international planning mechanisms need to be is open to debate and largely depends upon the nature of the human and material resources under discussion.

Some decisions, for example, energy production and transmission which necessarily have an international environmental impact, are best taken at national and international levels. Others, such as allocation of resources to recreation, culture or housing are clearly best taken at local levels.

Marxism does not favour "gigantism" as a principle; this is a horrible distortion by Stalinism, whose fanatical centralisation and hypertrophy was a function not of economic rationalism but of the need of an all-powerful and repressive bureaucracy to keep control of all aspects of economic and social life.

In the end, Bello is no more anti-capitalist than Susan George. True, he pays lip service to a more explicit programme of redistribution than George. Part of "deglobalisation" involves, "carrying out the long-postponed measures of income and land redistribution to create a vibrant internal market that would be the anchor of the economy, ... it is about not leaving strategic economic decisions to the market but making them subject to democratic choice".

But this is unconvincing. Bello fails to give any explanation of which forces, using what methods, would carry through such redistribution. There is no recognition that it will be violently resisted by the Third World bourgeoisie, most of whom (unlike the 1950s) have completely tied their personal and political fortunes to neo-liberalism and globalisation.

It is because he has no vision of global transformation of the rule of capital especially in its heartlands and prefers Third World disengagement and reorientation, that he can so blithely countenance alliances with a deeply reactionary wing of American business and its political representatives.

Any strategy for international revolution and international planning must involve taking over ownership and control of big business and finance in the USA. This task, in turn, demands that the working class establishes its complete independence of all wings of the US bourgeoisie. It must cease to provide mass forces in support of the political agenda of that element of US big business that wants to be free of international obligations, while leaving US business unfettered.

Bello's trenchant criticisms of the immense harm done by the IMF, World Bank and the WTO and his abolitionist proposals are very much to the point. But his petit-bourgeois alternatives divide the international working class between North and South and leave real power and property in both North and South in the hands of big business and their politicians. ★

Bello on "deglobalization"

"We are not talking about withdrawing from the international economy. We are speaking about reorienting our economies from the emphasis on production for export to production for the local market;

- about drawing most of our financial resources for development from within rather than becoming dependent on foreign investment and foreign financial markets;
- about carrying out the long-postponed measures of income redistribution and land redistribution to create a vibrant internal market that would be athe anchor of the economy;
- about deemphasizing growth and maximizing equity in order to radically reduce environmental disequilibrium;
- about not leaving strategic economic decisions to the market but making them subject to democratic choice;
- about subjecting the private sector and the state to constant monitoring by civil society;
- about creating a new production and exchange complex that includes community cooperatives, private enterprises, and state enterprises, and excludes TNCs;
- about enshrining the principle of subsidiarity in economic life by encouraging production of goods to take place at the community and national level if it can be done so at reasonable cost in order to preserve community.

We are talking, moreover, about a strategy that consciously subordinates the logic of the market, the pursuit of cost efficiency to the values of security, equity, and social solidarity."

Pierre Bourdieu.

The 70 year old sociologist Pierre Bourdieu helps run a publishing house and an association – Raisons d'Agir (Reasons for Action) which has brought out a series of widely read books and pamphlets attacking various aspects of globalisation, especially in the cultural sphere.

Bourdieu openly solidarised with the workers and youth revolts of 1995 against the government of Alain Juppé. He was an outspoken critic of NATO's war in the Balkans. He has fiercely condemned the "treason" of the French intellectual élite for failing to warn or mobilise against neoliberalism. A long time supporter of the French Socialist Party he turned savagely on Socialist premier Lionel Jospin, the PCF and the intellectual supporters of the gauche plurielle government. He accuses them of surrendering to US neo-liberalism. He is also an advocate of the development and convergence of the "new social movements" in France

He has never called himself a Marxist. In the 1960s and 1970s he rejected both Sartre's Marxist existentialism, for its soft humanism and subjectivity, and Althusser's Marxist structuralism for its pseudo-objectivism. Bourdieu, however, testifies to the fact that he was influenced by both Marx and Weber—in fact more by Weber than by Marx.

He developed the notion of what he called the "logic of practice" – how human beings develop a consciousness which is produced by social structures – and how this in turn dictates their "strategies" for social action. Bourdieu was particularly interested in how the ideological maintenance of the status quo is quite literally "embodied" in people (dress, manners, speech, values). He observes that they develop a disposition to act only in certain ways, making certain objectives seem realisable and others not.

It is scarcely surprising that in the 1960s and 1970s he was not an active radical – let alone a revolutionary Marxist, but he was a critic of bourgeois intellectual and academic society and its pretensions. In the 1970s and 1980s he developed an analysis of how the controllers of economic power and coercion (capital) turn this into a social power (what he calls social capital) and domination, such that the dominated accept it.

Cultural capital is accumulated in the form of academic qualifications. Thus, the real social and economic inequalities of wealth and power are turned into "symbolic" inequalities, whereby individuals or classes have supposed superiorities/inferiorities of taste, ability and intelligence.

These are imposed, exposed and reimposed in a constant social struggle because of the differing material interests of the actors but the "habitus" is constantly restored. This is certainly a strikingly pessimistic perspective with little room for self-emancipation. Bourdieu explicitly rejected the Marxist concept of ideology and "false consciousness" as overemphasising the rational. He saw human beings' consciousness as dominated by "common sense" prejudices (what he calls "doxa")

In doing so he ignored Marx's early examination of "alienation" and his mature concept of "commodity fetishism" as the basis of a bourgeois consciousness in the worker. To condemn Marxism for Cartesian rationalism – as Bourdieu does – ignores the whole theme of revolutionary practice in Marx's thought, from the Theses on Feuerbach onwards.

Human beings learn and change their ideas through practice. Bourdieu's theory might explain (in a one-side way) the persistence of conservative ideas, the stabilisation of an exploitative society by the self-imprisonment of the exploited. No real Marxist believes either that this "false consciousness" has no material roots, nor would they deny "the ideas of all past generations weigh like an nightmare on the brains of the living." Real – i.e. revolutionary – Marxists believe that only by uniting theory and practice is it possible to break the hold of the ideology which constantly validates and reinforces capitalist society

Bourdieu has always been a reformist and clearly had enormous hopes for the Mitterand presidency of the early 1980s but was extremely disillusioned by its conservatism and corruption. As a result his thought and actions have become more radical during the 1990s. *In The Weight of the World* (1993) he assembled and analysed numerous interviews with people suffering the effects of neoliberal policies and condemned "the abdication of the state" from addressing these.

Perhaps, coming to political activism late in life, his thought too will be radicalised. But implicit in his thinking is that all that is needed is a return to good old French statism. If the state (whose state?) were only strong enough then major social reforms would be "possible" once again.

Again failure to see things in class terms means he does not understand why the French bourgeois state adapted itself to the needs of its ruling class in the era of globalisation – despite its expressed distaste of "Anglo-Saxon" neoliberalism.

In this sense Bourdieu fits into the model of those, like Susan George or George Monbiot who – disgusted with the betrayals of the old reformist parties – are setting out to create a "new" version, based like the old on state intervention "from above". ★

Elmar Altvater

Five years ago, Altvater published his book on globalisation *The limit of globalisation* (co-authored with Mahnkopf) – a 700 page long "compendium".

Its main thesis is that while the drive of capital to overcome its own limits can never be complete, there is one important limit imperialism did overcome.

Capitalism created a global market which increasingly forced the many capitalists to compete against each other on the world scale directly. The world market really became one market. For Altvater competition between say US and European cars (produced on the respective continent) was very limited as long as transport costs remained relatively high and other protective barriers sealed them off.

This changed with the enormous reduction in transaction costs, transport, communication – a development which allowed direct comparison between costs of production of different countries and also to use this for buying and selling products at the cheapest price world wide, a process well known as "global sourcing".

The distortions of the law of value's operation on the world market have become less. A world market price becomes a reality. Given this, business will choose where to produce on the basis of directly comparing costs. In that sense globalisation it not a myth, but a reality.

Likewise, a world market for finances, a direct comparison between international possibilities for speculation develops. Finally, there is an equalisation of the rate of profit on a world scale.

This does not mean that investment will be equally balanced, indeed, as Altvater points out, it will be more focused towards the already existing productive centres. But the national states themselves become "competitors" for providing the "most attractive" (i.e. cheapest) place for capital inflows.

This is the reason why the welfare state comes under enormous pressure, why social security systems are slashed. Competition between large-scale capitals strongly increases since they are now directly competing on the world market.

The changed world market and an international equalisation of the rate of profit is a basis for the development of a "subject" of globalisation – the global players who really determine the operation of the world market – the large scale multi-national companies and banks. This fraction of capital is truly international according to Altvater.

Whilst they may still have a nation state where they are based, this is rather secondary consideration. It is this fraction of capital that dominates the world economy, determines welfare and work standards. Institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO more or less directly serve this fraction.

All this also means that the state has to modify its function. As a result of globalisation, the welfare state has to become a "provider" of the best conditions for the global MNCs.

Altvater sees globalisation as a tremendous threat to society and nature but he cannot simply reject globalisation as this would be to object to the course of history itself. What he advocates is a form of global reformism or regulation of globalisation.

For Altvater globalisation poses a number of threats:

l to the human community by the destruction of the welfare state, by increasing inequality, etc.

l to the environment, by the relentless search for profit

l to democratic and civil rights. Globalisation is not only destroying the welfare state, but also bourgeois democracy.

So he calls for the creation of forms of international regulation and democracy, and seeks to "democratise" international political and economic institutions – be it the UN, be it the IMF or the World Bank. He combines this with fashionable calls for a form of international "civil society".

As we can see in the chapter on the environment, Altvater always ends up in a contradiction between the analysis and the cure. In this chapter he correctly point to the destructive character of the capitalist mode of production, to the contradictory nature of progress within that, the fact that progress it always accompanied with the ruin of the sources of societies wealth – mankind and nature.

But what is the answer to these problems? The struggle to overthrow capitalism and to replace it by a society based on rational planning according to people's needs?

No. Since there is no "mass communist movement", the answer is not to fight for revolutionary politics in the growing anti-capitalist movement and in the working class. The task is rather to produce a dry reformist programme, he himself doesn't believe in. What does it consist of? The Tobin tax, a massive taxation of energy consumption and a drastic reduction in the working week.

The Tobin tax should "slow down the process of globalisation" and thereby decrease global competition and its effects on local communities. The taxation of energy consumption (a kind of "honest" green tax) would push in a similar direction. The other side of it is to increase the costs of transport, thereby limiting global competition, but also the destruction of the environment (less transport = less pollution). Finally, reduction of work time and a guaranteed minimum income would secure social inclusion for all, by creating more jobs and by ensuring that the unemployed have a living income.

Here, the whole utopia turns into a reformist farce. As Altvater recognises. this programme is very difficult to realise on the basis of global capitalism. Indeed, it is both utopian and reactionary. It is an attempt to domesticate global capitalism by pulling the existing development back (a little bit) and not by fighting to overthrow capitalism within its own development. ★

John Zerzan

Those black block anarchists who trash shops during summit protests are called "mindless" by the press. In fact, they are anything but. Many believe that the destruction of property – which they see as the ultimate alienating condition for humans – is the main objective of political protest.

Some of these anarchists are based in Eugene, Oregon in the United States. Many were at the Seattle and Quebec protests. John Zerzan is the most widely published and influential writer of the Eugene anarchists.

Zerzan believes that humanity can only achieve liberation, and the planet as a whole establish equilibrium, if we return to the earliest stage of human development, primitive communism. Although this might appear to show a Marxist influence, it is actually liberal individualism reduced to absurdity.

In, "Future Primitive" (Anarchy: a journal of desire armed, 33. Summer 1992) Zerzan argues that the agricultural revolution of the stone age destroyed a more natural society based on equality, individual freedom and health, well-being, leisure and abundance, all achieved on a minimum of labour. He believes that it was the development of a division of labour within society, between hunters and gatherers, that first created alienation and that, therefore, all such divisions should be abolished.

Zerzan decries all "complex" technology (meaning, presumably, anything beyond the digging stick and the club) and declares solidarity with the Unabomber who killed three people in his one man war against technology. He blithely accepts that the implication of his own theory would be a catastrophic reduction in production and, therefore, population.

His error lies in his one-sided view of historical development. The division of labour did, indeed, destroy the earliest human society, it did deny the universal potential of each individual by forcing each to become a herder, a hunter or any one of the infinite number of specialisms that have developed since. However, human society prior to this was no paradise. Human development could never be more than a potential, it could never be realised because survival itself took up all of humanity's energies.

Zerzan's implied belief is that in primitive society, each individual could be a "complete person", innocent of any alienation, a natural nobility without any savagery, perhaps. This owes much more to the American utopia of the self-sufficient frontier man than to a balanced understanding of historical development.

Was pre-agricultural human society really an idyllic picture of individual freedom with complete personalities and intellectual abilities? No. It was a life where a tyrant ruled with an arbitrary and cruel hand. That tyrant was called nature and it took the form of floods, famine, freezing cold and baking heat. If work was minimal, this was because there was very little early human societies could actually do to protect themselves from nature.

It was enforced idleness, not choice. If there were no societal rules and mores binding the individual, this was because nature imposed its own rules so tightly that human activity was straight-jacketed into a rigid pattern refusing the possibility of another (human) ruler.

Why did egalitarian societies give way to authoritarian ones? Because they were able to provide a more secure future and, over time, a higher standard of living for the vast majority of society. The centralisation of societies' resources enabled the shamen, priests, chieftains and kings to organise production and prepare defences against famine, disease, neighbouring tribes. The flourishing of new, more complex and productive techniques which followed is denigrated by Zerzan, but he is unable to deny its fact.

The price for such progress was extremely high – privatisation of communal property, intensification of work, exploitation, warfare, subjugation of women and social (class) tensions, to name but some of the most important by-products. Which is why everywhere this first revolution was accompanied by coercion and bloodshed.

Not surprisingly – and with immense justification – many youth in the developed North react with anger when politicians and businessmen gush about technological progress and how it can liberate all of humanity, while the twentieth century – the most technologically explosive century in human history – ended with more children dying from basic diseases, more and more bloody wars, a larger proportion of humanity in abject poverty and a greater than ever differentiation between rich and poor.

But to say that a certain tool or field of technology is, in and of itself, regardless of who controls it and to what use it is put, bad is to grant human qualities to an object. It is to deny that industrialisation and scientific breakthroughs in sciences like medicine in the nineteenth century did in fact lead to improvements in living standards.

The problem with capitalist production today is not technology as such but its control by a class which is forced to maximise profits even at the expense of the vast majority of humanity and the planet's sustainability itself.

That is the social relation of capitalism can no longer enable technological breakthroughs to benefit the majority, let alone the whole of society: it is ripe for revolution. ★

From vision to reality: how

Over the last ten years a handful of gigantic capitalist enterprises have tightened their grip on our planet.

Giant car producers, telecommunications companies, old banks and new media firms all grew on an unprecedented scale.

At the same time the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, the G8, the European Union, NAFTA and the Asia–Pacific Economic Conference supervised the implementation of a single economic and social policy for every country in the world: free trade capitalism. According to our rulers there is no alternative to free trade, open markets and the privatisation of telecommunications, media, transport, public services and essential utilities like water, gas and electricity.

Nothing is to be provided to the people as a right. Everything, from the water we drink to the medicines we depend upon, is to be bought and sold at a price determined by global corporations. There is now hardly a country in the world that is exempt from the extreme capitalist policies of the IMF/WB/WTO.

Every aspect of our lives has been affected by these changes. What we do at work, what we study in school or college, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the music we listen to – everything is owned by mega–corporations and ruled by the global institutions. Are they satisfied? Never – the more they consume, the hungrier they get. Their mantra – profit before people.

Creeping privatisation

That is why the corporations are now invading spaces that have not so far been run for profit. Critical services like hospitals, schools, care homes for the sick, the aged and the disabled are being handed over to the privateers of the free market. This is sometimes done by outright privatisation, selling public property to private profiteers.

Even when there is mass opposition, hypocritical "Labour" or "Social Democratic" governments like Schroeder's in Germany and Blair's in Britain still bring private money into public services, to make huge profits at the people's expense.

Under these schemes, the services remain under formal state ownership, but the state cedes ever greater management and financial control to the corporations. Step by step, social and public services are being taken out of the legal ownership of the electorate and placed under the dictatorship of a handful of private and corporate shareholders. Every national state, local government body, mutual or non–profit making organisation is being forced to hand over welfare, education, the media, recreation and entertainment to companies owned by a tiny band of billionaires.

In many countries political parties like the Socialists, Social Democrats and Labour have drawn support from voters made up of working class and lower middle class people. Because of this they once had to represent their supporters' aspirations, although they always did so in a moderate and strictly limited way, never challenging the actual right of big business to rule and to profit. But they also had to promise to meet some of the more important everyday needs of working class people.

No choice

Now these parties have been – or are in the process of being – transformed into pale copies of the traditional conservative parties of the rich and the powerful. The governments of Sweden, Germany, Britain and France carry out the policies of the IMF/WB/WTO, dressed up with just a few phrases to distinguish themselves from the conservative and neoliberal parties. Today it's not just a few radicals who say, "there is no difference between the parties, there is no real choice". Millions see it and feel it. Election campaigns have become ever more obviously empty charades.

In the oldest democracies, where millions of working class people fought for decades for the right to vote, voting levels are falling rapidly. The supposed free–choice of capitalist democracy that allows us to vote every five or so years is nothing more than a choice between two or three versions of the same thing.

Every institution – the press and the broadcast media, the curricula of the schools and the colleges, the Hollywood blockbusters, the big music corporations – pumps out the same pro–capitalist ideas and values. The mind–numbing message is that there is no alternative to capitalism and the market economy. There is no alternative even to the right–wing neoliberal policy of cutting taxes for the rich and cutting spending on the poor. No wonder official politics meets with such apathy. Why should the exploited and the oppressed play this futile game?

In the meantime there has never been a more urgent need for change. Never in the whole of human history have so few stolen the wealth produced by so many. One–third of the wealth on this planet is owned by 0.15 % of the population!

A worker in a factory, office or fast–food outlet can expect neither job security nor rights. The citizen at the ballot box cannot change anything of real importance. What choice is left? Capitalism's army of cynical public relations officers tell us there is always consumer choice – real freedom!

You can choose which over–priced house to buy, which expensive car to drive, where to take your foreign holiday, which designer clothes to wear. And of course this choice is available to everyone. On one condition: that you have the money. And two–thirds of humanity do not. Only 600 million of us are considered by the big firms and banks to be "in the market" for the goods they want to sell us – about 15% of the world's population! 85% of us have been written off!

But even for those who do earn a modest wage what a narrow and impoverished choice this is. A choice between Coke and Pepsi, between Nike and Reebok, between corporate images, mission statements, brands and "values". First they rob us of the last vestiges of control of our own lives and then they offer us a choice of "lifestyles", the chance to buy into a pathetic dream world of manufactured identities.

Of course these mocking badges of prosperity are keenly adopted by the exploited and oppressed all over the world as a symbol of an opulent lifestyle from which they have been cruelly excluded.

Modern consumerism plays a similar role to that played by religion over 150 years ago. Karl Marx described that role as: "the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the soul of soulless conditions". Behind this veil of fantasy lies a harsh reality: super exploitation, poverty and the wanton destruction of our social and natural environment.

Exploitation is at the root of it all

How does this vast accumulation of money in the hands of a few billionaires come about? Why are the results of generation after generation of human labour concentrated in the hands of so few?

The answer was also suggested by Marx. The work of wage earners produces all the wealth, but we receive in wages only enough to bring us back to work day after day and to rear a future generation of workers. The remainder produced by every one of the wage earners goes to the capitalists. This is what we call exploitation.

Apart from a few household and personal possessions, ninety–nine out of a hundred workers have little or nothing to show for a lifetime's work. We enter the world of work with nothing to invest

w the anti-capitalists can win

but our physical and mental ability to do a job. Most never acquire a share of the factories, shops, or profits that all this work generates. In fact, wealth gets concentrated into fewer and fewer hands.

This can only be ended by taking back what this generation and all past generations of workers have "given" free to the capitalists. This will be no minor reform. No wage rise, no matter how big, no redistribution from the rich to the poor by taxation, no matter how radical, can change this fundamental condition. For short periods of time and in certain countries working people have won serious improvements in their lot, but the capitalists have always, everywhere, tried to win them back and forced us to fight tooth and nail to defend every gain.

Imperialism

Capitalism rests on exploitation and growing inequality in its heartlands of North America, Western Europe and Japan. But it also relies on out–and–out plunder of the resources of the rest of the world. Mining, oil and gas corporations, agribusinesses and banks all use their technological, finance and trading monopoly powers to seize the raw materials and resources of the Third World. Other corporations shift production to underdeveloped countries where dictatorial regimes and lower standards of living mean they can exploit workers even more than they do "at home".

The weak and corrupt ruling classes of the Third World and former "Communist" states act as agents for the multinational corporations and the G8. Their local armies and police forces are trained and armed by the US and European powers, their secret police by the CIA and MI6. If any of these states steps out of line, a rapid reaction or "peacekeeping" force is sent in to "restore order".

The exploitation of the majority of countries by the rulers of a few major powers has a name. It is called imperialism. Contrary to western propaganda, it survived the dissolution of the old European colonial empires after the Second World War. Over the following decades the British, the French, the Dutch and eventually the Portuguese were forced by national liberation struggles, and some behind the scenes pressure from the United States, to abandon their huge Empires. But this did not mean the end of imperialism – just the colonial phase of it. Under the domination of the USA, the newly "independent" states remained, in reality, colonies of the multinationals.

Whenever the peoples of these "semi–colonies" resisted or forced their corrupt and oppressive governments to resist, the USA and its allies have always responded with brutality. Economic blockades, sanctions pushed through the United Nations, even full–scale wars like in the Gulf in 1991, are all unleashed to force "rogue states" into line.

But powerful as the world's rulers are, there is a mightier power. Against the concentrated strength of the planet's five hundred billionaires stand over five billion working people who they exploit.

We are many, they are few. But our potential power means nothing if it is not united, transformed into a single–minded force. We need to become conscious, in our millions, that it is within our power to defeat global capitalism and replace it with a system based on the needs and aspirations of humanity as a whole.

The capitalists relentlessly try to divide us, atomise us, to set workers of each nation against the others, to set men against women, white against black. That is why the slogan raised by Karl Marx in the Communist Manifesto, "Working People of All Countries Unite!" has been taken up by generation after generation of workers and youth.

The futility of reformism

The neo–liberals like to claim that they are against the state – that they want to "get the state off our backs". This is a lie. They only want to get some parts of the state off *their* backs. They want to free themselves from those aspects of state activity that have been forced upon our rulers by popular and democratic struggles – free, universal education and health services, social housing, public transport.

They do not want to pay even their present minuscule share of tax towards these essential services. The rich now want the full cost to be born by the poor and to make a profit by selling them back to us. And they want to salve their consciences by donating a fraction of their massive wealth to charitable foundations, like Bill Gates, so that they can decide which of the deserving poor and ill should have help. This is what they mean by freedom from the state!

At the same time they want to preserve and extend the weapons of repression that are the bedrock of every capitalist state. The police forces, armies and repressive laws, the restrictions on welfare and unemployment benefits, the cameras that spy on us and the spooks that tap our phones. These are the parts of the state they never "roll back" because they protect the property and the profits of the rich.

Reformist politicians used to claim that the democratic state represents the whole of society. Because of this, their argument ran, the "neutral" state could be used to achieve social equality gradually. To some, during the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s, it looked as if it might be true, at least in a few wealthy countries. But then, even in those countries, recession struck. The rickety cart of social reform began to roll back down the hill it had been pushed up so slowly and painstakingly for twenty years.

Over the last two decades of the twentieth century, the neoliberals have begun to strip the state down to its bare essentials – armies, police forces, the judicial and prison system, the top state bureaucrats. In short the state is an instrument of force in the hands of the ruling, capitalist class and their agents.

The neoliberals want to hide this killing machine under the cover of legality and democracy. Because all are entitled vote every 3–5 years, because elected representatives make the laws, their decisions are supposed to represent "the rule of the people". But where peoples or nations step out of line the real state intervenes to impose the will of the multinationals with smart bombs and high tech weaponry.

When anti–capitalists protest on the streets, robocops try to drive us back with rubber bullets, teargas, pepper spray and live bullets. All this is designed to beat us back, to frighten us off demos, to make us submit to their rule and their order. But ever more peo-

This is what OUR democracy looks like!

ple are beginning to see the real nature of the system. ***This is what their democracy looks like.***

The conclusion is hard but inescapable. Capitalism cannot be reformed.

The democratic assemblies, parliaments and debating chambers are not the real power in capitalist society. Behind these stand an apparatus of administration and repression that is tailor–made to defend private property. The generals, police chiefs, judges, civil service mandarins, who control this machinery are intimately connected with the ruling class and selected for this task. They will never obey orders to strip their blood brothers of their wealth and demolish capitalism.

Even if the working class and its allies were to win a majority for a social revolution, this apparatus of repression would revolt against the legitimate government and crush it and the working class movement. To move against the power of the capitalists with empty hands, whilst they are armed to the teeth, is a suicidal strategy. We have to mobilise a mass movement and arm ourselves, then demobilise and disarm the enemy.

An alternative power

The capitalist state cannot be taken over and used for the purpose of introducing socialism. It must be broken up, smashed, in the process of revolution. There is only one way this can be done – by building an alternative power, one based on democratic mass councils comprised of delegates directly elected by working class people and subject to immediate recall. Only organisations of this type can both organise the struggle against the exploiters and begin to form the basis of a new regime that can organise society in place of the capitalist state.

Every time such councils are created the bosses attack them. The police and army break up their meetings and demonstrations, arrest their members and sabotage their activities. That is why, alongside such councils the workers form self–defence organisations – workers' guards, community patrols, picket defence squads. Whatever they are called such bodies are also the basis of a new society, an accountable workers' militia in place of an unaccountable state machine.

Workers' councils are infinitely more democratic than any capitalist parliament, elected only once every five years and stuffed with unaccountable career politicians.

The emergence of mass councils such as these only ever happens in conditions of deep social crisis – their existence is a sign that capitalist society is entering a period of revolutionary upheaval. They create a duality of power in society, with organisations of working class power existing alongside the instruments of capitalist rule. Such instability can only be resolved one way or the other. Either the capitalists will retain power and dissolve the workers' councils, or the councils will themselves seize the power and dissolve the capitalists' repressive apparatus. For the councils to take power the mass of the people must be ready to fight and the revolutionaries must organise an uprising to disarm the exploiters and drive them from power.

Creeping privatisation

The resistance of the exploiters will not stop when they have lost state power in one country. Every example of revolution so far shows that they will resort to civil war from within and urge the surrounding capitalist states to attack "their own" country. The "patriotism" of the capitalists is a fraud – it stops abruptly at the moment the workers take power.

For this reason workers' councils and a workers' militia will require a central body – one with the responsibility and the authority to co–ordinate a life or death struggle. This would be an organisation assuming power in society and using force to take the property of the capitalists into the hands of the majority class. In this sense it would be a state. It would exist for as long as it were needed to fight the capitalists.

But it would be completely different from the capitalists' state and government. It would be organised by and composed of the majority of the population – not a sealed unit standing over and against them. It would be answerable to the democracy of the workers' councils and defended by the armed people. Its elected representatives would earn the average income of the people; important administrative posts would be rotated to avoid the emergence of a permanent bureaucratic layer.

For the capitalists this would be an unmitigated disaster: a dictatorship of the majority rather than their minority. But the workers would have nothing to fear from it. It would need no special, separate apparatus of repression because it would not be based on a minority exploiting class. It would set about creating a new social system based on co–operation and solidarity rather than exploitation and competition.

The more that capitalism gets replaced by socialised production and distribution, the more the resistance of the capitalists will be broken and revolution spread to other countries. In this way the division of society into classes would be overcome. The need for an organisation of force, even one based on the majority, would fade away.

When no classes remain, no elements of the state would remain either. As one of the first communists, Frederick Engels, put it, the "government of persons" would be replaced by the "administration of things".

Can society really be organised without capitalism? Is it possible to secure a decent life for the entire population of our planet? Yes – there is already enough produced in the world to feed, house, clothe, educate and care for the whole of humanity. A rational allocation of resources and the abolition of wasteful, socially useless production would enable the working week to be drastically reduced by sharing the work that needs to be done among the adult population.

Global economic democracy

This cannot be achieved by a return to the past. We can only build a global economic democracy if we use some of the tools that capitalism has given us – science and technology, mass methods of production and distribution. But they will have to be changed and developed out of all recognition.

Technology and industry have given humanity the potential to free itself, en masse, from backbreaking toil. Unsatisfying, alienating work has excluded most people today from carrying out the creative functions of scientist, artist or planner. Creativity is cramped and restricted to private life. But a democratically planned economy could overcome the rigid division of labour that exists under capitalism. It would allocate and rotate tasks.

It would ensure that every new labour saving device or system would be used to shorten the working week rather than sack thousands of workers. And in this way it would allow everyone of us the time and opportunity to create, to invent, to plan, to free ourselves from the dehumanising experience of working on a single job for the whole of our lives.

All of this requires social ownership and democratic planning. Under social ownership the means of production and

distribution belong to society, not to private shareholders or a bureaucratic state. Nevertheless, while capitalism still exists we should prefer state ownership to private ownership. Why? Because it turns all questions of hiring and firing, quality of service and product into a political issue (a society–wide question of policy) and not just a question of a private contract between employers, employees and customers. It raises more sharply the issue of what is produced, and why, whether goods and services should be directed to meet need or profit.

It is for this reason that the capitalist class does not want state ownership. It only tolerates it to bail out losses for bankrupt services and industries that it needs to keep going. But these nationalised industries and services are not "socialist". They are not socially owned. The state that owns them is still capitalist, and tries to force them to serve the long–term interests of profit.

Democratic planning

A democratically planned and socially owned economy can only be constructed by a state based on workers' councils. When coercion against former capitalists is exercised by the armed people themselves and when there is no private ownership of the large–scale economy, then "ownership" will be vested in those who produce and those they produce for.

Society's needs would no longer be decided blindly in the market place. They will be decided on by the producers/consumers themselves. Unlike the former USSR, we would not have a single, monstrous, bureaucratic central plan, decided in one place by a caste of privileged bureaucrats. Instead we would have an ascending series of plans, each decided on after full and informed debate in a workers' and consumers' democracy.

Today the entire global economy – production, trade, finance and banking – is run in the interests of a tiny minority of the world's population. The World Bank, the IMF, the WTO all dance to their tune. These institutions cannot be reformed, they must be destroyed and replaced with something entirely different.

The international cliques of bankers and CEOs and the parallel gatherings of their politicians do their utmost to direct the world economy and the exploitation of the world's people and resources. But their control is far from absolute. In a fundamental sense no one really controls and directs it.

There is not some mystical "hidden hand of the market", working for the well–being of all, as the capitalists' favourite economist Adam Smith famously claimed. The drive for profit gives capitalism an uncontrollable, blind dynamic, which in its frenzied competition wipes out the livelihoods of millions, devastates the environment and even ruins thousands of capitalists themselves in regular, sometimes catastrophic, downturns, recessions and slumps.

Neo–liberalism claims that "There Is No Alternative" to this system. We should rename this argument, the Big Lie of the Era of Globalisation. There is an alternative – it is known to millions around the world and has been the rallying cry of revolutionary struggles on every continent for 150 years. It is called Socialism.

Utopias - real and imagined

"But that failed!", millions will reply. "Look at Russia, look at China. They are returning to market–based, capitalist societies. The attempt to buck the market – to plan production – led to chronic shortages, poor quality goods, growing economic stagnation and a terrible tyranny in the workplace and society."

This brutal fact – the collapse of the centralised planned economies of the twentieth century "Socialist States" – explains the timidity of most of the proposals and programmes offered in the anti–globalisation movement. If this was socialism, they say, we want none of it. This is understandable but based on a cruel deception. For this was not socialism.

Socialism means a society without classes that is moving steadily towards the goal of a stateless community that operates according the maxim "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs". Measured against this definition the Stalinist states were a million miles away from socialism.

These economies were centralised under the absolute control of an unelected, unaccountable and privileged bureaucracy, which blocked the road to socialism and made its own peace with capitalism, first at the level of international relations and eventually by reintroducing a capitalist economy in their own countries.

It is no surprise that this experience has led many in the anti–globalisation and anti–capitalist movements to reject the idea of a centralised economy altogether. Instead they propose a network of autonomous decentralised communities, in which the local overcomes the global and dangerous forms of large–scale organisation are abandoned.

Such blueprints for a return to a localised, small scale, economy and society are utopian. Today the word utopia is widely regarded as positive in the anti–capitalist movement. This is, in one important sense, a justified reaction to the way that Blair, Schroeder and other reformists and post–modernist intellectuals reject any fundamental re–ordering of the basis of society, claiming it will lead to chaos or tyranny.

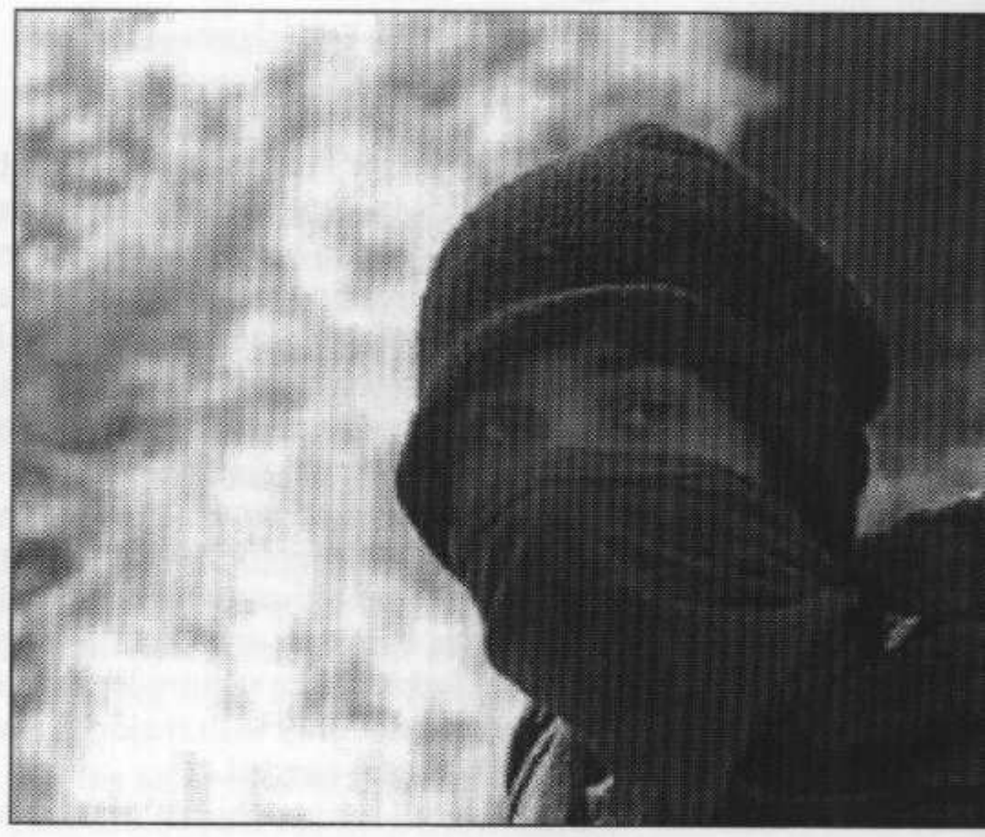
No wonder young people have rejected this counsel of despair. It is a reconciliation with poverty, inequality and environmental degradation and to their remorseless increase. The elaboration of utopias can highlight new answers to new problems.

The problem is that these blueprints, do not take as their starting point the real social forces (classes) in conflict within global capitalism, their fundamental interests and capacities.

Some of these blueprints are reactionary in the purest sense, in that they require a return to the economic and social conditions of the past, before capitalism took hold of the world. There is no possibility of going back to pre–industrial society to the life of peasants or hunter gatherers. This return to the past – which some deep ecologists and primitivist anarchists dream of – would be a squalid nightmare.

Neither is the "small is beautiful" idea of a "fair" market economy based on small–scale producers and barter any better. It would either collapse in poverty or simply repeat the whole process of human history, giving rise to new big corporations as an outcome of competition between smaller businesses.

Apart from the fact that ancient and small–scale methods of production could not sustain the billions of human beings that two centuries of capitalism has created, the truth is that the great majority does not want to spend most of its time growing food or making



clothes.

The influence of the ecological movement – itself a response to a qualitatively "new" problem, the fact that the globe's entire ecosystem can be damaged by mankind's blind expansion of production for monopoly profit – has been to generate such utopias. But it is not industry, technology, increased consumption in and of themselves that threaten humanity. It is the fact that they are not deployed rationally and "economically" to meet the democratically agreed and prioritised physical and mental needs of ordinary people.

Capitalist technology and industry have given humanity the potential to free itself from a life of either joyless toil or enforced impoverished idleness. Only a humanity with the time to create, to invent, to plan can free itself from

fetishising commodities, from national, gender and racial differences, from the power of the state. Only a truly free humanity can end all exploitation and oppression. The huge intercontinental banks, corporations or trading giants like Walmart exploit us today. But in the hands of the workers, with the use of high tech–communications and computers an entirely new system can be created.

Every step forward in science and technology has the potential to increase the amount of "leisure" time and convert enforced toil into creative activity for the benefit and the pleasure of all human beings.

This potential can be harnessed to abolish the irrationalities of capitalist production – ending the overproduction of food in Europe and North America and malnutrition in Africa; shipping and flying products that could be produced near to those who want to consume them; stopping the degradation of the environment and restoring areas turned into deserts, the dead rivers and fished out and despoiled seas and oceans.

A whole new world is possible. But we have to find the human and material resources for it in the existing world.

This requires setting targets and creating the means of achieving them – democratic planning with the goal of harmonising production and distribution to meet human need. What is needed is a whole series of plans. Information about resources, the needs of the people, the effects on the environment, and decisions already taken will be available to all.

The internet and modern electronic communications will make access to data ever quicker and broader; the interactivity of the medium would allow needs and preferences to be inputed by individuals and accounted for in the plan.

Anything that can be decided locally will be. Broader allocations of resources and exchanges of products will be done at a regional or world level.

Strategies and tactics that WORK!

This alternative "vision" needs a strategy as well as tactics to realise it. The capitalist class has to be overthrown, completely deprived of its hold on the state power, and expropriated, deprived of its ownership of the means of production.

All past experience shows that the possessing classes will fight like tigers to protect their possessions. The idea that they will yield either to the force of argument or the mobilisation of democratic majorities is a non–starter. The argument of force will be required: a democracy armed not only with majorities but with weapons is needed.

The overall means chosen must, from the outset, be revolutionary, based on the total destruction of the economic and state power of the capitalist class in both G7 and G77 countries alike. Before, during and after this revolution organisations must be built which fight for control over the economy and for the disintegration of the power of the capitalist state – organisations which themselves are the bedrock of the new society.

Without this, projects to create a really democratic economy and society are doomed to remain in the realm of dreams and blueprints – utopian in the worst sense of the word. In the real world they will simply breed disappointment and disillusion. Only a mass popular revolution, which spreads outwards from its first points of triumph into a worldwide revolution, is capable of achieving this. Anti–capitalism – if it is not to become an empty phrase – must mean a war for the expropriation of all the MNCs, the giant banks and the medium sized, "national" enterprises too.

Only by this means can economic power, power at the level of production and exchange, be vested in the hands of the workers, poor peasants and urban poor. Only in this way can the degree of control that workers and peasants establish over the capitalist class at the high point of their struggles be consolidated into the basis of a new form of production and distribution altogether.

The key force in such a people's revolution must be the waged workers and their natural allies, the poor and landless peasants. These classes in their billions – the great majority of humankind – are the only people with no fundamental ties to capitalist society.

Learning from experience

While our goals and methods of struggle must be revolutionary, the road of struggle must be such that the millions of workers, peasants and youth who suffer from capitalism's exploitation and oppression, but do not yet accept the necessity of a revolution, can learn this from their own experience.

Together we can fight for measures that meet our burning everyday needs: the cancellation of the debt, an end to privatisation of vital services, a living wage, equal rights for all. But in this struggle we must identify the real enemy. We must win the present anti–globalisation and anti–capitalist movement from its timidity on the question of ownership of industry, commerce, communications. We must go beyond declaring our hatred for the millionaires, go beyond dreaming up blueprints to organise society independently of them.

An alternative society cannot be built behind the back of the old one. It cannot be constructed with the tiny resources which the anti–capitalists or even the workers and poor peasants currently possess. The property of the mega corporations is the product of our unpaid labour. To turn one's back on it and start again from the leftovers of our wages is ridiculous. We will never succeed in building an alternative society as long as they possess all the wealth and power. We have to dispossess them of it all.

Now, in the era of globalisation, we have to struggle from the outset on an international level as well as locally. The working class, as producers and consumers, must struggle to establish not so much old style "government regulation" and "nationalisation" as real socialisation – collective, democratic

social ownership, rooted in every workplace, laterally extended through every, national, international or multilateral enterprise.

Such a method must include drawing up emergency plans to meet the needs of abolishing unemployment, precarité, restoring or creating social services, reconstructing the ravaged "second world", developing in a sustainable manner the "third world", rescuing the global environment degraded by capitalism.

We must fight for basic social rights: the right to paid employment, for an income that will give each and every person a decent standard of living without discrimination on grounds of age, gender or ethnic origin.

The move to taking common action across borders against multinationals, financial institutions and gatherings of the governments that serve them, is immensely progressive. But that action also needs to be rooted in the factories, offices and schools, and on the streets.

The trend to international organisation is creating new favourable conditions for renewing the national labour movements that have suffered heavy defeats and have declined in numbers and power as a result. We should now press forward to give a conscious and militant expression to this kind of international/intercontinental solidarity between workers in countries as different as Colombia, Germany, Bolivia, Russia, South Korea and Indonesia.

An immediate community of class interest can exist between workers in the imperialist countries, trying to save jobs being lost to cheap labour destinations, and workers in those countries with staggeringly low wages and brutal repression against trade union activists. There is one enormous proviso: the unions in the imperialist countries must drop completely their protectionist slogans (embargoes, high tariffs etc.) and instead provide financial aid without any strings to workers fighting for union rights and higher wages in the semi–colonies and the former Stalinist states.

Only on this actively internationalist basis can links can be forged within the multinational corporations or between workers of similar industries when they are called to strikebreak or undermine one another's struggles.

These links can and must be built not just between official trade unions but also – and most importantly – at workplace level, between ordinary rank and file workers. But to do this effectively it must be around an ever clearer anti–capitalist strategy.

Anti-racism

The enslavement of millions of Africans from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries gave a massive impulse to capitalist development. It also gave birth to modern racism. The civil rights movement in the USA in the 1960s and the anti–colonial liberation struggles of the last fifty years struck heavy blows at official racism. The downfall of apartheid in South Africa destroyed almost the last state explicitly based on the doctrines of racial/ethnic superiority. A powerful trade union and popular movement achieved this victory and continued to press for social and economic equality – goals which were denied to the black working class majority by the terms of the final settlement.

These South African unions and movements are a powerful part of the growing anti–capitalist movement. A series of linked trade unions and democratic movements – in countries like Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe – have led to the weakening or collapse of one–party or military regimes. There has been a rapid growth of mass popular movements across the continent.

At the same time the economic exploitation of the continent, its enslavement via debt repayments to the banks and international financial institutions, the exploitation of the cruel AIDS epidemic by international drugs companies, means that these movements still have a huge amount to achieve.

The waves of immigration from Africa, Asia, Latin America and since 1989, Eastern Europe, into the NAFTA and EU countries has led to an outburst of racism, both from the states and from populist and fascist forces. Whilst globalising capitalism wants to export capital to wherever it can make the highest profit and import the raw materials and the skilled and semi–skilled labour it needs at home, it is not willing to grant a "free movement of labour" to complement a "free movement of capital".

We should be and should raise in our struggle against racism and persecution the fight to abolish the whole range of immigration laws that stain the statute books of so many capitalist countries.

Women and children fight back

Women have been drawn more and more into production by globalisation. This is in itself a positive fact insofar as it draws new fighters for freedom into the struggle. But as always capitalism does not do this for the benefit of women workers.

It does so because it believes women will work for less, will continue to look after children and the home for free. The fight for real equality is nothing unless it is for access to free, safe abortion and contraception and for free access to social facilities such as childcare.

These steps can diminish the double burden women face – work at work, work at home – and must be integrated with our struggle against global capitalism.

As in the nineteenth century in Europe, global capitalism today is only too willing to use child labour to make its superprofits. Sweated Labour has become a major issue once again with clothing, electronics and agribusiness all making billions out of it.



A movement has arisen both amongst the sweated workers themselves and amongst trade unionists and youth to combat this in united struggle across continents. This movement has drawn in trade unionists from the "first world" too and has partly broken from the protectionist approach of the past.

The immediate answers to these interlinked issues are: an immediate worldwide ban on child labour, a decent living wage for sweated workers, free primary and secondary schooling for children, the right to organise in trade unions, full democratic and civil rights for all.

Fighting oppression and militarism

Since 1989 more and more oppressed nations, racial and ethnic groups, indigenous peoples, have demanded freedom from their oppression and domination. The compulsory unions of peoples such as the USSR or Indonesia have broken up or are beginning to do so. Compulsion, national oppression, stand in the way of international solidarity.

The working class, youth, the popular masses of the oppressor nations must take up the cudgels on behalf of the oppressed. They must fight for the right to self–determination of all peoples – including their right to form separate states.

At the same time since small states are even more at the mercy of the mega corporations and the US superpower and its allies and agents we need to fight for regional and continental federations of states under the rule of the working class and the poor peasants.

The working class – especially workers of the imperialist countries themselves – have a duty to support the resistance of all semi–colonial countries to the dictates of Washington and the other major world powers, even if their regimes, like that of Iraq, are brutal dictatorships.

What is at stake is not the political regime but the country's absolute subservience to imperialism. The USA, Britain, France support equally vicious dictatorships as in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Their rulers spend most of their time in Paris, London and New York, where they are fawned upon by the leaders of the world's democracies. Their states – like Qatar – even become

"save havens" from anti–capitalist demonstrators for the WTO and IMF conferences. This too is what their democracy looks like.

At the same time we must step up the fight against militarism by the imperialist governments. This has taken the form of sending their troops into places like the Gulf and the Balkans – to "maintain" capitalist order. Their "peacemaking" or "peacekeeping" interventions have delivered neither peace nor democracy, let alone prosperity. All of us must fight to get the troops of the big powers out of those countries they oppress directly.

Now Bush junior is in the White House another threat has resurfaced – the national missile defence system that the big defence MNCs have been lobbying for to keep their profits up. No matter that it doesn't work, and threatens political and military conflict with China and Russia – those that paid for Bush to get into office must be rewarded with big contracts for research and hardware development.

The anti–capitalists need to campaign against the real and growing threat to peace through the further militarisation of space. Its only function is to guarantee of the continued rule of the USA as the world's only super power – enforced by the most deadly means imaginable. It must be stopped by huge protests and working class action before it is put into place.

Free trade, fair trade or planned trade?

We stand for planned social exchange instead of "free trade". The WTO has one sole aim: expanding corporate globalisation at the expense of the workers and working farmers of "North" and "South". For this reason it must be destroyed – not reformed.

Yet the WTO is set on a further round of expansion. Its meeting to be held in Qatar on 9–13 November 2001 is cynically misnamed named the "development round".

The big corporations and the G7 governments want the WTO to adopt rules on government procurement, food and water, energy distribution, social services, education, health and safety, genetically modified organisms and environmental sustainability.

In all of these areas they seek rules which will compel governments to admit private capital into these spheres. Enforcement of free trade rules on such areas undermine the struggles of unions and environmental organisations to use public ownership or protective regulations to limit the destructive and inhumane effects of unbridled private enterprise.

The General Agreement on Trades in Services (GATS) is a particular threat in these areas. There must be no limit on the ability of governments and people to regulate in order to protect, health, safety, public services and the environment.

We must put an end to corporate patent protectionism. Seeds, medicine, the results of the study of plant, animal and human genetics should all serve human needs, not the profits of the multinationals. The patenting of life forms including micro organisms must be prohibited. Essential medicines and other goods, must be made available free to those in urgent need – especially to people with AIDS.

Agriculture

The Agriculture Agreement subsidises industrial farming while small farmers suffer import liberalisation which wipes out their livelihoods and incomes. All support for export–oriented agribusinesses must be ended in Europe and North America. The dumping of their surplus products in Africa, Latin America and Asia must be halted.

The semi–colonial countries must be free to feed their people in a way which maximises their own food production, maintains employment, and prevents the flood of expropriated peasant farmers to the shantytowns of the ever growing mega cities.

Only in this way can these countries achieve "food sovereignty and security", encourage small farmers' co–operatives and practice sustainable agriculture which does not destroy the environment.

The WTO's Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) agreement must be junked. Third world countries must have the right to use locally produced goods to develop their own productive sectors. The WTO dispute settlement system enforces undemocratic and unfair rules which usurp the legislative role of third and second world nations and of local government.

The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the regional development banks supervise structural adjustment programmes to force trade liberalisation in third and second world countries. Workers in the first world must expose and campaign against the actions of their "own" governments in this area. The aim must be to force them to write off 100% of the debts owed to them by these countries. Instead huge compensation funds for past exploitation must be levied from the big banks and corporations – run under workers' inspection and control. With these funds – under the control of third world workers and peasants' organisations to prevent corruption by the elites – the problems of poverty eradication, development, health and education can begin to be tackled.

But an environmentally sustainable, economically adequate, socially just and democratically accountable trade system cannot be achieved under the world rule of corporate capital.

Only social ownership of the means of production can lead to a genuinely democratically planned exchange of goods and services across the world. But struggles to achieve some or all of these goals will expose to millions the neo–liberal "free trade" assault on the poor and train us to take over the world economy from the billionaires and the mega corporations.

International solidarity

Solidarity action has been vital component of effective struggles in the era of globalised capital. The international actions in support of the Liverpool dockers in 1996–7, the recent attempts to co–ordinate car workers' resistance to plant closures and the cross European actions against sackings and closures by Marks & Spencers' – must be replicated from the first day of each and every struggle.

Likewise when whole national labour movements in the second and third worlds take action to resist the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the IMF or the rulings of the WTO, unions in the "first" world must support them. Rapid solidarity actions are necessary whenever unions are victimised by their own national governments. A mounting wave of solidarity action will not only create a new international conscious identity within the world working class, it will signal to the corporate bosses and politicians that the era of givebacks, privatisations and deregulation is at an end.

Strengthening anti–capitalism

In the anti-globalisation movement the revolutionary left wing should fight for a series of key policies to develop both the movement's militancy and to build a mass base amongst workers, youth, the poor and oppressed.

We propose the following:

- Fight the "race to the bottom" of corporate globalisation. Instead level up labour, environmental, social and human rights conditions to the highest levels so far achieved. Campaign to force corporations, the national states, the regional blocs, the international financial authorities to concede demands for minimum conditions – charters of labour rights, working conditions, minimum wages, social conditions, trade union and democratic rights.
- Create an International Commission to investigate and expose the whole process of globalisation, mobilising experts from the trade unions, the NGOs, political and social movements. This should draw on direct reports from rank and file workers, peasants, urban poor and the indigenous peoples on their exploitation and oppression. The spread of these findings via alternative media, the web, independent and community radio, independent TV projects and papers will generate new struggles and broaden networks of solidarity.
- Open up the national and international forums, where decisions are really made, to inspection by the representatives of workers, peasants, communities and so on. We must fight for the right to access the computer records of the banks and multinationals. This means a

not only a frontal attack on business secrecy but encouraging and defending whistleblowers from within these secret corporate strongholds as well as Internet hackers from without.

● Enforce common safety, welfare and education standards on global corporations via trade unions in all countries they operate in. We need a charter of rights and conditions. We need to combine our actions to achieve it through the unions and their local and international allies.

● Oppose the mega corporations' closures and relocations by international campaigns of direct action to halt them Launch political campaigns for the immediate seizure of their property, without compensation, if they refuse to concede to the workers' demands.

● Expose the domination of local, national and world politics by the big corporations – crony capitalism on a grand scale. We must denounce big businesses' buying of governments and local authorities by legal means (lobbying) and illegal ones (corruption). Discredit the parties paid for by corporate cash by exposing the vast scale of the donations by the super–rich and big business. We should fight to break away the workers' organisations and those of the poor peasants from such parties and build new parties pledged to implement the interests of the workers and poor peasants, to centre their activity on mass direct action, not on elections. Contest elections not to spread the illusion that capitalism can be reformed but to popularise our demands.

● We demand the right to work, but totally oppose compulsory workfare schemes which impose low wages, and poor working conditions on the unemployed. For secure, permanent jobs that are socially, culturally and ecologically useful. For an immediate, general and massive reduction in working hours without loss of the pre–existing level of real wages, without "flexibility" or "annualisation". For the right to a retirement pension at the level of the average wage.

● Total opposition to all forms of casualisation of working conditions and wages and against imposed part–time work and insecure jobs. For equal pay and equal legal rights for men and women. Total opposition to any form of discrimination that prevents equal access to jobs and salaries to women.

● Free access to all essential services, paid for from a wealth tax: free health–care for all; cheap good quality state or municipal housing for all – guaranteed by the state and municipality – free education and training courses.

● Develop the infrastructure of society – transport, electricity, gas, water and communications by massive public investment raised by taxing the rich. Development to be planned democratically to ensure it is sustainable and for the benefit of all, under the control of the workers and poor peasants.

● For the right to justice; free access to the law, judges to be elected by the people, for the right to be tried by a jury of your peers in all criminal cases.

● For full freedom of movement for people and the abolition of restrictions on residency and work on grounds of nationality or citizenship. Total opposition to the exploitation of immigrant workers, youth and children in undeclared jobs

● We must open up the media to the masses. A new weapon of struggle is already being created from below, the independent media movement in the "first world" and the media of the unions, peasant organisations, communities in the third world. We must link them together via the web and launch a struggle to expose and take over the multimedia corporations of the Murdoch's and Berlusconi's. A media for the millions not the millionaires must be our battle cry.

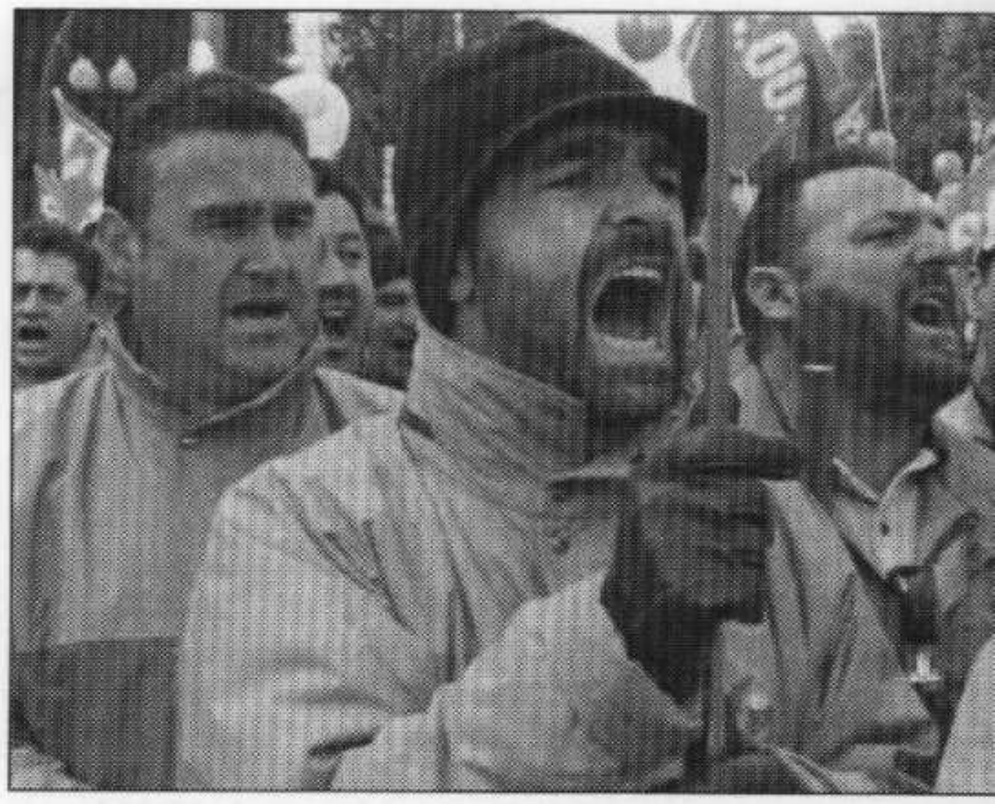
● Fight for the planned, environmentally sustainable, development of the second and third worlds. As long as the majority of humanity does not have clean drinking water, sanitation, electricity, healthcare, primary and secondary education it is sheer first world arrogance to talk of a "freeze on development" or "zero economic growth".

We can decrease the living standards of the rich. We can decrease the enormous waste of hyper–consumerism in the first world. We can make enormous savings through cutting out the waste of blind production for profit.

But we have to raise up the majority of humanity to the levels of a decent life which they themselves want. We can only do so by making this the planned goal of workers, peasants, the unemployed and underemployed world–wide.

● Stop global warming, which is a real threat to the future of civilisation. For a planned global shift away from energy production based on the burning of fossil fuels. All workers to be reallocated to other, environmentally sustainable work. Expropriate the oil, automotive and aerospace industries under workers' control and without compensation. For massive spending on alternative safe sources of energy – solar, wind and hydrogen power. For a vast expansion of public transport to reduce dependence on the private car.

● In agriculture we must end the domination of corporate agribusinesses and the landed estates of the rich. Overproduction for an unknown market is a terrible waste of resources – a source of food mountains in Europe and the US and famine in Africa and Asia. Make agriculture serve the total well–being of humanity within its natural and social environment. Instead of the goal of profit for the shareholders of the agribusiness corporations – the Chiquitas and the Monsantos – agriculture must meet the social goals of providing enough food for all, ending starvation and malnutrition, mass crop failures and man–made diseases (BSE etc.). Agriculture must be planned to provide



employment for a substantial part of the world's rural population, plus those who have been driven from the land. We must restore the devastated natural environments and preserve biodiversity as a treasure for future generations.

● End debt slavery – compensate the south for the plunder over centuries of its natural and human resources. In the G7 countries we must fight for the unconditional and total cancellation of the debt to all the countries of Latin America, Africa, South and East Asia. This is not a gift but only a first step in compensating them for the exploitation they have suffered for the last two hundred years. In these countries themselves we have to fight for the renunciation of the debt by their own governments.

Free trade?

Neither free trade nor protectionism under capitalism can meet the needs of human beings and their well–being on this planet. As long as capitalism exists we are opposed to protectionism by the developed countries against the products of the global south. Here we are in favour of free trade. The answer to employers taking advantage of "cheap labour" in the second and third worlds is not to exclude their goods by tariff barriers but to use trade union and democratic pressure to raise the wages and social conditions of these countries towards the levels of the "first world".

First and foremost this means defending the right to form trade unions and political parties to fight for these goals. However we should oppose the forced opening of the markets of the second and third worlds to the big banks and corporations of the first. For these countries we defend their right to protect their economies. The best means to do so would be by a democratically organised state bureau of foreign trade.

● End the drive to privatise social services where they are at present provided by the state. We must defend and extend these services at the expense of the rich.

● Create a new form of democracy out of today's struggles – destroy the power

of the capitalist class over the economy and over society (the state). To achieve this we need workers' and peasants' councils, general strikes, land occupations, militias, uprisings, the establishment of council power are all needed to achieve this.

● Break up the repressive apparatus of the capitalist states: disband the police, army high command, the top echelons of the civil service and state bureaucracy, the secret police forces and spy networks. Place all authority in the hands of working class and peasant councils and the armed people themselves.

A party of protest, a party for power

Our aim in the coming months and years must be international days of strike action, co–ordinated support for particular struggles, the fight to stop the passage of neoliberal treaties and prevent free trade blocs eroding our gains. For all this more is needed than just reliance on spontaneous militancy.

A permanent organisation is necessary that keeps the conditions, the struggles, the lessons of working class struggles around the world in full view of the workers in every country.

We urgently require an organisation that fights nationalism in all its forms and propagates working class internationalism – a global working class socialist consciousness.

We need a political organisation – a party – active in the unions and in all working class and popular organisations. To defeat our global enemies once and for all we need a party that fights for an international revolutionary action programme – elaborated to meet the needs of a world dominated by globalisation. Such an organisation must confront, weaken and ultimately oust the reformist bureaucracy that limits and controls the mass labour movements of the world.

It must offer a path of struggle not just to resist but to defeat global capitalism and create a new world. It must be a revolutionary, international, political party. It must combine united activity and the discipline of struggle with the fullest internal democracy. It must be a party "of a new type": different from the parliamentary reformist parties of social democracy or the monstrous bureaucratic tyrannies of the Stalinists.

But it will be a party nevertheless, because it will be an organisation fighting for power, but this time for the power of the majority, not the power of an elite.

As well as being based on the working class, such a party needs to win to its ranks the activists of the anti–capitalist movement, the radical students, the poor peasants, the landless–poor in the "third world".

Revolutionaries reject the idea that such parties will arise one–by–one on their own national terrain with their own one–sided and specific national "roads" to socialism.

This would be to repeat the worst aspects of the reformist Second International and the Stalinist Third International – precisely the features that led to their bureaucratisation, their absorption into imperialist society and their collapse.

The conditions of the twenty–first century make possible the simultaneous creation of parties from below (nationally) and above (internationally). The anti–capitalist movement is a vast network of interlinked campaigning forces. The breadth and combination of its "single issue" struggles should be celebrated–not greeted with sectarian distaste. In its early stages its political heterogeneity is inevitable. Within this movement there must be no exclusions of particular trends, whether anarchist or socialist, no refusals to debate and discuss the issues that the struggles we are involved in throw up.

But the confusion and political incoherence of the movement should not be celebrated. This is a weakness, not a strength. It can hinder our ability to fight successfully, not just on one demonstration, but on the many fronts where we are obliged to fight global capitalism.

Today our struggles are converging – in large measure because of the savagery of the big corporations and the USA's unchallenged hegemony on the world stage. To develop this convergence, deepen our common goals and struggle, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International is presenting these proposals for debate.

We do not believe we have all the answers, but we firmly believe that the more our movement can unite and combine in action for defined goals, the greater will be our prospects for success.

As our name suggests, we believe that the global anti–capitalist movement that is shaking our rulers today must now start to take a step further: towards assembling the forces and defining the activity of a new world party of social revolution. ★



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