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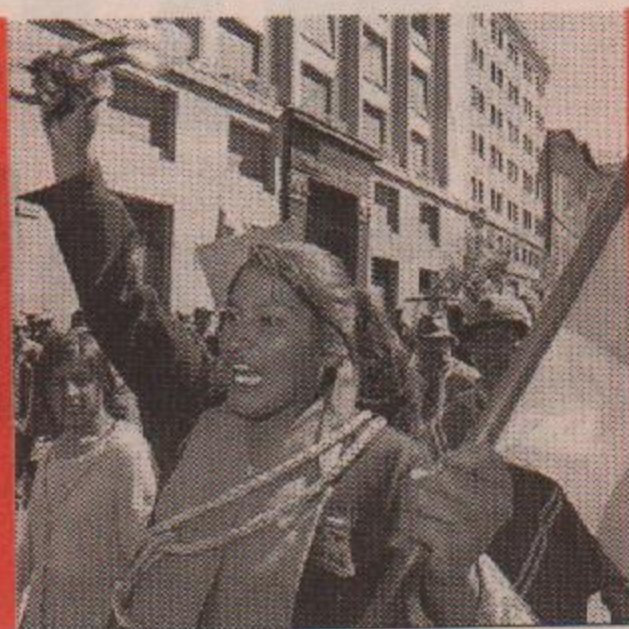
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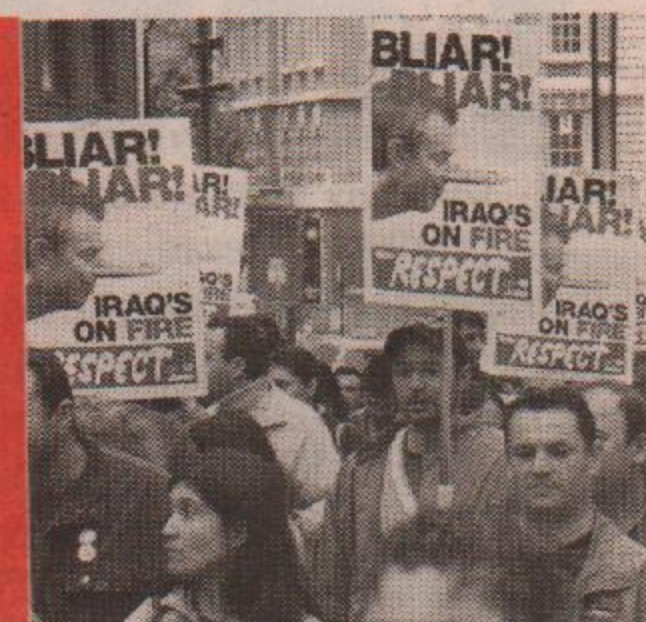
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POVERTY
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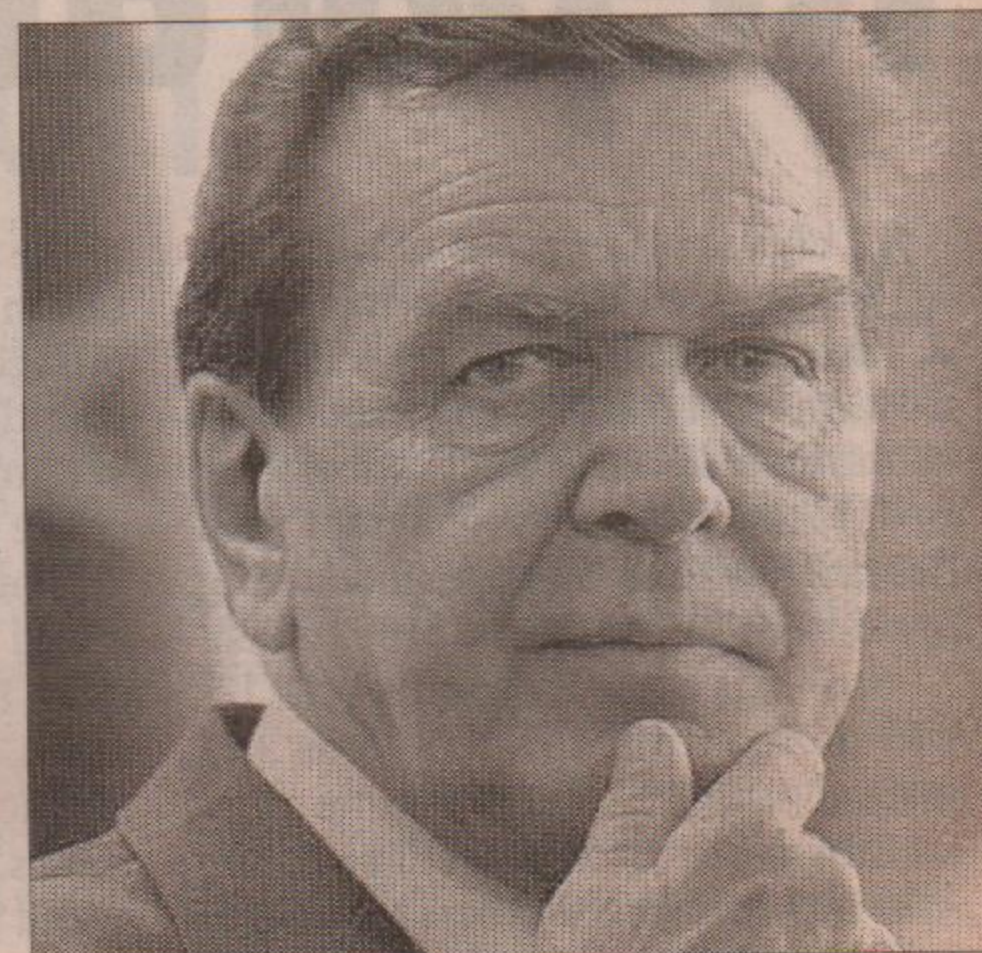
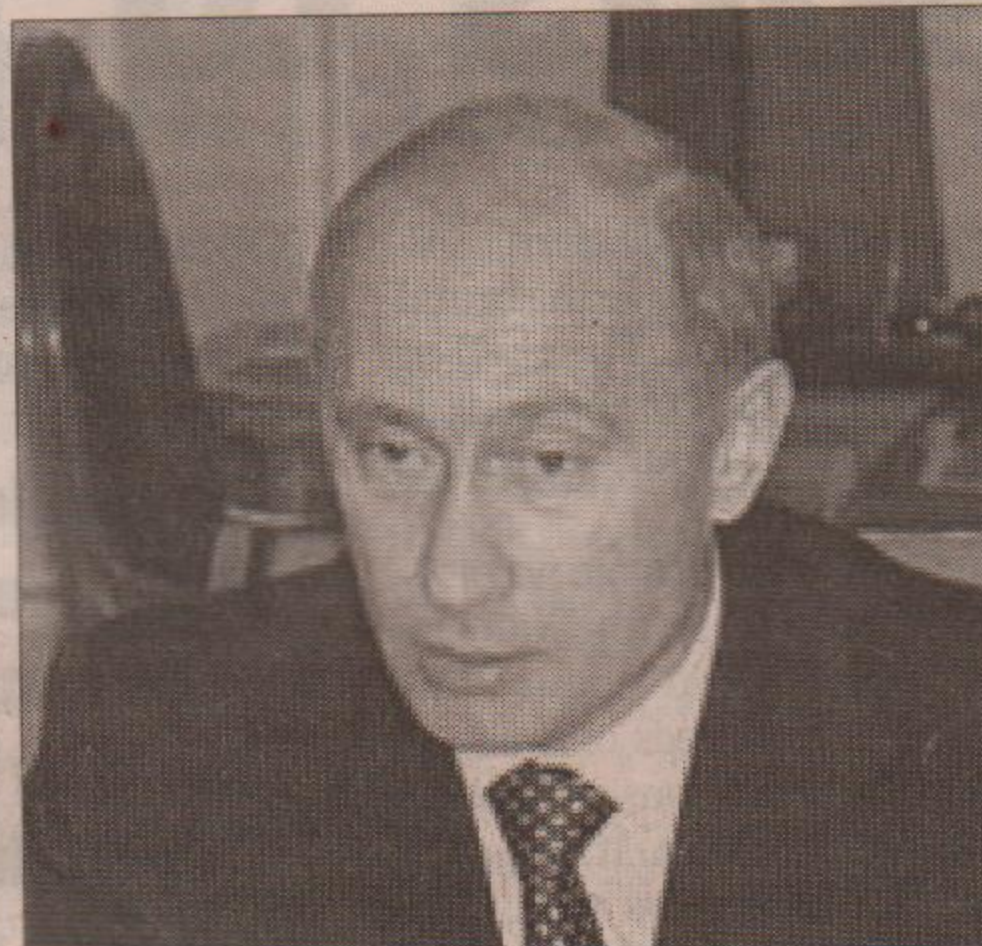
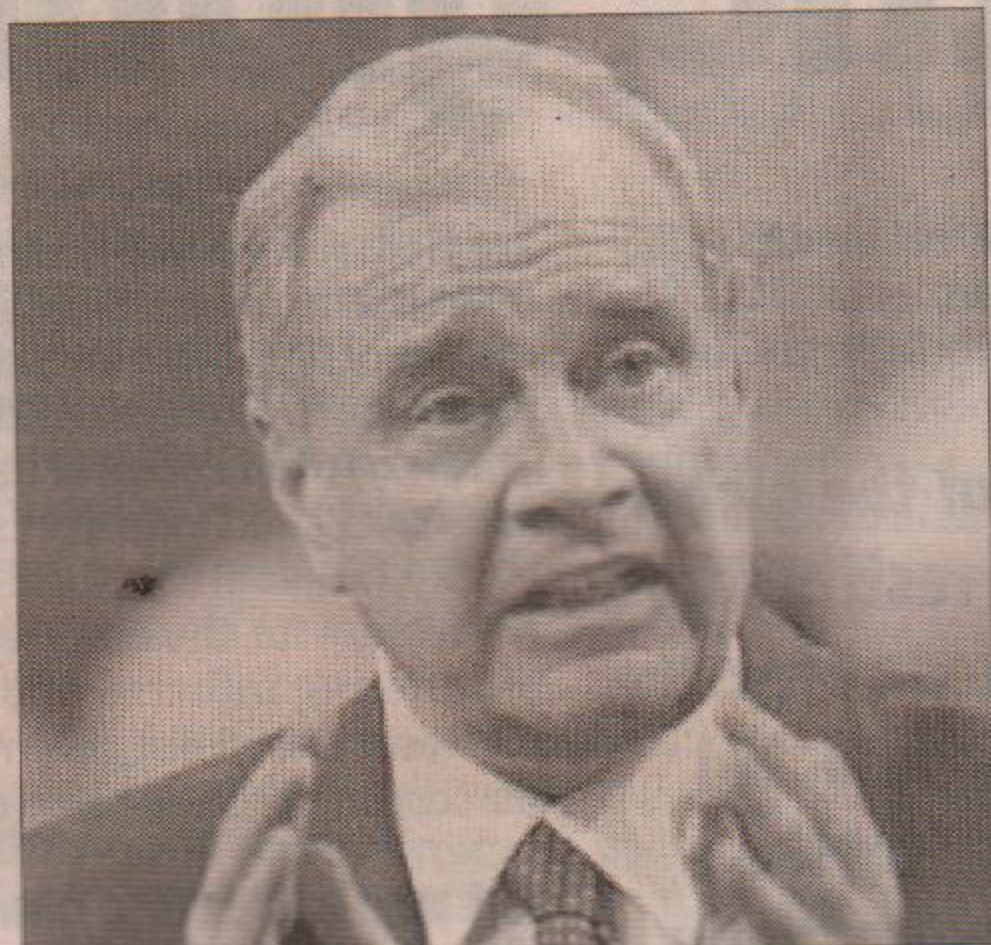
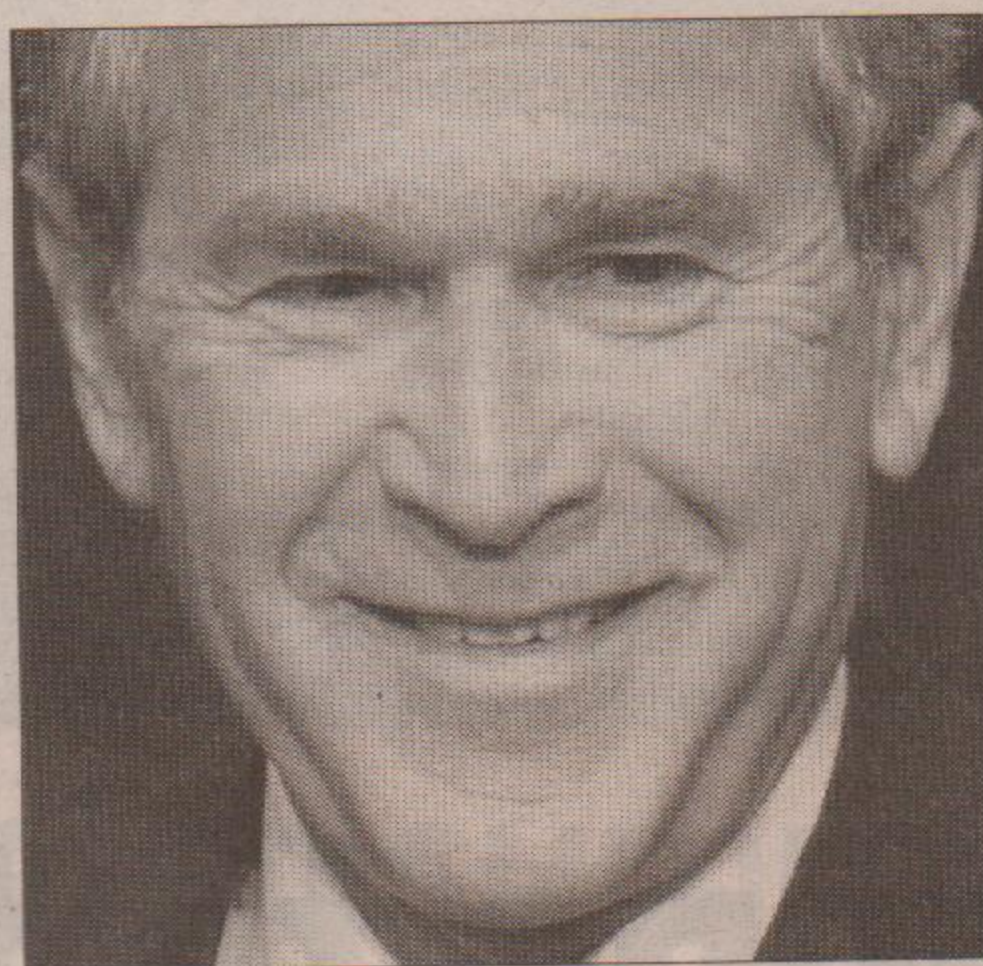
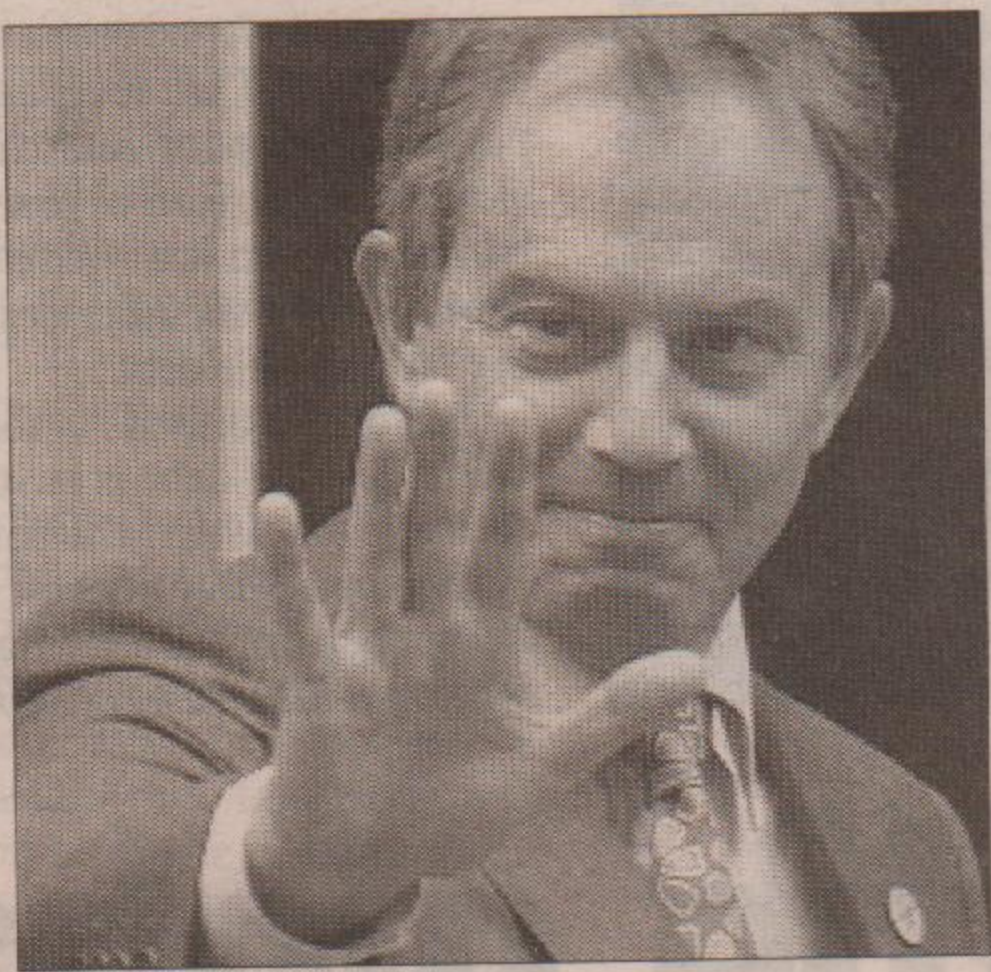
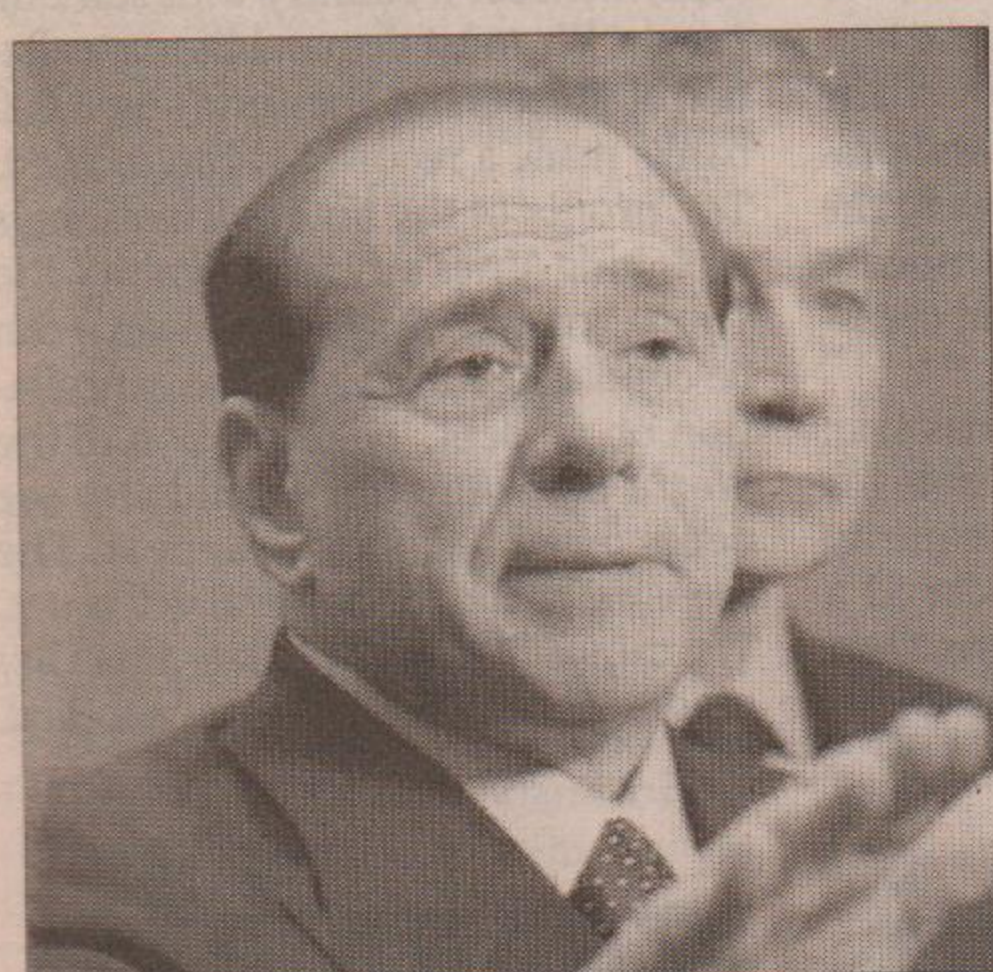
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TOMAKEPOVERTYHISTORY



MAKE THE G8 HISTORY

G8 debt relief plan is a pittance

Have the G8 agreed to cancel Third World debt? Not on your life. Brown's 11 June announcement aims to deflect mounting anger over the \$2.2 trillion debt that cripples whole continents. Brown knows hundreds of thousands are coming to Edinburgh and to the Live8 concerts, so he's posing as a great opponent of debt.

But did you know the following facts about the debt relief deal:

- The USA has only agreed to pay \$130 million a year over the next 10 years. That means in total over 10 years the USA will pay less than a third of what it spends on the Iraq war every month – which is \$4.3 billion
- Despite his posturing, Brown has promised just £70m a year from Britain
- These payments – which are made to compensate the

World Bank for writing down debts – are only guaranteed for three years

- The 18 countries receiving relief exclude many of the biggest and poorest countries in the world, such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nigeria. Sri Lanka is excluded, despite the horrific tsunami
- G8 countries, including the UK, have confirmed that the first payments “will come out of existing aid budgets”

US treasury secretary John Snow called the deal “an achievement of historic proportions”. Millionaire maverick Bob Geldof called it a victory “for Gordon Brown personally”. But millions around the world could be forgiven for seeing this announcement for what it is: a cynical attempt to head off angry protest by giving as little as possible, as late as possible, to as few as possible – and with

strings attached.

In fact Brown's “deal” could be little more than the already-agreed next step in a long-standing debt relief programme called HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries). It leaves the overwhelming bulk of the destructive third world debt owed to the banks and IMF intact. It does nothing to increase aid and may even reduce it, and it leaves the unfair global trade rules untouched.

So if you were planning to protest against debt slavery at the G8 summit in Edinburgh in July – don't stop. We have succeeded in raising awareness of this scandal among millions in the west – now we can turn anger into action. So let's press on for the cancellation of the whole debt, without conditions, and for reparations to the global south for centuries of exploitation.

Shut down the summit of shame

There's only one language the G8 leaders understand – mass action. So after marching through Edinburgh on Saturday 2 July, after debating alternatives at the counter-summits on 3 July, after attending concerts and listening to speeches, marching and celebrating in the streets ... let's march on the masters of poverty and war and shut down their summit on the day it opens, Wednesday 6 July.

Is there any point? You bet. If mass protest at the summit wasn't a real challenge to the G8, then why are they so scared of it?

Why have they got the police and the Perth and Kinross council to ban activists from marching anywhere near the Gleneagles hotel?

Why are they spending millions in Scotland's biggest ever security operation?

Don't be intimidated.

Remember your rights, and remember who these people are that are trying to take them from you.

The people who allow 30,000 children to die every day from poverty related diseases, who spend billions bombing Iraq so they can steal its oil, who preside over a system of indescribable wealth while millions live on less than a dollar a day, who are prepared to let their grandchildren live in a scorched and desiccated world rather than reduce carbon emissions – these are the people who want to stop you protesting outside Gleneagles.

In Genoa in 2001, 20,000 marched on the G8 summit on a hot Friday in July.

The police attacked them mercilessly, murdering one protestor – Carlo Giuliani – in cold blood. The next day, in a magnificent display of solidar-

ity, 300,000 people marched through the streets of Genoa, chanting, “G8, Assassini!”

The G8 and their hired hands in the police force need to be told calmly and clearly – any attempt to repress our protest will rebound on them in the same way.

That is why it is so disgraceful that Make Poverty History has placed a threatening statement from the police on its website, telling demonstrators “Do not let a minority tarnish the event. Tell police or stewards if you see suspicious or unacceptable behaviour.”

The minority who will be working to tarnish the event – to thwart it and prevent it reaching Gleneagles on 6 July – are these selfsame police.

If they try to obstruct the legitimate and legal right to protest then demonstrators will need to be ready to defend their rights in a determined manner.

REVOLUTION IS THE SOLUTION!

Fightback

Make Poverty History is campaigning on three demands: trade justice, drop the debt, and more and better aid. Workers Power believes that there are three demands that can make poverty history if they are part of struggle to challenge capitalism and the fight for socialism, writes *Keith Harvey*

This time last year chancellor Gordon Brown confessed that progress in eradicating poverty in the global south was stalled:

"...on current progress, we will fail to meet each Millennium Development Goal in Africa not just for 10 years but for 100 years. Far from achieving primary school education for all, 120 million children will still have no schools to go to... Our targets to cut infant mortality by two-thirds and halve poverty by 2015 will also go unmet in sub-Saharan Africa until 2150."

When many countries have to spend between 10 per cent and 50 per cent of their meagre government revenues on debt repayments, clearly they have little left for reducing child deaths and raising education and health standards.

African countries are the focus of the major initiatives. These countries have been sucked dry over the last three decades and yet they are still mired in debt. In 2004 the Congo paid 27 per cent of its government revenues in debt repayments, Zambia paid 31 per cent, and Guinea 20 per cent. Congo spent just \$1.40 cents per head a year on

Cancel all the debt

health care through the 1990s, Zambia \$9.40 cents, Guinea \$4.10 cents.

Africa received some \$540 billion in loans and paid back some \$550 billion in principal and interest between 1970 and 2002. Yet Africa still has debts of \$295 billion.

In spite of paying back more in principal and interest than it has received over the past 30 years, Africa's indebtedness has risen.

But Africa is only the most high profile part of a much bigger problem. The total amount of global south debt today is \$2.6 trillion. This has shot up from \$75 billion in 1970 and \$900 billion in 1985.

It gets bigger every year. Countries as large as Brazil, Argentina, and Indonesia have savaged essential social programmes in the new millennium to

find the money to service their debts.

The current G8-backed programme of debt relief (HIPC) draws on a pool of \$100 billion aimed at the poorest 42 countries, of which only \$30 billion so far has been disbursed since 1998. Despite forcing poor countries to jump through hoops to get this money (privatisation, reducing trade barriers) the UN concludes that for HIPC countries "debt service payments have been projected to increase steadily from about \$2.4 billion to \$2.6 billion between 2003 and 2005."

Brown's proposal is to cancel just \$40 billion. Even this meets stiff resistance from Germany, France and Japan. The proposal also ignores debts to the IMF and debts to commercial banks.

The Make Poverty History campaign has a slightly bigger ambition. It wants

to see "the unpayable debts of the world's poorest countries cancelled in full." Depending on which nations are included, that could cost \$300-500 billion. That is certainly off the G8 radar screen.

The G8 do not want to cancel the debt burden; they want to get rid of debts that will never be paid and turn poor countries into "good debtors". Debt burden gives the G8 leverage over the policies of the poor countries and provides steady stream of revenues to the banks. Reform is aimed at removing debt induced social crises and creating "sustainable debt".

But as the United Nations has said: "What level of debt is sustainable for countries in which the vast majority of the population lives on under \$1 a day per person?" (United Nations, *Debt Sustainability Oasis or Mirage*, 2004)

For any honest, reasonable person, none of this poses an insolvable problem. What's more important, the life of millions of children, their education and protection from disease, or whether a handful of billionaires have to choose between a large or small yacht?

But the obvious choice is one the G8 governments can never make, because they rule on behalf of those billionaires, on behalf of the multi-trillion dollar companies and banks. They choose their side: world imperialism and the ruling class. The oppressors.

There is no affordable level of debt repayment for a country with starving people. We must demand the cancellation of all debt now. The world's top 1,000 banks made a record \$417bn in 2004. The profits of the big multinationals exploiting Africa's mineral wealth - Rio Tinto, Unilever, Anglo-American - can be confiscated to pay for the cancellation on all debt. The abolition of the World Bank and IMF would also see debts owed to them disappear. The money is there; the political will is not. The campaigns must escalate after G8 meetings until all the debts are cancelled.

Reparations to the global south

Aid is another focus of the Make Poverty History campaign. It seeks at least another \$50bn of aid from rich countries and wants these countries to devote 0.7 per cent of their GNP to aid. Blair says he agrees with them. Brown has called for a doubling of aid from \$50 billion to \$100 billion.

Bush has made it clear that the US will not commit to such goals and instead has agreed more famine relief for Ethiopia to the tune of \$674 million. After all he needs to harness his cash to fight wars. Iraq alone has cost more than \$100 billion to date.

What is needed is to get away from the begging bowl mentality. What's needed is not charitable aid but reparations - and on a huge scale.

The exploitation and oppression of Africa, Asia and South America by the west has always been an essential part

of the capitalist system. Western capitalism was created alongside the brutal pillage of the Americas. The theft of countless thousand tons of gold and silver, mined by slave labour, wiped out entire populations.

This first wave of carnage was followed by the slave trade, the kidnapping, torture and forced labour until death, of tens or hundreds of millions of Africans in the plantations of the West Indies and southern USA. It was only ended in the USA 140 years ago.

The conquest of India, the destruction of entire civilisations, the invasion of China and the compulsory sale of Opium to the Chinese population, all formed part of the colonisation of the world by western capitalism.

"Capitalism came into the world dripping in blood," said the great communist fighter, Karl Marx. It still is.

Today the chains that bind the global south to the west are less obvious. The colonies have largely been abolished.

The people of the global south need restitution for the hundreds of years of suffering inflicted upon them by the capitalist governments, corporations and banks of the West

But those chains still exist and still choke the life out of the world's poor.

The oppressed nations of the south

are tied to their western masters by financial manacles. Debt service payments, foreign direct investment, share issues, portfolios. All of these bland words conceal a system of theft, systematic exploitation and oppression.

The people of the global south need restitution for the hundreds of years of suffering inflicted upon them by the western capitalist governments and the corporations and banks of the West.

But who will decide how much?

The people of these nations must decide themselves. As a first step, all branches of banks and multinationals in these nations and their assets must be handed over, without compensation, to their employees and their organisations - to the workers and poor peasants.

Next the workers and peasants of

these nations must draw up a plan, a complete and comprehensive list of everything they need, from HIV drugs, to tractors, to school rooms, books and pencils, to provide a decent life for them and their children.

This is not utopian. The UN Millennium Fund has set aside huge sums to train up experts in education, health, urban planning in poor countries.

These are the people that can draw up an audit of the destruction wrought by rich countries' companies and governments on their lives and what's needed to repair it.

Naturally, G8 governments and multinationals won't do this willingly. But mass action by the workers and anti-capitalists in the west and by the people of the oppressed nations can force them to do it. We will make the cost of any refusal to hard for them to bear.

Repudiate the debt

From its very beginning the all-conquering expansion of the western capitalists has been resisted by those it sought to colonise. From the wars against the conquistadors, to the slave revolts, the Haitian revolution of 1791, the self-determination struggles of India, Africa, Ireland and South America, the Vietnam war, right up to today with the Iraqi resistance and the Bolivian fight against water privatisation, there has never been any shortage of determination and success against the imperialist robbers.

Today we must match and surpass the feats of yesteryear. In the west we must support our brothers and sisters in the global south in their struggle against imperialist domination, because the same imperialists who oppress them, rule us. We have a common struggle.

We should support the demand of African finance ministers for the west to cancel the entire debt now owed by their continent, and demand in turn that these ministers act now - to repudiate the debt themselves.

Support for this demand in comes from the head of the UN's Millennium

Fund, Jeffrey Sachs: "If you try to collect the debt, you are killing millions of people. If the countries pay the debt, they can't meet their developmental needs. Africa should ignore its \$201 billion debt burden."

Officials in the US Treasury Department rejected Sachs' repudiation plan because it would negate one of the primary aims of the current debt-relief system - imposing conditions to guarantee that debtor countries make economic choices that fit the free market vision of the Treasury, the Bank and the IMF.

This is just what President Kirchner in Argentina allowed to happen after the 2001 debt crisis erupted. In the face of a massive wave of resistance to an IMF austerity programme, Argentina defaulted on its debt in December of that year. It refused to meet the IMF's most onerous demands. It began a campaign of non-payment of debt to commercial banks but crucially Argentina did not cancel the debt to the IMF, its biggest creditor.

Since 2002 Kirchner's government has paid \$12 billion to the IMF, prioritising payments to that institution above

any other creditor. The bourgeois ministers in Argentina satisfied the debt-lust of the IMF just when they should have refused to give it back a penny.

We must support the right of the global south to refuse to pay the debt and must match any action they take with solidarity action in the west including strikes, demonstrations and a refusal to co-operate with any attempts to starve the poor countries into submission. After all, thousands of Italians lost their savings when the Argentine bonds they were encouraged to buy by savings banks became worthless overnight. A campaign to compensate ordinary working people can be a powerful ally to the people of the global south.

To fight debt, we need to fight the entire capitalist system and all its representatives, wherever they are. To abolish poverty and debt penury we need to abolish capitalism. To do this, we need to build a new global political party of the working class - a fifth International - committed to the forcible overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a democratically planned economy (see page 9).

Anti-Capitalism

SUMMIT SIEGES & SOCIAL FORUMS

A new pamphlet from the League for the Fifth International.

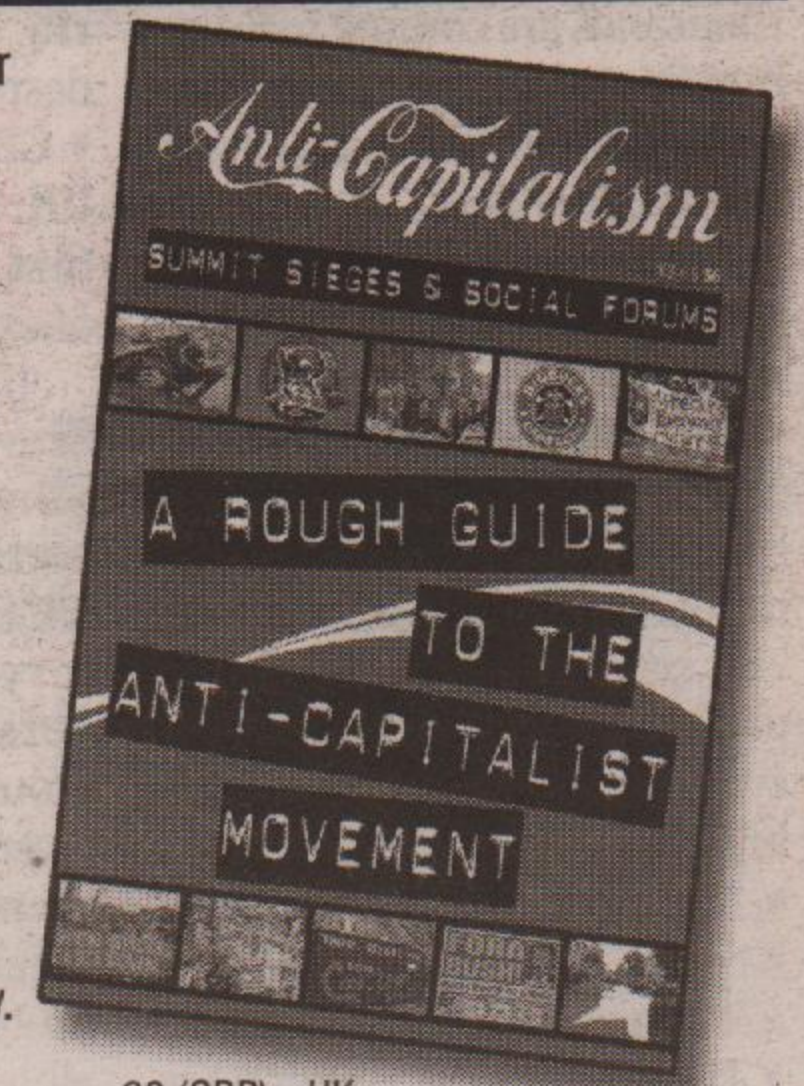
It surveys the global movement, from its origins in Chiapas and Seattle, through the writings of its principal theorists, and the history of its summit sieges and its social forums.

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Where next after the G8?

Seize the day!

The July G8 demonstrations in Scotland will see hundreds of thousands converge on Edinburgh to protest against global poverty and the big business agenda of the G8 leaders.

Make Poverty History rapidly filled 10 trains and put on hundreds of coaches. Its message to cancel debt and increase aid has inspired hundreds of thousands in schools, colleges and workplaces across the country. Trades unions have mobilised such as Amicus, which has laid on 18 coaches for its members.

The SWP's Globalise Resistance and the anarchist Dissent network will mobilise thousands of anticapitalists. Local G8 mobilising committees have sprung up in several cities such as Manchester and Leeds, alongside local social forums such as Cardiff and Leicester. They are all organising to get as many people as possible to Scotland for the protests. It is certain that this will be the biggest antipoverty and anticapitalist mobilisation the UK has ever seen. Add to this local demonstrations and Live8 concerts and it could rival in size the February and March 2003 antiwar mobilisations.

Bob Geldof's call for a million people to converge on the opening of the G8 on 6 July was greeted with howls of rage from police chiefs and Labour politicians. He called on young people to walk out of schools and take three days off to do so. Suddenly "Saint Bob" became irresponsible Bob, dangerous Bob - a Pied Piper of Hamelin threatening to empty the classrooms and lead swarms of youngsters against the G8. Geldof is certainly an unreliable maverick. He may be pressured to divert his followers into a concert in Murrayfield, but his call was absolutely right and many young people will have taken him at his word and decided to join the G8 protest.

The militant anticapitalist wing of this vast movement will mobilise thousands of protestors to confront the 12-mile "exclusion zone" around the

G8 summit, attempting to shut it down. On the Sunday 3 July there will be an anti-G8 counter-summit with organisations from all sides of the anti-G8 movement debating alternatives to capitalist globalisation.

The counter-summit must discuss how to continue the movement after the G8, especially with so many young people present, both existing anticapitalist and antiwar activists and first-time protestors. By then it will have become plain to many that the result of lobbying the G8 leaders is just another set of empty promises on debt relief and aid linked to further demands for privatisations in the poor countries.

A movement, even of a million people, that comes and goes away again, runs the risk of achieving nothing, except perhaps to make many people cynical about mass mobilisations in future. The failure to take sustained mass action after the great antiwar marches in 2003 led to a withering of the antiwar movement. This must not happen again.

Here in Britain we must seize the opportunity to turn these G8 mobilisations into a lasting and co-ordinated movement. Mass movements cannot last forever if they are based solely on spontaneous anger and hope for change. They need to get organised. Tens of thousands would willingly become organised activists against the war drives, privatisations, poverty and racism they see growing in Britain and around the world.

If the leaders of the July protests put out the call to go back to every town and city in Britain and across Europe and build local bodies pledged to continue the fight, scores of thousands would take it up. In this way we could build strong local co-ordinating bodies across Europe: against the occupation of Iraq, against the rise of the BNP, against the environmental crisis, against the attacks on pensions and cuts to the civil service, against global poverty.



Counter summit must co-ordinate action

All the major figures and organisations in the anticapitalist and antiglobalisation movement will be present in Edinburgh and at the counter-summit.

Socialists and ecologists, trade unionists and students, groups from Britain, Europe and around the world will attend. This is the raw material from which to build a powerful, democratically organised mass movement against global capitalism.

But will such a movement be launched in Edinburgh? Unfortunately, the prospects of the "leaders" of the big organisations doing so are not good. After all most of them, the union leaders, the NGO chief executives, the CND leaders and even the Socialist Workers Party, are the same people who let the 2003 mass movement slip through their fingers.

The G8 Alternatives counter-summit is a broad event involving the left, some NGOs and organisations that have a history of being involved in anticapitalist summit sieges at Prague in 2000 and Genoa in 2001, plus successive meetings of the European Social Forum. Sadly, there is a real danger that G8 Alternatives will remain little more than a set of interesting discussions and could fail to take the initiatives to establish an organised UK-wide movement.

For example, seminars of trade unionists will discuss privatisation in Europe and the EU constitution, a workshop of youth organisations will debate how to mobilise their generation for action, groups from across the world will discuss the oppressive impact of globalisation on women and the environment, others how to push down the

racist immigration barriers being thrown up around Europe.

The aim of these sessions should be to go beyond general discussion and try to take practical steps - create networks, draw up campaigning plans and debate and vote on proposals for action.

Worst of all, there will be no Assembly of all the participants to tie the counter-summit together at the end, in the way that the Assembly of Social Movements meets at the end of the European Social Forum and agrees a calendar of common mobilisations.

Such an Assembly could come up with an action plan and establish a permanent co-ordination of organisations to implement it - a network of social forums right across the UK, tied in to the annual European and World Social Forum assemblies.

We need a UK social forum

Social Forums need to be democratic bodies connecting different groups, youth and trade unionists for discussion and action.

The Italian Social Forum movement grew up after the protests against the G8 in Genoa, Italy, in July 2001. When one protestor, Carlo Giuliani, was murdered in cold blood by the police and Premier Silvio Berlusconi threatened a state of emergency and the arrest of anticapitalist activists, social forums sprouted all over Italy, organising mass strikes and demonstrations for over a week that forced Berlusconi to back down. They formed the basis of successive days of mass action against Berlusconi's attacks on social services. And the first European Social Forum conference (ESF), which the Italian movement convened in Florence in 2002, saw a radical Assembly of the Social Movements raise the call which led to the 15 February 2003 international antiwar demonstration, the largest global demonstration ever seen.

The Italian movement showed the potential of such local co-ordinating bodies to develop into real councils of action, with delegates representing the anticapitalist youth and the working class movement and a wide spectrum of militant community organisations

and campaigns. They were democratic, took decisions and focused on action. They provided an antidote to the bureaucracy and routinism of the trade union movement, NGO's and much of the left in Italy.

A UK Social Forum could unite currently fragmented local groups - anti-G8 campaigns, local Make Poverty History supporters, groups of school students campaigning against debt, trade unions, and political organisations. It could provide a national organisation that could co-ordinate the activism, give it a profile and impact, and organise on a greater scale for key international events such as the EU summit in Britain this autumn.

Such local bodies, whether they were called social forums, action councils, people's assemblies, could draw in the thousands of potential activists and attract the tens of thousands beyond them with regular, systematic campaigning on these issues in our local communities, unions, workplaces and campuses. We could organise an annual UK Social Forum which had at its head an Assembly of the delegates from the local social forums, the unions the anticapitalist parties and so on.

Activists should raise the issue of how to continue the movement and the need

for a UK social forum in every session at the counter-summits, even holding a spontaneous assembly or meeting on the question if the response is positive. But even if we don't succeed and the summits wind up with nothing lasting left in place, the story isn't over. Protests at the EU summit in Britain later this year will give us a chance to hold a similar event in conjunction with the ESF movement, and call for a UK Social Forum next year. And in January 2006 the World Social Forum will gather in Venezuela, and at Easter the European Social Forum in Athens will be held. Both will hear calls to deepen and organise a worldwide movement.

But for that to happen it's up to every activist in the movement to start arguing this now and building the movement that can deliver it. Those that attend the G8 protests should hold local report back meetings and propose the creation of local social forums to keep the movement in motion. Existing G8 committees should keep going, and work to draw in all the organisation and local bodies which mobilised for Edinburgh and Gleneagles to build a social forum in every city and town.

- Build a network of Social Forums across Britain
- Build a UK Social Forum

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Resist Blair's attacks at home

Tony Blair may be pre-occupied with Europe and the G8 this summer but his government is already planning the next series attacks on working people. *Keith Sellick, Rachel Hardcastle and Dave Gay* outline the attacks on pensions, schools and hospitals as New Labour starts its third term

Selling schooling

There is nothing Tony Blair hates more than a 'bog standard' state financed school, run by an elected local education authority and locally elected governors.

He does not even trust his new Secretary of State for Education, former Treasury minister Ruth Kelly. She has to have a fully committed Blairite minder. That person is Andrew Adonis.

Adonis was Blair's education adviser and he has spent his time pursuing unpopular policies such as top-up fees, city academies and foundation schools. Now in ermine in the House of Lords, as an education minister he is charged with breaking up state education and letting private firms run our schools and colleges.

Adonis is also known to favour the break up of local education authorities and handing control of schools over to governors and parents. But of course the real people running the new schools will be the private sector and rich businessmen and women who will rush to invest in schools - provided Labour guarantees them mega profits and of course control over their investments.

Labour's third term plans were outlined last July in its *Five Year Strategy*. This called for 200 more privately run city academies by 2010. Indeed all schools could become independent specialist schools. It also put forward plans to encourage schools to become Foundation Schools. These would leave local education authority on a vote of school governors and would have control of all the buildings and playing fields; they would run their own budgets and be able to set their curriculum within the parameters of national guidelines. The report also called for schools to be run by more new providers: business, religious groups and voluntary organisations. This is a massive extension of the pro-market policies of Labour's first two terms.

The government report *Building Schools for the Future* also plans further rebuilding and refurbishing of the stock of secondary schools along similar lines to the Private Finance Initiatives in hospitals, which have ripped off the NHS and delivered poor quality buildings.

All these policies will erode education as a part of the public sector and introduce more private companies in the running of classrooms and the building of schools - and none of it needs more acts of parliament because all the legislation is already in place.

While privatised schools are being thrown up apace, traditional LEA run schools are being chopped. The schools' inspectorate Ofsted has revealed that a school is closing every eight days with 46 schools being closed last year. The government outlined in the Queen's Speech plans to handover the closure of schools to Ofsted so taking decisions away from local authorities altogether. The days of school education policy being accountable to the electorate are over.

All this will break up national education, hand over our children's future to business and undermine the ability of teachers and parents to fight for better pay and better schools.

For the students it will mean more bans on what they wear, more rules and less real education as they are subjected what the business decides the new generation of workers will learn.

Blair talks about greater choice, parental power and a more diverse system. This is code for the break up of the state sector and students and parents being subject to the mercy of the market.

Plundering pensions

The government has decided the UK is going through a "pensions crisis" and it is the workers who are going to pay for it. According to New Labour people are retiring too early and paying in too little from their meagre wages.

Public sector pensions were targeted before the election when the government announced a "non-negotiable" extending of retirement age from 60 to 65. Strike action and the threat of it spreading throughout the public sector in the midst of the election campaign led the government to postpone the attack. This allowed the cowardly trade union leaders to call off strike action, just when it would have been most effective.

Surprise, surprise, now the government plans to press ahead anyway. Between 2005 and 2008 they will bring in:

- A five-year increase in normal retirement age to 65 (immediate for new workers, and phased in for existing employees).
- The exclusion of bonuses and overtime from pension entitlement calculations, reducing pensions.
- An increase in employees' pension contributions.
- A changed basis for health workers' and civil servants' pensions, which will significantly disadvantage most employees.

In the private sector things are even worse. There are about 13.1 million workers in the UK without an occupational pension.

Companies that do provide pension schemes are closing down secure, "defined benefit" schemes and replacing them with "defined contribution" schemes - what you might get out depends on stock market and investment performance!

Blair has put David Blunkett in charge of pension reform. He has made noises about making people use their houses as security.

Work longer, pay more, place your pension pot with the swindlers of the stock market - this is Labour's plan for our futures.



Workers like firefighters must take action to defend their pensions

Handing hospitals to big business

Following Tony Blair's "I will listen" promise, new health secretary Patricia Hewitt announced within two days of getting her new job that she would spend "three months listening to patients and staff".

A week later, the "listening process" clearly over, she announced a massive expansion of privately run independent treatment centres. The NHS will give £3 billion to the private sector to carry out operations over the next five years. This is more than double the current amount and means that the private sector will be carrying out between 10 to 15 per cent of NHS operations. The government will pay the private sector for a guaranteed number of operations - a minimum of £500 million a year - even if the actual numbers carried out are less.

Hewitt also said that whole hospitals will be allowed to close because of private sector expansion and payment by results. Labour is even having to bring in legislation to keep Accident and Emergency departments open if the rest of a hospital closes! But don't worry: in the words of the new health secretary "the private sector is transforming the NHS not dismantling it."

Health experts did not share this view. Vincent Marks, Professor of Clinical Biochemistry at the University of Surrey, said: "This is really the destruction of the NHS." Even the Tory health spokesperson Andrew Lansley said that the private sector was getting more money per operation than the NHS!

The government also wants more Foundation Hospitals. These will be allowed to retain profits, invest them as managers see fit and run the services that they want. Patient care will be determined by the market and profitability.

There will also be more Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes to build hospitals and to run ancillary services such as cleaning and cooking. A recent House of Commons Public Accounts Committee report revealed that construction giant John Laing had a 60 per cent profit margin on the Norfolk and Norwich PFI hospital.

Some hospitals will do well: they will recruit the best staff, buy the best equipment and get the best private firms to do operations. Other hospitals, probably in working class areas, will have to cut services, close wards and eventually close down - as some have already. The result will be a two tier NHS, an inability to plan services nationally and a break up of contracts for staff - it will weaken the unions and patients' ability to defend services.

After 2008 there is a planned reduction in spending. Currently the amount spent on the NHS is about 7.4 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product. But this commitment runs out in 2008, and most experts believe it will return to about 4 per cent quickly.

If the government is allowed to push through these measures, by the end of the decade the NHS will be fragmented, with private operations and contractors flourishing and the numbers of Foundation Hospitals growing. Hospitals in poorer areas will be closing and the money given by the Treasury dramatically reducing.

The scene will be set for abandoning the principle that health services should be free at the point of delivery, and charging for operations and other services in NHS hospitals will be the next "big idea" - whether it comes from New Labour or the Tories.

workers power WHAT WE SAY



FIGHT THE CUTS:

- Stop privatisation and PFI
- Nationalise all private healthcare and schools without compensation
- Tax the rich to pay for a massive expansion and improvement of education, healthcare and pensions
- State owned services to be controlled and managed democratically by the workforce
- Nationalise private pension funds and merge them into a single state pension scheme
- Occupational pension payments to be guaranteed at the level of two-thirds of earnings on retirement
- Minimum pension of £300 a week per person, to bring two million pensioners out of poverty

THE WAY FORWARD:

- Build an alliance of public sector unions to resist the attack on pensions and public services
- Set up democratic co-ordinations at local, regional and national level to organise action and unite the struggles
- Bring in delegates from beyond the public sector - from private sector workforces, from pensioners, from the unemployed and youth
- Organise for strikes - including all-out indefinite action - against these attacks
- For a rank and file movement in the trade unions to hold union leaders to account and to organise action independently of them if necessary

FOR A NEW WORKING CLASS PARTY:

The party that is launching these attacks on the working class is the Labour party - which was founded a hundred years ago to represent the interests of working people!

It is increasingly clear to hundreds of thousands of former Labour voters that Blair's party is acting for the capitalists, not the workers; for the few, not the many.

That's why Labour's core vote fell so sharply in the general election. Millions opposed Blair's bloody war and his pro-market agenda for our public services.

Our trade unions are in the main still funding Blair's party. But some unions like the firefighters and the transport

workers are now outside it.

With Blair's reduced majority, the more leftwing Labour MPs are starting to make a bit more noise and get organised. Others are joining alternatives like Respect.

All the antiwar, anti-privatisation, and anti-Blair forces need to break with Labour and form a new workers' party. To this end, Workers Power proposes that the trade unions, the Labour left, anticapitalists, socialist

groups, Respect and anti war campaigners call a Conference in Spring 2006 to hammer out a plan of mass action to stop Blair in his tracks.

It is increasingly clear to hundreds of thousands of former Labour voters that Blair's party is acting for the capitalists, not the workers; for the few, not the many

We propose that top of the agenda for the movement should be forming a new all-Britain political party of the working class. We believe such a party should struggle for power through revolutionary means, to carry through a socialist transformation of society.

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

CAPITALISM

Long ago capitalism developed the material and human resources to end poverty and inequality on a world scale. Yet it will not do this. It cannot because of its fundamental features: private ownership of production and the division of the world into competing nation states. The factories, the land, the mines, oil fields and banks are all owned by a tiny handful of billionaires, whose power and wealth is defended by national armies, police forces and security services.

To liberate humanity from hunger, insecurity, war and disease this tiny ruling class must be overthrown. Only the working class has the strength, the centrality to production and the interest to carry this through. Capitalism must be abolished by a workers' revolution, and a society without class divisions, without bureaucratic, military and police repression, must be created. Only in such a society will the last traces of national and racial oppression, the oppression of women, youth, lesbians and gays finally disappear.

The exploiters will resist this revolution with savage ferocity. But their resistance can be broken by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution, disintegrating the forces of repression, the capitalist state.

The capitalist politicians, top civil servants, judges, the police and army chiefs must be swept away - the army and the police force must be smashed and replaced with a militia of the armed working people.

All power must pass into the hands of democratic councils of delegates from the working class, directly elected by the workers and poor farmers and subject to instant recall by them. This is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For the exploiters it will certainly seem oppressive, indeed they will lose all their wealth and power. But for the all the formerly exploited classes it will be the most democratic society ever seen. And even this state will only be a transitional form on the road to a completely classless and stateless society: communism.

To achieve this, all large-scale production and distribution must be taken into social ownership and be democratically planned. Under workers' control, we could share the work between all able people and every improvement in productivity could be used to reduce the length of the working week. Poverty, social inequality and the underdevelopment of whole continents could be systematically overcome.

IMPERIALISM

Imperialism is the highest and most violent stage of capitalism. In the imperialist system a few great capitalist powers and corporations exploit billions in all countries and use their vast military machines to crush anyone who resists them.

For this reasons we support all resistance to their invasions and occupations. We demand an end to the occupation of the Iraq and we support the Iraqi people's armed resistance. We support the Palestinians' struggle to free their homeland of Zionist occupation. We demand the withdrawal of all British troops from abroad including from Northern Ireland. We demand the dissolution of Nato and all other imperialist pacts.

SOCIAL OPPRESSION

We fight all racism and national oppression and defend refugees and asylum seekers. We demand the opening of the borders, giving all migrants the right to work, social security and full citizenship rights. We fight to deny the fascists any platform for their views and support organised self defence against fascist gangs and racial attacks.

We fight for women's liberation from physical and mental abuse, from bearing the sole or main burden of domestic labour, from suffering sexual exploitation, unequal pay and discrimination at work. Women must have control over their own fertility, including the right to free abortion and contraception on demand.

Lesbians and gay men must be defended against harassment on the streets, at work and in the schools. They must have equal legal rights to marry and bring up children.

We must fight the oppression of young people. We demand an end to the harassment of young people by government, state and press. Young workers should get equal pay and the same rights as other workers. Schools and colleges must be run by the representatives of school students, education workers and local working people. We fight for independent revolutionary youth organisations linked to a revolutionary youth international.

DEMOCRACY

We must fight for the abolition of all the many undemocratic elements in Britain today: the monarchy, the House of Lords, the unelected judiciary, the state church. There should be no privilege for any one religion. The rights of all faith groups to practice their religion must be protected but all religious schools must be abolished. All blasphemy laws must be abolished and restrictions on the right to criticise religion opposed.

TRADE UNIONS

We must fight the privileged officials in the trade unions who sell out our struggles. All union officers must be elected, recallable, and removable at short notice and earn the no more than average pay of their members. Rank and file unionists must form a movement in and across all unions to dissolve the trade union bureaucracy.

REFORM AND REVOLUTION

We oppose reformism and the pro-capitalist actions of the Labour Party in government and in opposition. Labour, for all its organised links to the trade unions, is a capitalist party in its programme, and leadership. It is a bourgeois workers party.

To lead a social revolution the working class needs a new type of party which unites its most conscious and active militants, giving a lead in the trade unions and other mass organisations in their day to day struggles and directing them towards the social revolution. For this purpose an action programme of transitional demands is essential.

STALINISM

For decades Stalinism was wrongly described as Communism, has betrayed the working class. It established a dictatorship over the working class by a privileged bureaucratic elite. It blocked the road to democratic planning and socialism. This led eventually to the collapse of the USSR and other so-called socialist states.

Where Stalinist states survive - such as Cuba and North Korea - they must still be defended unconditionally against imperialist blockade, attack and the restoration of capitalism. But without a political revolution of the workers and the establishment of workers' council democracy they too will eventually collapse. The theory that you can build 'socialism in one country' has been plainly falsified by collapse of the bureaucratic workers' states.

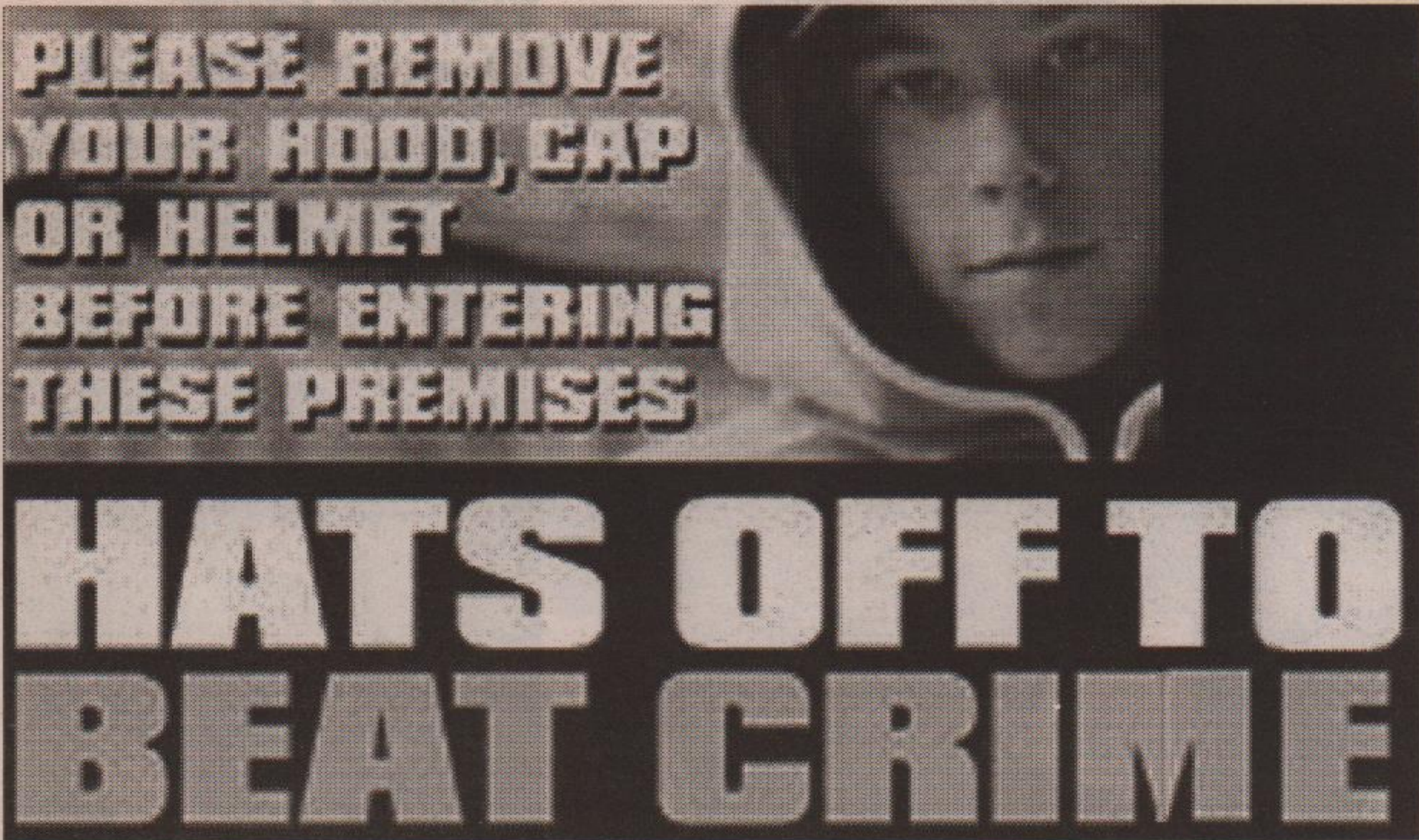
We must reject the strategic legacy of Stalinism: 'democratic alliances', 'popular' fronts' with capitalist parties or a 'democratic stage' which obliges the working class to renounce the struggle for power in the here and now. In every country, the workers must organise independently and fight to come to the head of the struggle. In the age of imperialism and globalisation only an international, global revolution and permanent (i.e. uninterrupted) revolution can consign capitalism to history.

THE INTERNATIONAL

With the goal of revolution and communism, advancing along the road of the class struggle, we propose the unity of all revolutionary forces in a new Fifth International - a workers' party organised across national boundaries to fight for world revolution.

If you are a class-conscious fighter against capitalism, if you are an internationalist - join us!

The government is criminalising young people because of what they wear or where they go



Crackdown on youth

It is now a regular feature of the school holidays that the government launches a repressive campaign aimed at driving young people out of shopping centres and off the streets. And the press is used to whip up a frenzy about "hoodies" "feral youth" and young "lynch mobs".

Recently a 15-year-old boy has challenged government legislation in the High Court on the basis that it infringes his human rights. The boy lives in a "dispersal area" in Richmond, west London. These are areas where the police can pick up any under 16s after 9pm unless they are in the company of an adult. They are then escorted home - if they resist they are arrested.

There are 400 dispersal areas in England and Wales set up under the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 with many more planned. Local councils like Richmond are very keen on them; when businesses complain of youth "hanging out" the police can clear them off the streets.

Added to these dispersal areas is the recent war on "hoodies". Early in the summer, Bluewater shopping centre in Kent announced that it was banning the wearing of hooded tops on its premises along with leafleting and canvassing. It was quickly followed by other shopping centres and malls around the country such as Elephant and Castle in South London. The reason cited is that hooded tops are intimidating and can obscure their all-seeing spy cameras.

Of course none of the shops were banned from selling them - that would

have infringed the businesses liberty and hurt their profits!

Blair has recently given a new meaning to the word "respect". It now means controlling the youth, making them respect the agents of law and order. Blair even has a new government committee to deal with the supposed lawlessness among young people, which he chairs. "The streets must be reclaimed for the decent majority" he recently declared. To build "respect", communities, schools and parents are to join forces with the police to clamp down on bad behaviour.

Is there a problem?

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, a respected social policy think-tank, has published a report about the fear of antisocial behaviour. Two-thirds of people surveyed believe there is no problem and do not experience any fear of it. The third that does believe there is a problem live on poor working class estates. Places forgotten about by governments, with poor schools lousy housing and few of no facilities for youth such as sports or youth clubs or parks.

There are undoubtedly young people who carry out crimes and intimidate people in these communities. Their lives have been blighted by neoliberal policies of successive Tory and Labour governments before them, which saw the destruction of swathes of industry and working class communities.

But the attacks on hoodies, the sharp increase in the use of Antisocial Behaviour Orders on young people from 10

upwards, the increase in dispersal areas with their red and yellow cards does nothing to turn around poor estates or lives with little potential. All it does is criminalise swathes of young people because all these policies take action against them without finding them guilty of any crime.

Demonising youth is nothing new, 30 years ago it was punks and skinheads, then it was mods and rockers in the 1960s, now it's hoodies and chavs. What all these youth groups have in common is that they dress, talk and act differently from how the government and ruling class want them to.

Asbos may be targeting young people who wear hats, knock on doors or swear and shout but already they are being used to clampdown on political protests. An animal rights protestor has recently been banned from going near animal testing laboratories - even though she has never been convicted of a crime. Last month Lindis Percy, 63, had to go to court to prevent herself receiving an Asbo for protesting outside Menwith US Airforce base in Yorkshire. The judge refused to grant the Asbo but she was electronically tagged and given a curfew for eight weeks. Liberty has already raised concerns over half a dozen cases of Asbos given to prevent political activism

Asbos, dispersal areas, rules about what can or cannot be worn are ways of regimenting young people to prevent them from rebelling or thinking differently while governments blame working class and black youth for the poverty and misery of people's lives.

are you sick of sweatshops • discrimination • poverty • sexism • war • politicians • racism • boredom • police • big business • exploitation • oppression • Tony Blair • homophobia • unfair laws • third world debt • unemployment • eco-destructi on • rightwing morality • tuition fees • crap jobs • CAPITALISM??

then join **REVOLUTION** socialist youth movement

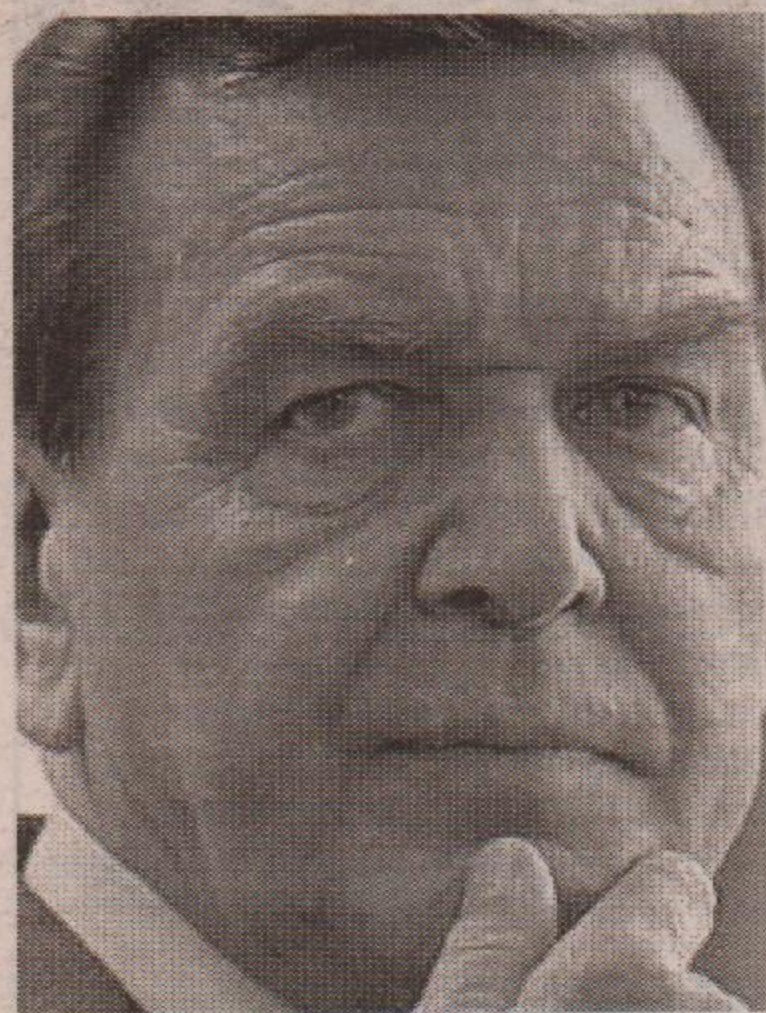
the independent socialist youth movement.

Name:
 Address:
 E-mail:
 Phone:
 School/college?

Send to: REVO, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX or join@WorldRevolution.org.uk 07951 493 232

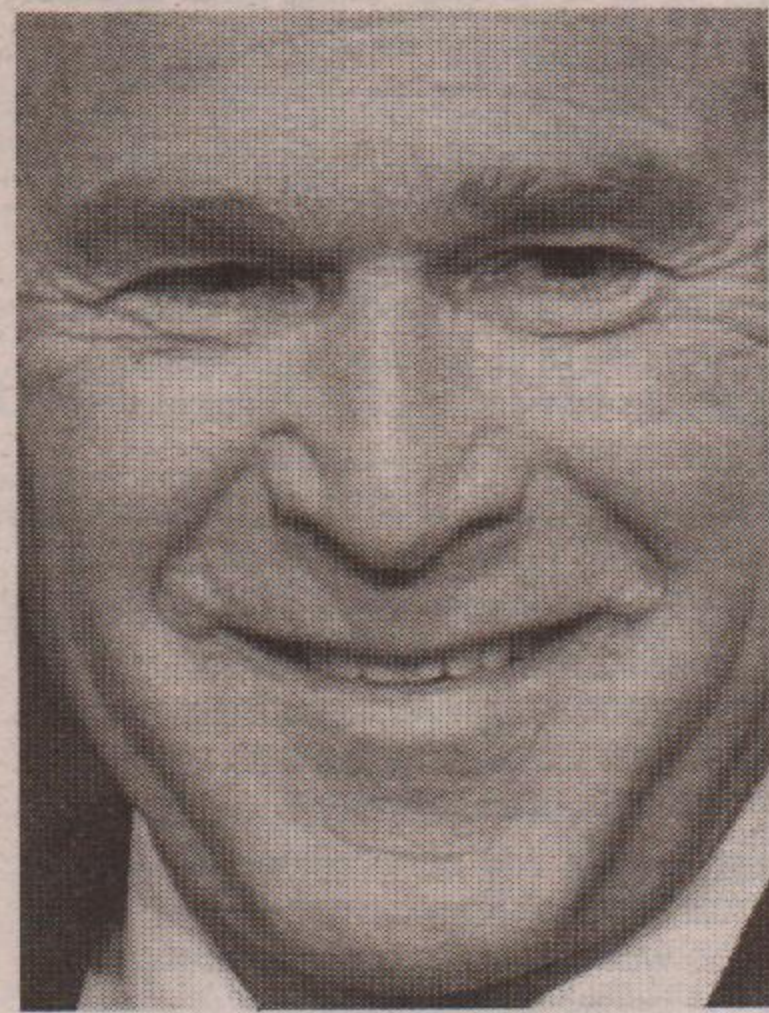
www.worldrevolution.org.uk

**Gerhard Schroeder
(Germany)**



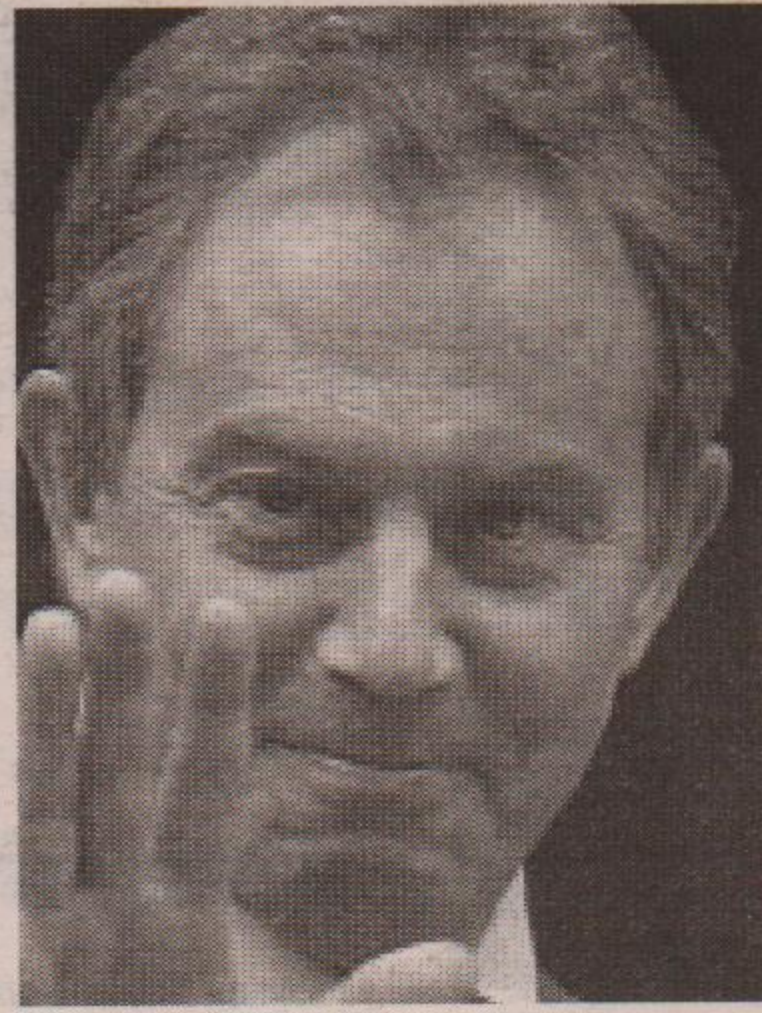
- Social Democratic leader who has led the attack on Germany's welfare state and is responsible for the neoliberal Agenda 2010.
- First German chancellor since the war to send troops outside the country - to Kosovo and Afghanistan.
- Close links to big business - has sat of the board of directors of Volkswagen.

**George W Bush
(US)**



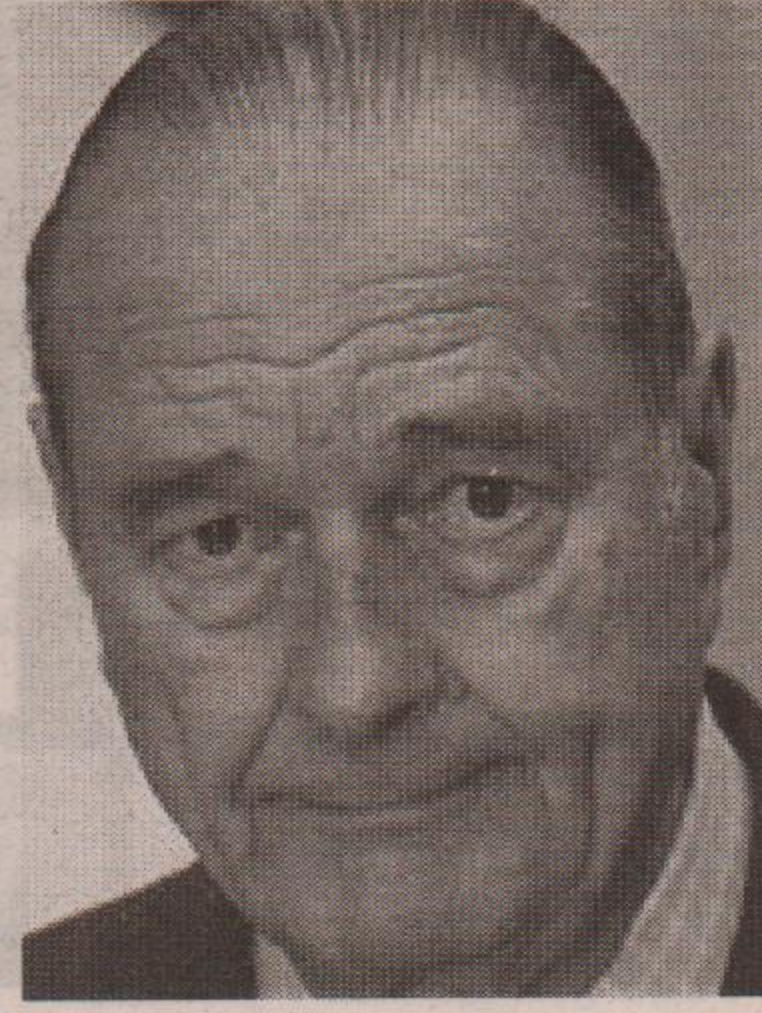
- The "toxic Texan" took the US out of the Kyoto treaty on climate change.
- Has refused to give money to fight Aids in Africa unless countries and NGOs sign up to sexual abstinence and anti-homosexual policies.
- Responsible for the US doctrine of first strike and regime change.
- Surrounds himself with advisers from oil companies like Condoleezza Rice
- Spent \$300 billion on war since September 2001

**Tony Blair
(UK)**



- Since coming to power in 1997, Blair has gone to war in Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Serbia, Afghanistan and Iraq.
- Lied to parliament, his party and the public about the reasons for going to war with Iraq.
- Leads the neoliberal attack, pushing through privatisation at home, and wants to undermine welfare and job rights in the EU
- Boasts how Britain has the most restrictive trade union rights in Europe

**Jacques Chirac
(France)**

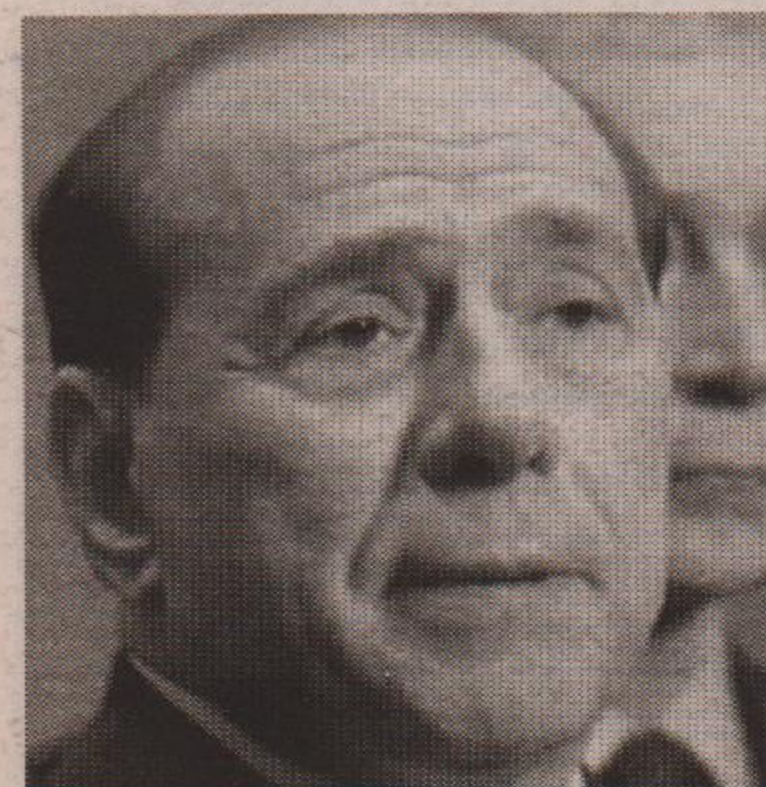


- A few weeks after his inauguration he reinstated the French nuclear tests in the South Pacific. When the local people protested, he sent in the Foreign Legion to suppress the opposition.
- Surrounded by scandals involving cash being given to family and friends. Under investigation for illegal financing of his party while mayor of Paris. He refused to testify in any of these cases and cannot be forced to give evidence as the office of President protects him.

**Vladimir Putin
(Russia)**



- Former KGB secret police boss.
- Pursues a vicious war against Chechnya, which wants independence. The war has led to about 220,000 refugees and thousands of civilian deaths and disappearances, and many war crimes committed by the Russian army.
- Has changed the constitution to give himself more power, led clampdowns on the press and has arrested his political opponents.



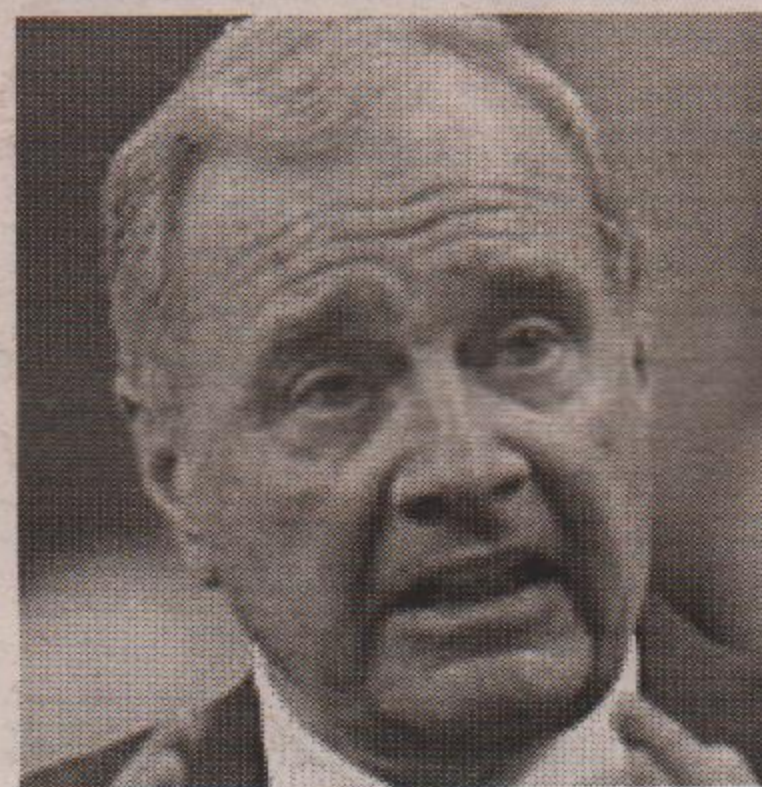
**Silvio Berlusconi
(Italy)**

- World's 30th richest person with personal assets of \$10 billion in 2004.
- Denied that Mussolini's regime had killed a single person insisting he just used to send opposition "on holiday".
- Controls 90 per cent of Italian media.
- Legal investigations ongoing include false accounting, tax fraud, corruption, bribery of police officers and judges.

EIGHT CRIMINALS - SIX BILLION VICTIMS

**Paul Martin
(Canada)**

- Cut 7 billion dollars from the Canadian health service in order to make tax cuts for the rich.
- Three out of five Canadians believe that the Liberal Party headed by Paul Martin is corrupt.
- Was recently in Libya promoting the Canadian arms supplier SNC-Lavalin. This company sold arms to Iraq.



**Junichiro Koizumi
(Japan)**

- Approved expansion of Japan's defence forces and in October 2001 gave permission for their use outside of Japan.
- Sent troops to Iraq despite home opposition.
- Regularly visits Yasukuni Shrine, which honours Japanese war dead including convicted war criminals.

Women workers fight back

Wal-Mart and Coca-cola, two of the largest multinational corporations in the world, signify the evils of US-led globalisation: worldwide market domination, super-exploitation of workers, environmental degradation and cheap products.

But across the world, workers are resisting.

In April this year, 10,000 workers in China, mainly young women migrants from poor rural areas, staged a massive strike at the Uniden Electronics factory in Shenzhen. This Japanese-owned company makes phones for Wal-Mart. The company is defying Chinese law in refusing to allow a trade union, while Japanese supervisors abuse workers and beat up union organisers. Women are forced to work 11 hours each day, including 3 hours compulsory overtime, and they receive no sick or maternity pay - indeed they are asked to pay the company living allowances if they are off sick.

The strike ended after the company promised a union by July of this year, but many women are unhappy with this. They don't want a company - or gov-

By Helen Ward

ernment-imposed union; they want to elect their own representatives.

This strike challenges Japanese companies which are using exploitative work practices in China, it threatens Wal-Mart which has resisted Chinese government pressure to allow unions in factories, and it shows that young, poor, rural women are capable of resistance and organisation.

Women are also protesting against Coca-cola's plans for new factories in Tamil-Nadu state in India. Led by low-caste Dalits (formerly called 'untouchables'), campaigners are arguing against new factories where the community has no drinking water. Experience in other parts of the world shows that Coca-cola plants often undermine local clean water provision and bring additional environmental degradation.

That it is women who are resisting globalisation is not surprising - it is the availability of cheap female labour that attracts multi-nationals in the first place. The bosses believe that such labour will be cheap, flexible and docile.

Don't they know that it was women

who launched the Russian Revolution? That women textile workers led the struggle for labour rights in the USA? Or that women were a core part of the armed revolutionary movements in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Mexico?

When we are brought together in large factories, or through experience of conflict in our communities, women can be extremely militant.

In Nigeria's Niger Delta, local women shut down six Chevron Texaco oil installations in 2002, demanding basic services in their communities, jobs for local people and an end to pollution of the rivers.

In one village, Escravos, a group of 150 women, mostly in their mid-50s and 60s, decided to take action after the company refused their demands and after the government brutally repressed youth protests.

They stormed a company ferry, grabbed the radio and ordered the driver to take them to the terminal. They blockaded the docks, helipad and airstrip, trapping about 700 American, British and Nigerian workers inside and preventing the export of around 400,000 barrels of oil a day. Their protest ended

after 10 days when they won concessions. In the following weeks, women in several other communities repeated the actions and also won promises of reforms.

In all these struggles more permanent and militant organisations will be needed to ensure that the promises are met and the gains made permanent.

Globalisation does not just mean economic exploitation in the global south. The imperialists want to ideologically dominate as well. For example George Bush has gone on a global offensive trying to impose his reactionary Christian views on sex and reproductive rights on the world.

In Bush's first days in office he removed all federal funding for abortion programmes within the US, and in 2001 he introduced his Global Gag Rule. This meant that any foreign NGO receiving USAID funds was not allowed to provide, or give information about, safe abortion.

From 2003, Bush extended his gag to prostitution. Now any organisations getting US money for AIDS prevention work must have a policy "explicitly opposing prostitution and sex trafficking". This means that many projects doing HIV harm minimisation work

with sex workers have been closed down.

The US is also pushing governments to comply with the so called Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which in fact clamps down on prostitution.

"When sex workers sneeze, George Bush freeze" shouted the placards on a sex workers demonstration in Kolkata (Calcutta) in India last month. The 65,000 strong sex workers organisation was launching a protest against the anti-prostitution bill. Similar protests took place in South Korea and Japan. One of 3,000 sex workers demonstrating in Japan said "this is my job, let me work".

Women workers are being drawn into struggle around the world. They are throwing off the shackles that existed in the village communities and male dominated clans and families. Now they are fighting the imposition of the new shackles imposed by globalisation and the multinationals.

These young women workers can dynamise the struggle against exploitation. They must organise themselves as a fighting working class women's movement and lead the struggle not just against economic exploitation but for women's liberation and socialism.

Climate change: why the G8 will fail the planet

Global warming causes droughts and floods but big business will continue to pollute, writes *Pete Ashton*

The world's biggest polluters get together and decide how little they are going to do about climate change. Welcome to the G8.

Tony Blair said that climate change is "the biggest challenge facing mankind". But the gap between the words and what the world's leaders are proposing to do about this crisis is yawning.

Global warming is now a well established fact and the vast majority of climate scientists link it to human activity. Extreme climate events, heatwaves, freak storms, droughts, caused by global warming are estimated to kill 160,000 people a year. Last year was the warmest the world had seen for more than 600 years.

This was a result of an overall rise in global temperature of only 0.6°C during the 20th century. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (composed of 3,000 top scientific experts) global temperatures will rise between 1.4°C and 5.8°C over this century.

As a direct result of this warming, we are moving towards a global food deficit for the first time in the history of our planet.

The glaciers of the Himalayas, feeding the great rivers of Asia, are

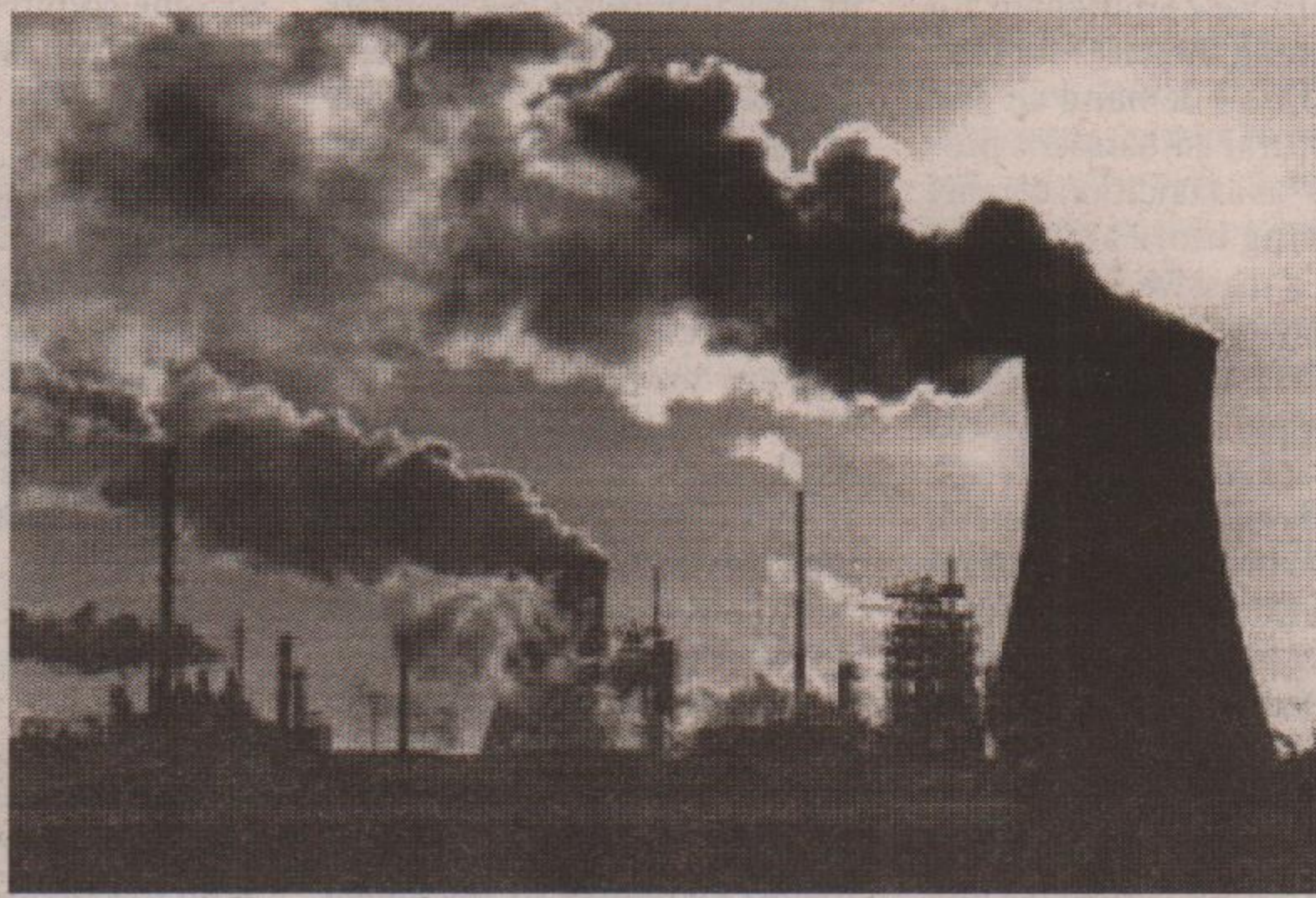
disappearing. In China 2,500 square hectares of land turn to desert every year, as the main rivers dry up. In East Africa 40 year drought cycles now occur every four or five years.

So what is the G8 doing?

George Bush is in denial. His government refuses to accept that carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from cars, power stations, aircraft and so on produce global warming. He pulled out of the international Kyoto agreement, which aimed to reduce these greenhouse gas emissions, because it would have "damaged US business". Between 1990 and 2002 the CO₂ emissions of the US increased by 13 per cent, which more than cancels out all the cuts agreed by other countries at Kyoto.

Any strategy to confront global warming has to be agreed at an international level. In a leak of the 2,000 word G8 draft communiqué on climate change, it states that: "If we miss this opportunity and fail to give a clear sense of direction, then we will be locked into an unsustainable future that will threaten our long-term security and prosperity."

Yet it fails to include a single target or timetable for action. Greenpeace described it as "a mush of warm words carefully crafted by civil servants to make sure no one is committed to anything."



The summit itself, with its army of bureaucrats and limos will produce as much carbon dioxide as 800 families generate in a year! But don't worry, apparently they are going to make it "carbon neutral" by planting a few trees in Africa!

Tony Blair swans around the world claiming that Britain is a "world leader" in reducing carbon dioxide emissions. This is bunkum.

The UK is on target to meet the reduction agreed at Kyoto but everyone agrees these were minimal. And

the reason the UK can meet the target has nothing to do with action taken by Blair and new Labour. Nearly all these gains were a result of the defeat of the 1984-5 miners' strike and the subsequent closing of most of the coalmines in Britain, under the Tories. This led to a switch from coal to gas for electricity generation.

New figures from the Office of National Statistics show greenhouse gas emissions fell by 8.1 per cent between 1990 and 2003, a lot less than the 13.4 per cent claimed by the Department of

the Environment. And things are getting worse not better. Emissions from traffic are going up as more cars and lorries pour onto the roads, after decades of neglect and underinvestment in railways and the bus network

Britain is a "world leader" in one of the most environmentally damaging forms of travel – air transport. Greenhouse gas emissions from UK air travel have doubled in the last 13 years. Air travel was excluded from the Kyoto agreement, yet because it pumps CO₂ directly into the high atmosphere it is at least twice as damaging as CO₂ pumped out on the ground

Yet the government is planning a massive expansion of air travel, with new runways and airports being built across the country. The hugely profitable airlines, Ryanair, Easyjet, and British Airways are the darlings of deregulated, neoliberal British economy with their fuel subject to little or no taxation. It is little wonder that you could have flown to Edinburgh from London at half the price of a standard rail fare yet have contributed 50 times more to global warming!

The government's manifesto pledge to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by a fifth by 2010 is dead in the water. But why should Blair care, he will be off writing his memoirs by then.

What is needed? An emergency plan for energy

Runaway climate change will lead to a global catastrophe within 50 years. The only solution is to start a massive shift away from producing energy with fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas – and to reduce dramatically the amount energy used and wasted. This shift has to happen on a global scale.

To reduce dependence on fossil fuels there must be a massive investment in alternative technologies, such as wind, solar and wave power. The new technologies to facilitate cleaner fossil fuel power stations must be fully funded. Capturing carbon dioxide emissions and storing them permanently underground can reduce their level by 80 per cent – it is expensive and therefore the power

companies resist doing it.

Car and lorry traffic must be reduced by improving and building new railways and massive investment in bus and coach transport. Cleaner and more efficient cars and buses must be developed.

Instead of the expansion and building of new airports we need a fully funded integrated public transport plan paid for by taxing the rich and the polluting companies. We can reduce reliance on air travel by, for example, developing a high speed European railway system. The "polluter must pay" principle must be applied rigorously to the airline companies through taxation, while rail and coach transport should be subsidised to cut fares and improved service.

There should be tight regulation on

house building and improvement plans introducing the highest standards of insulation and energy conservation to the buildings themselves and to the appliances used in them.

The government makes much of its plans to improve recycling and reduce waste. Yet this starts from the wrong end. The producers and supermarkets should be taxed on all forms of environmentally damaging packaging and obliged to produce goods, cars, computers, fridges, that are efficient, long lasting and easily recycled

These are just a few of the measures that could make a dramatic impact on climate change, there are many others. Scientists and environmentalists have been arguing for them for years yet the governments and the G8 will fail to introduce them. Why?

Capitalism is the problem

Just taking these minimum, urgent measures would bring the G8 governments into serious conflict with big business. Capitalism by its very nature harms the environment. In the name of greater profits, resources are gobbled up with no regard for the needs of people now or in the future. For business what matters is "shareholder value" now, not what happens to the planet 50 years down the line.

Tropical rainforests, often called the "lungs of the planet" because they soak up carbon dioxide, are disappearing at the rate of 145 million acres a year in the Amazon alone. Two acres will have gone as you read this sentence. The multinationals are busy extracting timber, planting cash crops, extracting oil, coal and other minerals and clearing forests for

Carbon trading – the market 'solution'

Carbon trading is an attempt by governments to use market forces to curb the consequences of excess carbon emissions accelerating global warming. This year London's carbon-trading market was launched.

It works by the government setting a limit on the amount of emissions a company can make. If a company uses less than its quota it can sell this amount in the marketplace – there companies that have exceeded their limits will buy it. The idea is that the market costs will drive firms to become "cleaner".

But it all depends on the limits set. Last year Blair's government caved in to the Confederation of British Industry when it complained that proposed emissions cuts would hurt British industry. The government is now appealing to the European courts to get its carbon limits reduced. The USA is not taking part in the scheme at all, and aircraft pollution is excluded!

beef production. This wholesale devastation of the rainforests has led to increased levels of global warming.

Capitalists are reluctant to conserve resources, introduce alternative technologies or re-cycle, they complain that these are "too expensive". The G8 leaders are the representatives of this capitalist system. Some of them might talk about taking climate change seriously, but when it comes to action they will bow to the demands of the multinationals

We all have a vital interest in stopping the capitalists destroying our world. But there is also a need for the development of resources to improve people's lives. Workers and poor peasants around the world need electricity, heating, better homes and better transport. Only if we offer these things, alongside a defence of the environment, can we carry them with us against Bush, Blair and the multinational corporations.

China for example, is now the second biggest emitter of greenhouse gases

in the world after the USA, due mainly to its reliance on coal burning power stations for its electricity. There is an urgent need therefore for massive investment in clean coal technology. In a sane society the richer nations would pay for this, but under capitalism it is dog eat dog and to hell with the planet.

Given the international nature of capitalism today it is clear that our demands for a sustainable environment cannot be secured on a national basis. Neither can they be fully and permanently secured without the seizure of economic and political power from the capitalists themselves.

We need a new system of production not driven by profit but by human need. We need to place the control of production in the hands of the millions of workers and poor peasants. We need to overthrow the capitalists and develop and implement a truly socialist, democratic and global plan of production – only this can save the planet from environmental disaster and human misery.

Nuclear power – a solution?

The G8 is meant to be making a statement on nuclear power. This technology has been given a new lease of life because it produces near zero emissions of carbon dioxide. Even some environmentalists have suggested that new nuclear power stations are necessary because of the dangers of global warming.

But it is an extremely dangerous technology – Chernobyl and previous accidents have showed what can happen. Keeping nuclear waste safely is difficult. The new safer methods of storage are extremely expensive. Starting a new nuclear building programme would only add to the storage problem and the risks.

So why are G8 leaders considering this option rather than first taking measures to clean up existing technologies and reduce energy consumption? Because insisting that business cleans up its act will hit profits and mean confronting the politicians' paymasters – the bosses.

It is much easier to offer the energy industry fat cats profitable contracts to build expensive nuclear plants – leaving the state (i.e. working class tax payers) to pick up the bill for waste storage and dismantling, decades down the line.

Nuclear energy must not be run for profit. It must be nationalised, with no compensation to the energy bosses. It must be run under workers' control, with workers' inspection over all aspects of the industry and the closure of those found to be unsafe.

CAN MAKE POVERTY

When the 70,000 strong human chain linked arms around Birmingham at the 1998 G8 summit they were gathered there under the slogan "Cancel all Third World debt". But in the face of opposition from the G8, World Bank and IMF, the various NGO coalitions ('non-governmental organisations') have scaled down their ambitions for reform of the system of debt bondage.

Jubilee 2000 (now Jubilee Research) for example have focused their energies on exposing the lack of progress in implementing the 27-state Highly Indebted Poor Countries programme (HIPC) and suggesting ways of reforming it. They maintain a lower level campaign for debt relief for a further 30 or so low income developing countries.

Make Poverty History (MPH), the global coalition behind the 2 July G8 protest in Edinburgh, campaigns for fair trade, debt relief and more aid. On debt it demands not full cancellation but that: "The unpayable debts of the world's poorest countries should be cancelled in full."

What unites the NGOs is first of all the focus on the poorest 30-50 countries, for which 100 per cent debt cancellation would amount to between \$35-80bn. Secondly, all agree that the IMF should not be the judge of what is a "sustainable" level of debt but rather the debtor countries must

be centrally involved in the process of drawing up genuine poverty reduction programmes that ring-fence resources for the basic education and health needs of the population and making debt servicing conditional on this. Many NGOs take the UN's Millennium Development Goals for 2015 (MDGs) as the benchmark for social reform, and debt relief must be commensurate with reaching these.

Thirdly, all demand an end to "structural adjustment programmes" as a condition of relief or receiving more aid and all insist on a massive injection of new money. MPH calls for a minimum increase of \$50bn a year in aid and rapid progress towards the UN backed goal of each rich country devoting 0.7 per cent of its GDP to overseas aid, a target that most EU and all G8 countries are failing to meet; worse, most have reduced their aid budgets in the last 10 years. Finally, all generally support an international insolvency system in which debt distressed countries and their creditors take equal and joint responsibility for working out a solution.

The European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad) is a coalition of 48 NGOs in 15 European countries that has drawn up proposals as to where the money should come from to allow for the cancellation of poor country debts.¹ It suggests the money comes from the sale of IMF gold reserves, a proposal that

Eurodad believes "is acceptable to the widest possible community of stakeholders, including borrowers and creditors".²

This would raise between \$35-\$43bn depending on the final sale price, allowing for 100 per cent debt cancellation for the 40 poorest highly indebted countries.

The defect of the NGO approach lies in its limited scope, its partial solution and its strategy for achieving its goals. First, the NGOs themselves have pointed out that the goal of HIPC and further debt relief proposals being considered by G8 members is not social justice but debt sustainability. So the IMF will not entertain any proposal that undermines its fundamental power relationship over the global south, as guardian of neoliberal globalisation.

Its job is to supervise a stable system of financial flows between the imperialist overlords and commercial banks on the one side, and the global south on the other in such a way that wealth generated in the global south flows steadily into the west's coffers.

Even Eurodad rather undermines its own case when it accepts that even if debt cancellation on this scale were to occur it would not "alter fundamentally the unequal creditor/debtor relationship which currently dominates the international debt architecture". It is the creditor who decided the what, when and how of debt relief "and this

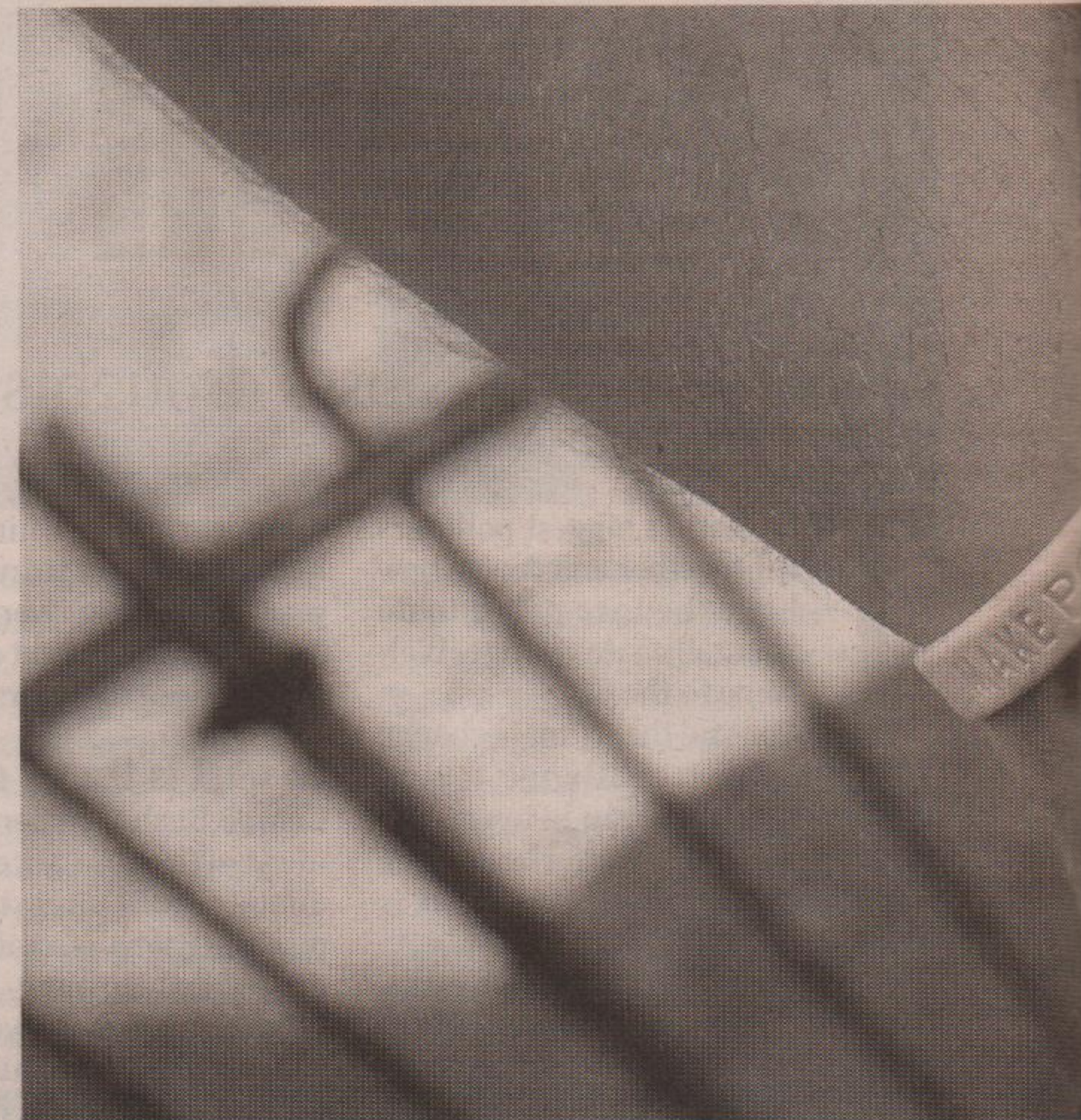
It is clearer and more honest to demand the abolition of the IMF and the World Bank

approach has failed to guarantee debt sustainability in low income countries and does not take into account the urgent development needs of these countries".

Indeed, radical reform proposals by the NGOs amount to asking the IMF and World Bank to act against their essential nature. It will not happen so long as their G8 paymasters preside over imperialist domination and neoliberal globalisation forms the basis of their rule. That is why it is clearer and more honest to demand the abolition of the IMF and World Bank.

This has the merit first of all of being the most far-reaching proposal on debt cancellation. With this abolition also go all the assets and liabilities. Put another way, the IMF today is "worth" about \$370bn. On its closure all these assets could be set against the approximate \$523bn of total "low income country" debt stocks (61 poorest countries, with GNI per capita of less than \$760). The World Bank's smaller assets could also be put into the pot.

But this still leaves a considerable shortfall even if we only include the 61 poorest nations'



debts. This is why we have to demand massive reparations by the G8 and OECD countries to the global south. This is a better term than "aid" with its unavoidable charitable overtones; "reparations" accurately signifies that what is at stake is payment for crimes against the global south. We are speaking here of hundreds of years of colonial and semi-colonial plunder and exploitation, through land grabs, theft of natural resources, slavery and more recently through enforced privatisation of state assets.

The source of these reparations must include revenues from a massive "development tax" levied on the main multinational corporations (MNCs) currently making unparalleled profits from their banking operations, and oil and mineral operations in the global south: BP, Shell and HSBC, Rio Tinto, Unilever, Anglo American, SAB Miller – all based in the UK – alone posted record profits in 2004-05 and must be forced to pay for their ruinous exploitation of the Third World. It would be hard or impossi-

PLANNING: THE ALTERNATIVE

"On 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall came down, symbolising the end of an experiment in economic and social policy that began more than four decades earlier. The long-standing debate between the virtues of economies organised around free markets and those governed by centrally planned socialism is essentially at an end."

**Alan Greenspan,
Chairman of
the US Federal
Reserve Board**

Take a look around you. It's more than 15 years since the Berlin Wall was torn apart. Capitalist globalisation is rampant, barriers to trade and investment massively reduced in the world's poorest countries. Yet what do we see? More than 1.2 billion people don't have access to clean water and up to 60 million people are infected with HIV/Aids. Global warming – largely a function of capitalist production and consumption patterns – threatens to overwhelm humanity.

Even in the richest and most powerful nation on earth, the United States, where Greenspan still pulls key levers of the economy, real wages are lower and working hours higher than in 1989. Infant mortality is worse than in Cuba and 30 per cent of the population have no health insurance. Higher employment levels have been achieved by cutting welfare payments and forcing people to work for poverty wages.

It is not clear then what the market has to boast about. Yet we are told by Greenspan that only the invisible hand of the market can decide "the adequate allocation of resources". Perhaps he had in mind the fact that the United States with 5 per cent of the world's population consumes 25 per cent of its energy, with disastrous consequences for climate change?

No, the market does not adequately allocate resources by means of bringing buyer and seller into a relationship with each other as equals. Rather, the market merely reveals the existing structure of income inequality and private property ownership which themselves flow from how people are exploited at work, or whether they do the exploiting.

Everyone knows – because multimillionaire Bill Gates tells us so often – that a malaria net for the bed of every child at risk in Africa would largely eliminate the millions of deaths from this disease. Yet they don't have them. Why? Because they do not have the money to buy them.

So instead of the market "adequately allocating" malaria nets to Africa it takes a US business mogul-turned-philanthropist with his \$50bn personal fortune to rustle up his loose change to help provide them. The capitalist market cannot solve this problem because they cannot be sold at a low enough price to an impoverished population and still make a profit for the corporations concerned.

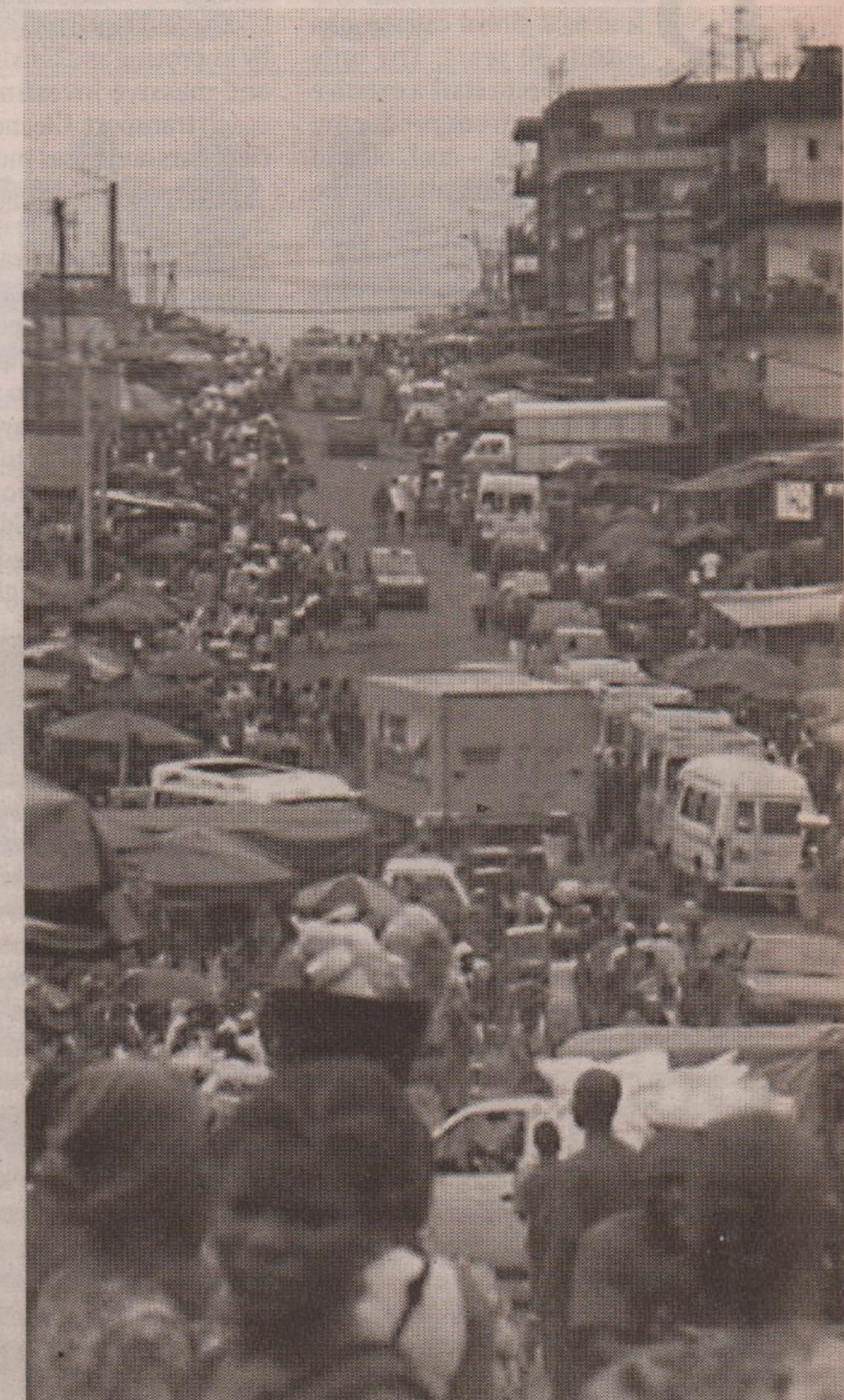
Mass deep-rooted poverty – the experience of billions on this planet – is caused by the inadequate allocation of resources by the capitalist market economy; its scale is such that it can not be uprooted by the largesse of a Bill Gates or the paltry hand-outs ("aid") of G8 countries.

It can only be addressed by the elimination of private property in the main means of production, distribution and banking. The G8 leaders cannot do this because they are in office to serve these corporations.

But the elimination of production for profit is the precondition for an alternative system of providing for people's various needs: socialist economic planning.

Poverty is the lack of good quality basic goods. Even in the short term the elimination of production for profit will release resources to tackle this problem. A massive redistribution of goods and services away from luxury production for the rich will allow for more food, safe water, housing and basic health services to be provided to the mass of the poor. This is especially true when one considers the enormous resources wasted under capitalism that go into marketing goods and services to persuade us to buy what we did not know we wanted! Up to 50 per cent of the final price of many products comes from such promotional costs.

Production for need would also cut out much of the wasted resources poured into blindly launching products for which there is no demand. But in the medium term a major attack on poverty can only come with sustained increase in output until it reaches an optimum level. This is not maximum production but



HISTORY SUCCEEDED?



bank shareholders in London and New York. The same applies to Mexico, Brazil and other "less poor" countries in the global south. The value of these original loans has been repaid many times over since 1970 and not a cent more should be handed over.

By narrowing down the focus of the campaigns, the NGOs not only reduce the size of the potential coalition of active anti-debt forces in the global south (indeed, run the risk of setting them

An essential step in the anticapitalist struggle of the 21st century still goes by a good old 19th century name - socialist revolution

against each other in the rush to get the begging bowl out) but also exclude the largest number, and the most organised, militant working class forces from throwing their weight behind anti-debt campaigns.

And this in turn leads us to the core of the problem: what methods of struggle will lead to complete, or even radical, debt cancellation? The NGOs prefer pleading on behalf of relatively passive, deeply suffering victims. This strikes the deepest chord within the metropolitan middle

classes.

While this may be sufficient - as in 1998 - to bring about small and inadequate reforms of a very limited debt relief system designed to write-off unpayable debt arrears, it cannot destroy the "debt architecture". For this what is needed is a prime focus on mobilising working and popular classes in the midst of debt-induced social and political crisis, such as have convulsed semi-colonial countries in the past 25 years: Mexico 1982, Indonesia 1997, Argentina, 2001-2 and Bolivia today.

The convulsions that Bolivia has experienced since 2002 illustrate the real effects of the HIPC programme. Bolivia is one of the 14 graduates of the programme; it has "earned" its debt relief by having the government of Sanchez de Lozada during 1996-2002 cut welfare budgets and privatise most state assets - including its precious energy assets.

But the workers and peasants' movement has again and again refused to accept the sale of the majority of natural gas rights to foreign companies. Repeated general strikes and road blockades have brought down the Mesa government. They have the power to force the renationalisation of all assets handed over to MNCs.

Above all, if the Bolivian workers can create a party of their own, they could go on to break apart the state apparatus of the capitalist class and establish a workers' and peasants' govern-

ment based on councils of delegates elected by the masses and recallable by them. With the workers and poor peasants in the driving seat, they could really set about a "poverty reduction programme" of their own.

Whether such social convulsions emerge out of struggles against cuts in welfare, or against privatisations, or as in Argentina, the collapse of a currency, it is in such crises that the latent and slow debilitating effects of debt bondage erupt to the surface and open the eyes of millions to the source of the problems they face.

With the right leadership the working class-led movement can bring down pro-imperialist and pro-IMF governments, break up the capitalists' state apparatus of repression and bring about working class regimes that can repudiate the debts owed and bring the national economy into the ownership and control of the masses. This essential step in the anticapitalist struggle of the 21st century still goes by a good old 19th century name - socialist revolution.

On an international scale a united front of heavily-indebted regimes can create a problem that is beyond the IMF resources to solve, bringing down the whole "financial architecture".

The waves of solidarity that such a movement would generate in the global north would also help forge a political movement demanding global debt cancella-

tion. And such a movement increasingly can draw upon the tens or hundreds of thousands who have been literally defrauded by the west's banks when persuaded to invest their money into debt bonds. Many thousands in Italy found their savings wiped out overnight by the decision of Argentina's government to default on its unsustainable debt.

But debt is only part of the problem for the global south. This is explicitly recognised in the MPH manifesto demands for "fair trade". Even when debt burdens are reduced, even for a while, to levels that allow for some social welfare system to survive, the countries of the global south remain at the mercy of corporate globalisation.

The repatriation of super-profits made out of the toil of the badly paid workers in Asia, Africa and Latin America is a function of capitalist exploitation. In the struggles around the globe against debt, privatisation and exploitation, the workers of the world need to unite and create a new world party of their own, committed to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. If not then we will simply experience recurrent cycles of debt crises, each with untold victims.

1 See Paying for 100 per cent Multilateral Debt Cancellation, Eurodad, January 2005).

2 *ibid.* IMF gold stocks are valued on their books at \$51 an ounce but the market price is \$424 an ounce (or \$370 as a 30 year average).

ble to put a figure on this but minimum compensation starts with a sum equivalent to the stock of debts of all global south countries and not just the "poorest" - currently around \$2.7 trillion. And this highlights another defect of the NGO approach - its narrow focus on a few dozen countries. It is easy to see why. NGOs are made up of charities; charities need "victims" who can be helped. Many sub-Saharan fit the bill.

Jubilee Research is open about excluding countries such as India

from their campaigns for debt relief, "because they can meet the MDGs without further debt cancellation". Here we see the problem of staying within the parameters of "debt sustainability". India annually pays out tens of billions of dollars in debt repayments. Debt service for all non-HIPC countries in the global south reached \$374bn in 2000, a \$78bn increase on 1998.

This money can and should be used for providing jobs and services in the global south, not underwriting the opulence of

TIME TO GLOBAL POVERTY

rather one that is compatible with a number of other social objectives (such as environmental protection etc).

But we can expect a great boost to production to come from greater productivity levels as workers become engaged in work they enjoy and do not feel alienated from. The same will apply to innovation. What's more, every improvement in technology could be used to reduce the length of the working day, instead of being used to throw people out of work altogether. Shorter working days would raise productivity as people grow less tired, less bored, less drained by their work.

Those pro-marketeters who disdain planning in principle are liars or demagogues. The issue is not whether planning exists or is a good or bad idea but whether planning is subordinated to the market or supersedes the market. Capitalist production today is planned more than at anytime in its history. The problems do not lie with planning, they lie in the fact that capitalism plans for profit, not need.

Take Dell computers, one of the biggest companies in the sector. It sells about 150,000 computers a day online. You can order a Dell laptop according to your own specification and get it delivered to your door in about four days.

As soon as these orders come in, the suppliers know about it.

Capitalist production today is planned more than at any time in its history. The problems do not lie with planning, they lie in the fact that capitalism plans for profit, not need

Every two hours, the Dell factory in Penang Malaysia sends an email to the various suppliers, telling each one what parts and what quantities of those parts it wants delivered within the next 90 minutes - and not one minute later. About 30 key parts are brought together in a total supply chain - including suppliers of suppliers - involving about 400 companies in North America, Europe, and primarily Asia. "We know where every part is in the Dell system at all times," according to Dick Hunter, one of Dell's global production managers.

Now that's planning. But African children can't get a simple net made and delivered to their villages, not in four days, not ever.

And the reason is because every one of those orders for a Dell computer comes from the pool of 600 million people in the world who really count for

capitalists - those with high enough income to keep the major industries and services in global capitalism making profits. Those who berate planning say the market is synonymous with democracy because it allows everyone to exercise their choice. But if you haven't got any money you're excluded from this "democracy".

Soon not only every line of goods but every single product will have a radar tag that will monitor it from production to sale. Like the Dell supply system, these innovations that lie at the heart of capitalist planning can be taken over by socialist society and liberated from the cramping effects of the market which restricts their deployment.

Planning is limited under capitalism to within a corporation (or between it and its suppliers). The sophisticated surveillance of goods is trying to keep up with consumer preferences for their goods. But no one company knows what the total and conflicting demand is for a range of goods and services, which is why capitalism breaks down.

Too much of one thing is made and not enough of another; the only way of finding out is when masses of stocks lie unsold in one shop and queues trail around street for others. Utterly wasteful. The selfish private pursuit of profit ensures this social calamity occurs regularly.

But did not socialist planning

result in waste and misallocation too? Devout defenders of the market like to point to the defects of the planning system in Stalin's Russia after 1930 or in Eastern Europe after 1945. It is true, inefficiencies and shortages were legion. But this was not due to the planning per se; it was because the privileged Stalinist dictators refused the mass of the population any say in how to run their lives - either at work or outside it.

This bureaucratic "planning" was therefore of necessity blind, in ignorance of people's true needs, desires and capacities. And capitalist planning has much in common with this. Workers and consumers are treated as objects rather than subjects of planning. Consumer preferences are "read" from their loyalty cards, Tesco distribution workers are tagged with wrist bands to monitor their movements.

Stalinism and capitalist companies alike would never allow people to be actively and consciously involved in drawing up plans for what they want to produce and consume. No, the power lies with the big companies - the capitalist producers. The consumer did not choose CDs to replace vinyl. Who decided it was more important to invest millions in adverts for Crazy Frog ring tones than to keep hospital wards clean? This choice was forced on us because companies saw

they had they have bigger profit margins.

In a socialist planning system people will be involved from the ground up in a discussion about what, when and how much to produce, what resources to set aside for investment, what for consumption. Many alternative goals will have to be debated.

These decisions can only be made by democratic discussion and debate across the whole world by the majority of its people - the workers and poor peasants. Only the active participation of the workers and peasants of the world will allow the correct decisions to be made, a balance to be struck between the potentially conflicting interests of different groups, for the monitoring and adjustment of the plan as it is implemented. And all of this is impossible under capitalism.

The American Journal of Economics and Sociology gives a candid reason why it is impossible:

"... the overwhelming sentiment of the business community ... is decidedly hostile to national economic planning ... Any form of planning or state capitalism beyond simple data collection would ... go against traditions ... weaken the authority of corporate management, undermine the ethos of the American version of capitalism."

That ethos is simple - capitalism plans for profit not need and society-wide planning as

opposed to internal corporate planning would overturn that ethos.

Socialist planning turns this on its head. It plans to meet human need. It plans to liberate humanity from the tyranny of hunger, poverty and disease. It plans to ensure harmony between people and planet. It does this by ensuring that its plans are drawn up and executed in a democratic fashion - by the active participation of millions.

The problems we face cannot be solved locally. They are global problems. Local people must have the right to decide all appropriate decisions about where they live, but decisions on global issues, like limits on carbon dioxide emissions, over-fishing, the creation of an integrated public transport system, cannot be decided only locally.

Socialism can build on the best of capitalist planning, the computerisation of production, the internet, the global links of trade and of course the bar code. But the fruits of production will only be harvested for the mass of people, when production is in the hands of the masses themselves. Ordinary working people must be able to control their lives and plan the economy, not for a few multi-millionaires, but for us, the billions. In this way we can create a new global system without class division, poverty and war.

Keith Harvey explains how the G8 ensures world trade will always be unfair to the developing countries

IMF and the World Bank: agents of misery

The International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, now known as the World Bank, were formed after the second world war.

The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) brief was to provide short term assistance to economies that suffered balance of payments crises. It was to regulate an international monetary system to facilitate global trade.

The World Bank's brief was to finance the long term development of countries, initially in war-torn Europe. In the late 1950s, the Bank shifted its attention to Africa, Asia and Latin America. These countries were so poor that they could not meet the World Bank's interest charges and the US feared that they would turn to the Soviet Union for support. To counter this and maintain its dominance, the World Bank channelled

cheap loans to these regions.

The IMF's role changed sharply in the 1980s in the face of a mounting Third World debt crisis. It rescheduled debt repayments and made them conditional on the governments of developing countries reforming their economies.

Each country in crisis had its own IMF structural adjustment plan (SAP), which called for:

- Devaluation of the national currency.
- Jacking up interest rates.
- Cutting back on government spending, especially social spending and subsidies for food.
- An increase in prices charged by state enterprises such as energy and water or their privatisation.
- A cap on wages and a restriction on credit.

All the programmes have the same aim: to restore the "balance of pay-

IMF Structure

- IMF has 182 member countries, which had at the start of 1998 paid in \$193 billion. Its base is in Washington and it has 2,600 staff.
- Policy is set by annual meeting of Board of Governors, with one from each member country. The Executive Board in Washington oversees day to day policy.
- Voting rights in the IMF are proportional to the amount of money paid in. The USA has 18 per cent of votes for its \$35 billion paid in. This allows it to veto any changes to the IMF Charter, which requires 85 per cent approval. The G8 countries have more than half of the votes: 174 countries share the rest.

ments" by restricting domestic demand and thereby cutting imports while boosting exports by lowering their price.

The success of an SAP depended on increasing income from exports and attracting foreign investment in a country. The increased income is immediately earmarked for debt repayment while foreign capital finds that assets are now much cheaper than they were before because of currency devaluation. As a result, the banks get their pounds of flesh and the country surrenders more of its economy to the multinational corporations, which get access to countries' workers and natural resources at cheap prices.

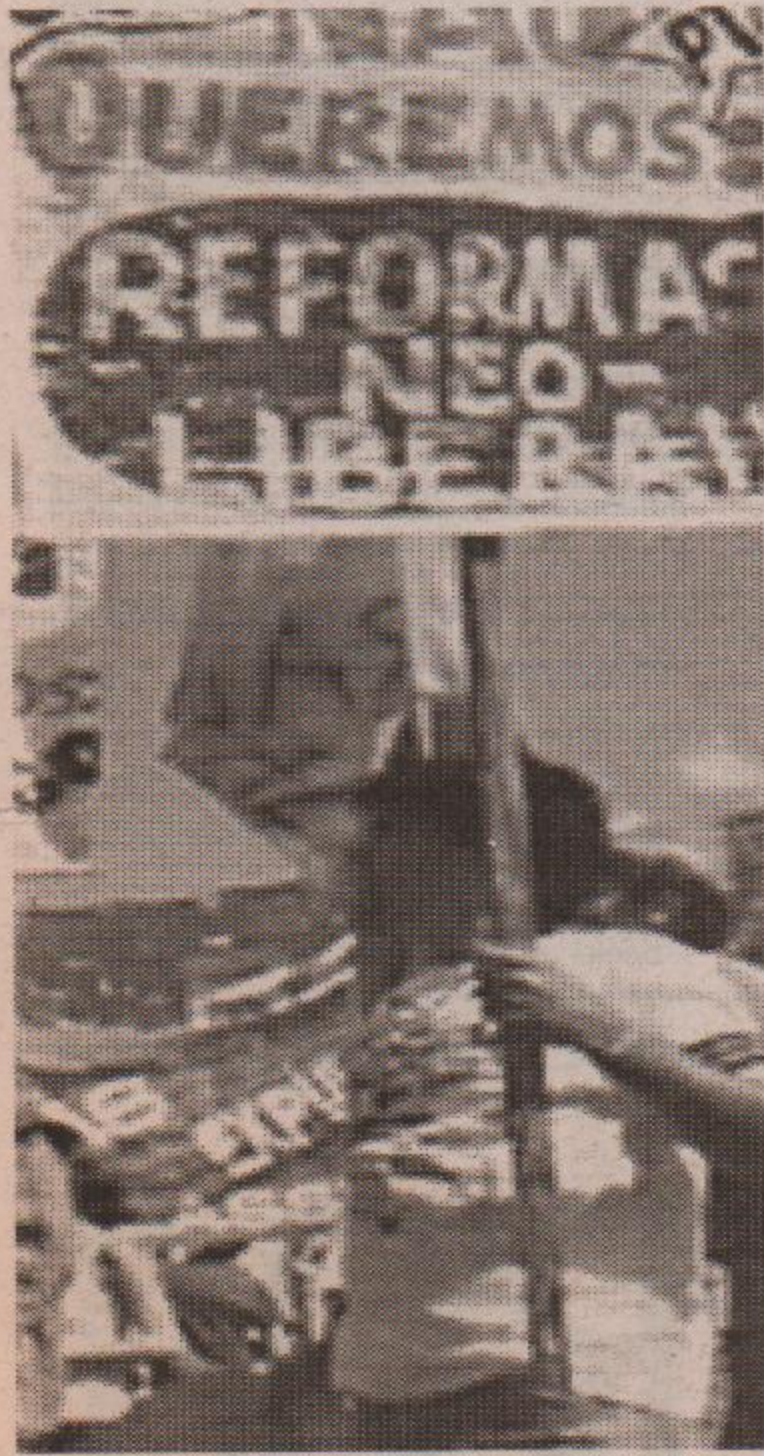
Loans are only given to countries that agree to accept these SAPs – there are no negotiations.

In the 1990s, SAPs were rebranded as poverty reduction programmes but

their aim is still the same. If a country wants debt relief or cancellation then it has to undertake a series of reforms to open up its markets – selling state assets to foreign companies for example.

So central are the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation to the dominance of the multinationals that no fundamental reform can be countenanced; as long as the banks and IMF insist that loans make a profit, that continued interest repayments must be prioritised above other government spending commitments – in other words as long as global capitalism remains dominant – then the pain will endure.

Only a strategy that aims at uprooting capitalist exploitation in each country and the bourgeois governments that defend it can end the role that international finance plays in millions of lives.



HOW THE G8 CONTROLS THE WORLD

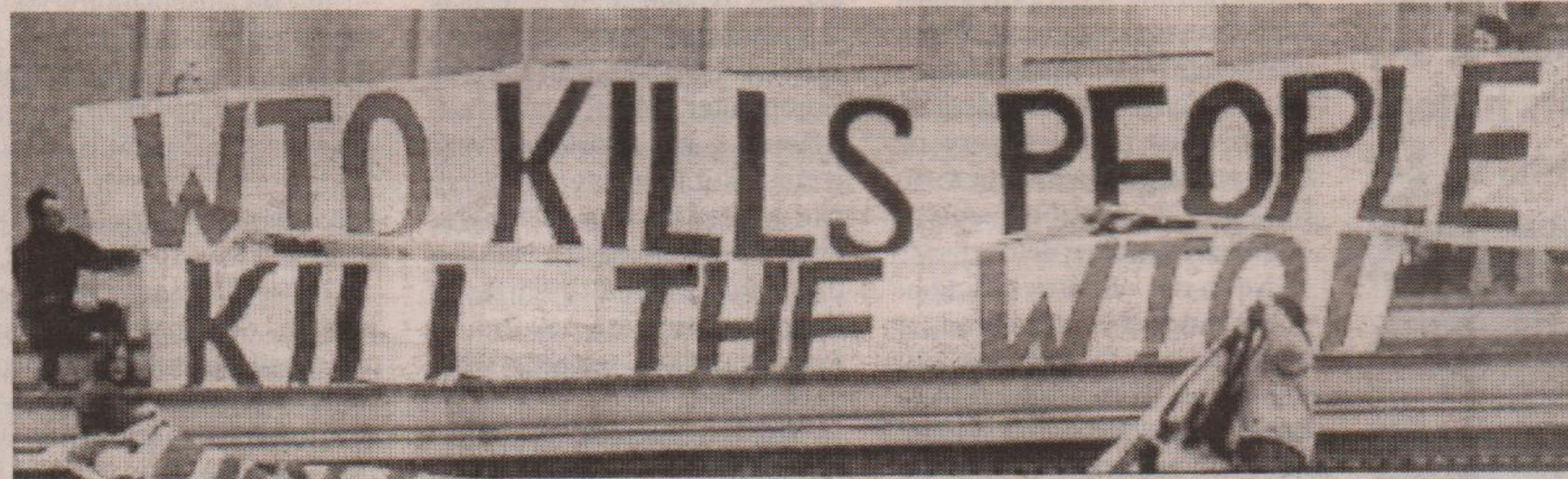
Fair trade, free trade or planning?

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) oversees the international trading system. It was set up in 1995 as the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which was a treaty that committed nations to a long-term policy of reducing tariffs on international trade.

From the outset, it was a rich man's club that decided which sectors would be freed for trade or in which subsidies could be maintained. For example, the US and European countries insisted that their textile and agricultural sectors had to be protected from imports from the global south while also arguing that the south had to open up its markets to the industrial products and the banks of the North.

For 40 years the United States was able to use the general agreement to tear down tariffs that obstructed its own exports and insist on special treatment for its own industries and agriculture. For example, the "temporary" Multi-Fibre Agreement that was adopted in the 1950s, which protected the US cotton industry from competition, is still in force 50 years later.

But by the 1980s, US's needs had changed. It now wanted to exploit the much higher productivity of its farms. As the US agriculture secretary John Block put it in 1986, "(The) idea that developing countries should feed themselves is an anachronism from a bygone era. They could better ensure their food security by relying on US agricultural



products, which are available in most cases at much lower cost."

Also the huge expansion of the activities of US-based "multinational corporations" – especially after the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s – also created new priorities. The US argued that a new organisation was needed, the WTO.

One of the leaders of the anticapitalist movement Walden Bello said: "The WTO is a blueprint for the global hegemony of corporate America. It seeks to institutionalise the accumulated advantages of US corporations."

The WTO controls trade in agriculture, manufacture and services and it has jurisdiction over national laws and intellectual property rights.

The WTO sought to remove all barriers to trade for multinationals, known as "trade related investment measures". Restrictions on investment have been reduced nearly everywhere in the 1990s. By 1997, 1,330 investment treaties,

involving 162 countries, were in place: three times as many as in 1992. The US also sought to consolidate its advantage in cutting edge knowledge-intensive industries through "trade-related intellectual property rights".

US officials also wanted to create a much more powerful means of enforcing decisions. The decisions of the WTO's "dispute resolution mechanism" are now enforceable through sanctions and apply to all 142 member-countries usurping the laws of the countries of the global south.

Through the General Agreement on Trade in Services, it intends to bring all areas of human existence under its control. For example, governments would have to open up areas such as health, education, and energy production to international competition in which the multinational corporations would have the advantage over local providers. The services agreement is a privatisation charter.

The EU commission says: "It is first and foremost an instrument for the benefit of business".

The WTO's services director says: "Without the enormous pressure generated by the American financial sector, there would have been no services agreement."

It aims to break into the public sector and make health, education and transport provision open to competition from private sector. The services agreement excludes government services that are "not in competition with [private] services suppliers" but since most public services in the UK are already in competition at some level with private sector this is no protection at all.

The WTO is not then a free trade organisation. It exists to manage the rules of trade in favour of the big western multinationals; defending US and EU subsidies to its agribusinesses while insisting on the elimination of such subsidies in the global south.

Can trade be made fair under capitalism?

Make Poverty History calls for "trade justice", including ending rich country subsidies and allowing third world countries to decide what measures they should take to end poverty and protect the environment.

Since this would make the WTO redundant, Make Poverty History should demand that the WTO be abolished and the global south countries free to establish whatever protective barriers are needed to prevent their domestic industries and jobs being decimated.

In the global north however, we oppose any protectionism aimed at keeping the goods of the global south out; here we favour free trade. The answer to employers taking advantage of "cheap labour" in the global south is not to exclude their goods – as the US and EU currently wish to do in blocking Chinese textiles – but to use trade union and working class action nationally and internationally to push for the improvement of wages and conditions in developing countries towards the level of the OECD countries.

But while protectionism in the global south may be a valid defensive response to the rapaciousness of the multinationals it cannot provide a long-term basis for an international trading system. Prolonged protectionism coupled with a narrow and impoverished domestic market will not allow poor countries to escape poverty.

But the end to either free trade or protectionism can only come about with the abolition of capitalist production and trade. With the social ownership of the means of production a system of planned trade can adjust the exchange of products and services in a way that assists the global south to raise living standards.

Bolivia: make the revolution permanent

Bolivia is engulfed by revolution. For the second time in 18 months the ruling parties are in turmoil, **Dave Ellis** reports

President Carlos Mesa resigned on 6 June after a month of mass protests, mass strikes and road blockades that sealed off the capital of Bolivia La Paz and the neighbouring city El Alto from the rest of the country.

The issue that sparked the current protest was the demand for the renationalisation of Bolivia's gas exploration and export industry. The gas industry was privatised under the auspices of the World Bank in the late 1990s. The population was outraged as it watched its most valuable resource enrich a Spanish multinational while the mass of Bolivians continued to live in dire poverty.

The heart of the protest movement is El Alto, a city of nearly a million inhabitants next to the capital La Paz. This city led the struggle against the privatised water utilities in 2003, driving out a French multinational and the President responsible for much of the privatisations. Since then the city has been effectively in the hands of popular assemblies and the Federation of Neighbourhood Committees (Fejuve) In May the call went out from El Alto for an indefinite general strike until their demand for full nationalisation was realised. The Bolivian workers federation, the COB, backed the call for a general strike. The strike spread like wildfire across the country with miners, teachers and transport workers joining in.

By early June the capital and much of the country was gripped by the strike and road blockades and the President handed in his resignation. The congress reconvened in Sucre – away from the pressure of El Alto – to choose a successor who could defuse the situation. The favoured candidate of the right wing Congress was the senate speaker, Hormando Vaca Diez, a rich rancher from Santa Cruz. But Vaca was unacceptable to the workers and peasants and was forced to give way.

Santa Cruz is the main province where the valuable deposits of gas have been found. The local ruling elite have been demanding greater autonomy in the hope that, whatever happens in the rest of Bolivia, they will be able to strike a separate deal with the imperialists and their multinational energy corporations.

The ruling class is desperate to continue to draw their wealth and power from selling the country's natural resources to European and North American imperialism. They would sooner destroy the nation rather than lose these profits and their foreign masters' goodwill.

Instead of Vaca the Congress chose Eduardo Rodriguez to be the new President. He was the head of the supreme court and someone supposedly above party politics. He is a stop-gap President whose job it is to end the revolution on the streets and organise new elections. Like his predecessor he has said he will "consider" the nationalisation of the gas industry. He has called for national unity and for a truce and has called on the workers' and peasants' organisations to call off the general strike and blockades.



Bottom left: MAS leader Evo Morales

Top right: indigenous leader Jaime Alanoca Mamani

This must be rejected! When President Mesa took over after the uprising of October 2003 the leaders of the mass movement, the COB and the peasants federation (CSUTCB) declared a truce for 90 days. They opened negotiations with Mesa and demobilised the general strike and blockades. This was a terrible mistake. In the end Mesa waited until the revolutionary movement had subsided and then made it clear that he had no intention of nationalising the gas industry.

President Rodriguez will do exactly the same thing – play for time, hope the movement will demobilise and then refuse to concede the demands of the Bolivian people.

Lamentably the major left wing party, Evo Morales' Movement for Socialism (MAS) has already called for the protests and strikes to be called off. Morales has refused to back the demands for nationalisation, preferring to argue for higher taxes on gas production, but has been forced to go along with the more militant activists in the

general strike.

Shortly after Rodriguez's appointment Morales declared: "One must understand that he is the new president and he has expressed a commitment to listen to our demands. His election is easing the tensions and we are going to accept a truce". He implored the other workers' and peasants' organisations to accept a truce as well. Already sections of the MAS have started to end their blockades of the highways.

This is a huge backward step. No doubt Morales is hopeful that he is the most likely candidate to win any presidential election. He came second in the last Presidential elections with 30 per cent of the vote. The MAS wants to divert the mass struggle into putting its reformist leadership into power – once there it will abandon their demands and attack the most militant workers and peasants.

Fortunately there are many revolutionary workers who are not so easily duped. The main organisations leading the general strike, the COB and the

Fejuve, gave the new president 72 hours in which to nationalise the gas and hydrocarbons industry.

The leader of the Fejuve, Abel Mamani, declared, "Whoever is president, we will continue to struggle. We didn't ask for the resignation of ex President Mesa. We want nationalisation... There is no truce."

This is a good sign. The workers are not only debating how to pursue the struggle for nationalisation, they are starting to realise they need to take the power to enforce their demands.

How can the revolution be won?

The centre of the revolution is El Alto. There the workers and shantytown dwellers have united behind the Fejuve. Local districts of the city, the trade unions, the teachers, workers assemblies, small traders – all send delegates to the Fejuve to organise.

The Fejuve is like a soviet, the worker's councils that took power in Russia in the revolution of 1917. At the beginning of the struggle the Fejuve played the role as the central organ of strug-

gle. Now it must transform itself into an organ of dual power and insurrection.

The beginning of this division in the power, which runs Bolivia, became clear in the crisis in June. As the general strike began to bite, the country ceased to function. The old structures of power and administration simply could not do anything. But society cannot remain immobile forever.

Food must be distributed, water services must be run and the people need electricity and fuel. In this situation the Fejuve has had to fulfil the role of the government of El Alto. It has taken over the role of distribution of food and resources in the city. The workers who control the utilities ensure that supplies reach the poorer districts but not the wealthy ones. The general strike has shown that without the workers and peasants the country cannot work.

Other councils are being organised in the other main cities, some are called popular assemblies, others *cabildos*. This form of organisation must be widened. These councils must aim to draw in every sector of the popular masses particularly women and the indigenous population. They must link up at a local, regional and national level.

Some of these tasks have already been discussed at a June national meeting in El Alto and are being put into action (see box). The task now is for these organs of power to create an alternative government, a revolutionary workers' government with the support of their allies – the revolutionary peasants and the urban poor. This means arming the masses and winning over the rank and file soldiers to its side. It means seizing power and sweeping away the rotten Congress and Presidency.

The Bolivian people have the chance to deliver a mighty blow against a rapacious imperialism, which through its privatising and neoliberal policies is stripping Latin America and other continents of their natural resources and wealth. It could become a beacon for the oppressed masses not only in Latin America but also throughout the world.

The current revolutionary crisis in Bolivia must be resolved before long – either in favour of the bosses or the workers and peasants. For the latter to win they need a leadership that is clear about the need to organise for the seizure of power. A revolutionary workers' party must be built now!

In October 2003 the leaders of the COB claimed they could not have taken power because there was no revolutionary party. This was a poor excuse then and a poorer one now since their leaders have done nothing in the intervening 18 months to organise the working class to build one. It is in fact an excuse – they are looking to other forces to solve the country's crisis. The leader of the COB, Jaime Solares, declared in early June that he hoped a government headed by "a patriotic and honest military officer" would replace Mesa.

A party of tens of thousands of the most active and courageous militants could move millions behind them as long as they are clear on the immediate tasks: build the popular assemblies, take power into their hands, arm and train the mass organisations to resist the army generals, take over the factories and mines under the control of the workers and expropriate the capitalists.

Above all spread the revolution internationally. Multiply the centres of resistance to Peru, Ecuador, Chile and beyond. Demand support, equipment and manpower from the popular movement in Venezuela and from the international working class.

The First Enlarged Meeting of the National Originaria (Indigenous) Peoples' Assembly of Bolivia

The transnational oil corporations, North American imperialism and the treacherous rulers of the Bolivian state have plunged the whole nation into a deep political, economic and social crisis, with the country currently on the verge of total collapse. The aroused masses in the city of El Alto and throughout the country have a decisive role to play: to save the country through a peoples' government elected from below and with real accountability.

For this reason, the first enlarged meeting of the Originaria National Peoples' Assembly takes the following decisions:

1) That the city of El Alto be the General Headquarters of the Bolivian Revolution in the XXI century.

2) To create a United Leadership of the Originaria National Peoples' Assembly as an INSTRUMENT OF POWER, at the head of the Federation of Neighbourhood Juntas of El Alto (FEJUVE), the Regional Workers' Union of El Alto (COR), the Bolivian Workers' Union (COB), the United Trade Union Confederation of Peasant

Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB), the Trade Union Confederation of Artisan Workers, Small Traders of Bolivia, the Trade Union Federation of Mine Workers of Bolivia, the Interprovincial Transport Federation of La Paz and the other mobilised social organisations in the interior of the country.

3) To create SUPPLY, SELF DEFENCE, PRESS AND POLITICAL Committees whose aim is to guarantee the success of the organised peoples' organisations.

4) We reiterate that our struggle for the NATIONALISATION AND INDUSTRIALISATION OF HYDROCARBONS is non-negotiable.

5) To organise the formation of Peoples' Assemblies in every department under the leadership of the COB, the Departmental Workers' Federation, and the delegates elected from the rank and file in mass meetings and cabildos.

6) To reject all manoeuvres of the ruling class either through a constitutional succession or elections involving the same old "politicians".

El Alto, 8 June 2005.

Can the Scottish Socialist Party survive?

G.R. McColl looks at the Scottish Socialist Party's accommodation to nationalism and reformism and argues that there can be no separate "Scottish road" to socialism

Many on the British left have looked to the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) as a model, something to be emulated to challenge Tony Blair's New Labour throughout the UK. So when its support plunged in May's general election, there was widespread disappointment.

An organisation that had gained six seats in the Holyrood Parliament two years before, saw its share of the vote drop to just 1.9 per cent in the 58 seats it contested. Only two of its candidates saved their deposits.

As elsewhere in Britain, the Labour vote in Scotland fell on 5 May, though Labour remains the nation's single largest party and it commands a notably higher share of the vote than in England (39.5 per cent compared to 35.9). Similarly, the Liberal Democrats made the largest gains, while the Scottish electorate once again returned only one Tory MP.

But it was not always thus: in 1955 the majority of Scotland's Westminster MPs were Tories. This historical reality contrasts sharply with the image of Scotland as a bastion of the left, with unique traditions of working class militancy expressing an essentially separate history and character. So is the Scottish working class fundamentally different?

Scotland has certainly provided a lead for the working class movement on many occasions in the past. The Scottish Labour Party played a key role in the founding of the Independent Labour Party, and Scotland has seen some of the most bitter class struggles over the course of the past century: the Clydeside shop stewards' movement of the First World War, the shipyard occupations of the early 1970s, the anti-poll tax movement in the 1980s and the bitter strike by mainly women workers at Timex in 1993, to name a few.

However, this militant tradition has always, in the main, regarded itself as part of the all-Britain labour movement and its political leadership, whether in the Labour Party or the Communist Party, consciously opposed the idea of a separate nationalism, deriding the Scottish National Party (SNP) as "Tartan Tories". The exception to this rule, albeit a famous one, was the heroic antiwar communist John Maclean's call, late in his life, for a Scottish workers republic.

The lefts hostile attitude to Scottish nationalism began to change in the 1970s. The Tory onslaught on jobs, workers' rights and the nationalised industries hit Scotland's heavy industries disproportionately severely. The militancy that brought down Heath in the 1970s also led to the most left wing Labour Party electoral programme, promising an alliance between government and unions.

As the reality of a Labour government committed to following IMF economic policies became clear, working class discontent rose. At the same time, a revitalised SNP presented North Sea oil as a guarantee of economic viability for an independent Scotland. Faced with the prospect of working class disaffection in one of its most important heartlands, the Labour government introduced the Scotland Act, providing for a referendum not on independence but on "devolution" of some powers to a Scottish Assembly.

When the referendum was held in March 1979, a narrow but clear majority of voters said "yes" to an Assembly on a 63 per cent turn-out, but the Act stipulated that at least 40 per cent of the total electorate had to vote "yes" for



Former SSP leader Tommy Sheridan and MSP Rosie Kane at the rally for an Independent Scottish Republic in 2004

the Assembly to come into being. This grossly anti-democratic procedure, while it killed off the possibility of a Scottish Assembly, gave added legitimacy to the demand for separate Scottish representation.

This was further fuelled by Scotland's experience in the 1980s when the country, which again returned a majority of Labour MPs, was a prime target for Thatcher's attacks. Foremost among these was the Poll Tax.

Like many Labour-controlled local authorities in England, such as Greater London, South Yorkshire and Liverpool, those in Scotland used their limited powers of local taxation, known as the "rates", to maintain public services in breach of central government policy to cut public spending. Because rates were calculated on the basis of property values they had a roughly redistributive effect: the rich, who lived in expensive houses, tended to pay more than the poor. The Poll Tax was intended to reverse this by taxing individuals, not properties – and Thatcher decided to introduce it first in Scotland.

It was the widespread and militant campaign against the Poll Tax, based not only on demonstrations but refusal to pay and direct action to defend non-payers, which brought to the fore many of the leaders of today's SSP. It also created the conditions in which they, and others on the Left, began to rethink their approach to nationalism.

Their background was in the Militant Tendency, whose programme for socialism in Britain was based on a future government nationalising industry and redistributing wealth via an "enabling act" passed by a socialist majority in parliament. There was no obstacle, in principle, to repackaging this reformist programme for a Scottish context. Indeed, given the existing political landscape, a left majority was more likely in a Scottish Parliament than the UK one. Except that there was no Scottish Parliament. They concluded that Scottish independence was, therefore, the necessary first step to the Scottish Socialist Republic.

This combination of left reformism and Scottish nationalism proved attractive for many on the left who were

repelled by the Labour Party's drive to the right, symbolised by the deletion of Clause Four of its constitution which called for public ownership of industry.

First as Scottish Militant Labour, then as the Scottish Socialist Alliance and finally as the Scottish Socialist Party, the new current began to attract support both from the organised left and from working class voters. Famously, the affiliation to the party of branches of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union led to the union's expulsion from the Labour Party. On the electoral front the SSP gained six seats in the Scottish Assembly on the basis of over 100,000 votes in May 2003.

What then accounts for the decline in the general election? Of course, the first past the post electoral system always tends to reduce votes for minor parties who have no chance of winning a seat outright – but that was also true in 2001 when the SSP, nonetheless, gained 3.1 per cent as against 1.9 per cent this time. Some may point to the loss of Tommy Sheridan as the party's leader as a factor and given his pre-eminence within the party that cannot be entirely dismissed. But if the party had continued to make ground in the working class the loss of one individual, however influential, would not cut its support by nearly 50 per cent.

A more fundamental reason is that the party drew the wrong conclusions from the conflicts from which it first drew strength. Vicious and destructive as the attacks on the Scottish workers were under both Tories and Labour, and militant as the Scottish workers fight back was, they were all part and parcel of the class struggle in Britain as a whole – not a specifically "Scottish" or "national" struggle.

That was also true for the defeats – Scottish miners were defeated by the same combination of state power and labour leadership treachery as were their English and Welsh comrades. And for victories, most notably against the Poll Tax itself which was finally only defeated by mass mobilisations across the whole of the UK, culminating in the Trafalgar Square riot of 1990.

The Scottish nation has every right to self determination. If a majority of Scots were to express the wish for

separation it would be the duty of workers in England and Wales to demand this wish be immediately and unconditionally conceded to. And we would take action to help the Scots bring it about. Retention of Scotland within the Union by either force or fraud would be a bigger blow to workers' unity and internationalism than any separation.

But the Scottish ruling class decided centuries ago to throw in its lot with the English bourgeoisie. A united British ruling class has ruled both countries ever since. Why would the Scottish working class want to separate itself from its class sisters and brothers, the working class of the rest of Britain, which is ruled over by the same bourgeoisie and the same state?

Although the battles of the last three decades may at times have strengthened the sense of national identity of

Scots, all the evidence suggests that support for independence and separation has remained a minority political current. Far from championing it and reinterpreting it as a necessary step towards socialism, revolutionaries should have argued against it. It was, and is, a utopian distraction from the real interests of the working class on both sides of the border. By supporting nationalism, revolutionaries effectively isolate themselves from the majority of the working class who do not support it.

The conclusion that should have been drawn from the experience of the 1980s and 1990s was that the working class, especially, but not only, in Scotland, was looking for a radical and militant new political force with which to fight the policies of both Tory and Labour governments. It was the willingness to lead a real fight and suffer the consequences, as Tommy Sheridan did when he went to jail for opposing the bailiffs, that rallied support in the unions and in the working class estates.

What led the SSP and its predecessors to nationalism was not the pressure of a tempestuous mass movement for independence but their own reformist schema of a parliamentary road to socialism. Having been unable to transform the Labour Party into a radical reformist party that would legislate for socialism at Westminster, the goal became the building of a new party, radical and reformist from the beginning, in Scotland.

Whatever the ups and downs of electoral politics in a local or European context, the way forward for revolutionaries, in or out of the SSP in Scotland, lies in turning their back on nationalism and combining their forces with others to build a new, mass-based, workers' party both sides of the border.

That party will need to commit itself not to the fantasy of a parliamentary road to socialism but to the building of working class organisations that will overthrow capitalism through revolution. Only in this way can the working class establish our rule throughout Britain, and through a new world party of social revolution, spread socialism throughout the world.

Programme of the League for the Fifth International
£1.50 €2.50

FROM PROTEST TO POWER

MANIFESTO FOR WORLD REVOLUTION

All history proves that the capitalists will never relinquish their property peacefully – to claim otherwise in the age of 'Shock and Awe' is either hopeless naivety or willful deception. There is only one way: their apparatus of state repression must be overthrown by force. The capitalists' monopoly of military power – armies, police and security forces, prison systems, civil servants, judiciaries – must be smashed to pieces and replaced with the rule of the working people themselves.

This can be done – the majority of humanity can cast off the tiny minority of parasites. It will take mass organisation, an unambiguous strategy and, when the hour strikes, courageous and ruthless action.

Some may balk at this, but the alternative to revolution is not decades of undisturbed peace. Basing a global civilisation on the empowerment of a few thousand and the impoverishment of six billion is like lodging depth charges in the planetary core. If the logic of capitalism is left to unfold, our world will be torn apart by starvation, disease, poverty, environmental catastrophe, and war.

In the struggle against capitalism, greater energy is equivalent to greater humanity. For with the suppression of our exploiters and an end to the tyranny of profit, human history can truly begin.

Where is the European Left going?

Two hundred organisations and individuals across Europe have issued an important new Call for an alternative to the neoliberal agenda of the EU. So will the European left unite, and if so on what basis? *Dave Stockton* reports

In Lisbon in March 2000, Europe's rulers set the European Union the goal of becoming "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world" by 2010. They pledged themselves to create 3 per cent annual economic growth and 20 million jobs.

But this proved to be a total illusion. Five years on economic growth in the Eurozone is forecast at only 1.6 per cent. Unemployment is around 10 per cent in France, Germany and Italy, and even more in Spain. All this during an ongoing upswing of the world economy.

In fact the growth targets, along with some waffle about "social inclusion", were just window dressing. The real Lisbon agenda aimed at slashing pensions, healthcare, education and workers' rights. Why? Europe's capitalists face ever fiercer competition in the global market from multi-nationals in North America and Asia. They need to reshape Europe on the neoliberal model set by the United States.

The rejection of the European Constitution in France and The Netherlands shows that workers have rumbled this project for what it is a neoliberal assault on the social gains they have made over the last fifty years. The left organisations which combined to defeat the Constitution in France believe that they can agree on an alternative to the Lisbon Agenda and moreover that the time is ripe to roll it out across Europe. They have issued a Call for a special conference in Paris on 24 and 25 June.

The major forces behind this Call, which has been signed by 200 organisations and individuals, are the French Communist Party (PCF), the largest militant union federation CGT, Attac France, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), which is the French section of the Fourth International, and G10 Solidaires, a union federation influenced by the LCR.

In its paper *L'Humanité*, the PCF said: "The No victory is first of all the fruit of a remarkable popular mobilisation, and a political renewal of the Left. It is a call for building, as soon as pos-



Supporters of the the LCR in France celebrate the rejection of the EU constitution

sible, a Social Europe, a Europe based on solidarity, progress for all: a Europe that rejects the Law of the Jungle, that pits workers against each other, at the lowest salaries, working conditions and social benefits available in the European Union."

The signatories have also called for the local collectives they built in the No Campaign to continue their work. The general secretary of the PCF, Marie George Buffet, has also called for "popular assemblies for another Europe".

It is a good idea to transform the "Collectives for the No of the Left" into local action councils, to unite the unions and the left in action. The last preparatory meeting of the European Social Forum in May called for a Europe wide day of action against the Bolkestein directive in October. This

could be turned into a day of strike action, built for by a network of action committees that could then launch further actions. The meeting in Paris should start the work of setting up such a European-wide network.

But what of the question posed of "a new politics", even new "parties of the left"? The post-Stalinist 'official' Communist parties which comprise the European Left Party, whose best known members are the PCF and Rifondazione Comunista of Italy (RC), remain committed to a reformist programme. They limit themselves to calling for "another" EU constitution without calling into question the capitalist and imperialist character of the EU itself.

They want to create new reformist parties, probably drawing in the left wings of parties like the French Social-

ists, the German Social Democrats and even the Italian Democratic Left (DS). Some probably want to go even further and build a new Popular Front with the left wing of capitalist parties like the Christian Democrats or the Gaullists.

Wittingly or not – and for leaders like Bertinotti of RC it is certainly conscious – they are offering themselves as alternative rulers of the continent for the capitalists. Indeed RC is now preparing to enter government with the Christian Democrat Romano Prodi, one of the main architects of the "Europe of the monopolies". Such actions are a plain and simple betrayal of the class interests of the workers and anticapitalist youth.

But what of the "revolutionaries" of the LCR? They are part of an alterna-

tive grouping of parties in Europe which calls itself the European Anticapitalist Left. Where is their "revolutionary" and "anticapitalist" alternative? Yes, they put more emphasis on mass mobilisations and taking action in defence of the social gains under attack. But when it comes to the political basis for a "new politics" they advance no radical alternative to the politics of the European Left Party.

Instead of putting forward a revolutionary action programme the European Anticapitalist Left (in Britain represented by the SWP and/or Respect) are content, indeed positively enthusiastic to put forward the same vague reformist slogans as the European Left Party – a social and democratic Europe. Indeed the LCR seeks a block, even a fusion with them.

They are happily aiding the reformist project by only advancing reformist slogans themselves and trying to unite the left or build new parties on this basis.

The League for the Fifth International (LFI) has a qualitatively different approach. First we say that a united front for action, including reformists and revolutionaries, trade unionists and anticapitalist youth is both possible and necessary to fight the present attacks. All this requires is for the reformist leaders to really mobilise their mass membership. We call on them to do so.

In the framework of an ongoing struggle it will be possible to hold a democratic and urgent debate about strategy, about programme, about what sort of society we are fighting for and how we can achieve it.

For the LFI this necessitates a revolutionary strategy and the building of revolutionary party, not only in each country, not only in Europe but as part of world party, a new International. Globalisation makes this necessary even for most of the day-to-day struggles of the working class. That is why the LFI continues to struggle within the anticapitalist and workers' movement for the founding of a Fifth International as a world party of social revolution.

Germany: left coalition to challenge SPD

Germany's governing Social Democratic Party (SPD) has suffered a humiliating defeat in North Rhine Westphalia, until now the party's stronghold. In elections to the region's state parliament on 22 May, the party's vote fell to 37.1 per cent while the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) won 44.8 per cent, an increase of a million votes. The defeat means that the governing coalition of the SPD and Greens has also lost control of the second chamber in the German national Parliament.

This disaster was the latest in a series of defeats for Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder since he won the 2002 elections on an antiwar ticket. His neoliberal policy, "Agenda 2010", has cut the welfare state at a time of economic stagnation and an employers' offensive on pay, working conditions and jobs. Support for the SPD fell as fast as unemployment, now topping five million, rose.

Faced with the prospect of another year of mounting internal conflict within the SPD and deadlock in Parliament, Schroeder and the party leader, Muntefering, have opted for early elections. By this, they hope to seize the initiative

from their critics within the party by forcing them to close ranks behind Schroeder.

It is a desperate tactic but based on the accurate recognition that their only hope of re-election is to exploit the belief, at least among party and union leaders, that the main priority is to keep the SPD in office. If successful, they would then cynically declare that they had a mandate to press on with Agenda 2010.

The past two years have not only seen a collapse in working class support for the SPD but also repeated mobilisations of mass forces against government policies. These have included rank and file trade union demonstrations, the "Monday demos" against unemployment and militant industrial struggles such as at the Opel plant in Bochum.

In such a situation, revolutionaries cannot call for a vote for the SPD. Instead, they must use the months up to the election to campaign for a new working class party to unify and give political direction to the different campaigns in the inevitable struggle against whichever party gains power.

It is in this context that the performance of the non-SPD reformist left in North Rhine Westphalia has to be judged. The post-Stalinist Party of

Democratic Socialism (PDS) saw its vote stagnate at 0.9 per cent. The newly formed Electoral Alternative (WASG) received 2.2 per cent. Given the mobilisations and the alienation of the mass of working class people, these results are very modest, but they are not insignificant. The WASG did particularly well among the unemployed (7 per cent), but it and the PDS failed to make inroads amongst employed workers. Given the system of proportional representation and its continued base in "East" Germany, the PDS can probably cross the 5 per cent threshold and gain some seats in parliament.

Both organisations have formed an electoral bloc for the September national elections. This has attracted support from Oskar Lafontaine, the former leader of the left wing of the SPD.

The leaders of the WASG and the PDS have decided that it is for them, not the rank and file of their parties, to decide on what the programme will be for the election and what character any new party should have. They have formed a purely electoral alliance, which will allow future MPs freedom to manoeuvre, including giving tacit support to the SPD if it forms the next government.

Such a top down process is exactly the opposite of what is needed. We call on the WASG and PDS to sponsor an open conference to discuss and decide upon the formation and programme for an electoral campaign against the general attack of the capitalists, Schroeder's Agenda 2010 and CDU-candidate Merkel's threatened attack on the unions and workers' rights.

This conference should be open to the widest possible participation of militants from the Monday-demonstrations, alliances against the Hartz laws, social forums, workers' struggles like Opel Bochum, the Trade Union Left network, youth and student organisations, co-ordinations of immigrants and from antiwar and anti-imperialist organisations. Such a conference would thus be a real gathering of working class fighters, not just a tame audience for faded SPD stars or the lower ranks of the trade union bureaucracy.

Workers should demand from the unions and their leaders that they withdraw all support from the SPD and join the formation of a new fighting party. The engineering union, IG Metall, for example, has already issued a programme of demands on the government that is nearly identical to that of the

WASG, yet its leaders are doing all they can to rally their members behind the SPD. Workers should call on the SPD-left to break with Schroeder and join in the founding of a new party.

Such an open conference must allow all currents to present their proposals, draft programmes and strategy for an election campaign and for the creation of a new, mass working class party. It should adopt a clear and unequivocal position of giving no support to any incoming government, which continues the attacks on the working class and the measures to strengthen an European imperialist bloc. Last, but not least, it must demand that the PDS breaks its coalition governments with the SPD in Schwerin and Berlin which are carrying out local versions of the selfsame cuts in the social gains of the working class.

A new party will only be a real step forward if it is more than an electoral formation, if it is a party of class struggle, not a party for electing yet another bourgeois government – a party which will become not only a weapon to rout the present attacks and give the lead to a working class counter-offensive, but a party which will fight to overthrow capitalism itself.

The Socialist Workers Party a

There have been immense struggles against war, racism and neoliberalism in the past few years. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its fraternal groups in the International Socialist Tendency have played an influential role in these struggles. *Luke Carter* looks critically at their turn to the anticapitalist movement six years ago and the policy they have advocated for that movement since

On 30 November 1999, 30,000 mainly young people shut down a meeting of the World Trade Organisation in Seattle, USA. The protest signalled the coming onto the world stage of a new movement committed to fighting against "globalisation" – the economic and political project of the rich G8 nations to slash welfare spending, privatise industry and dismantle barriers to the free movement of capital. This movement challenged the conventional wisdom that free market liberalism had finally won the battle of ideas after the collapse of the Soviet Union and, with the rightward shift of social democratic and labour parties internationally, it presented rich opportunities for revolutionary socialists. Workers Power spotted this new radicalism among young people in the mid 90s and launched the socialist youth group Revolution.

The SWP had ignored the beginnings of this movement but after the Seattle demonstrations it began to orientate to it and were in prime position to take full advantage of it. In the 1980s it had seen its competitors wither away. Militant Tendency was purged from the Labour party and later split in 1993. The cult-like Workers Revolutionary Party collapsed during the miners' strike with the emergence of a sexual abuse scandal around its leader Gerry Healy.

The SWP defined the period between 1975 and 1990 as one of retreat for the working class, which it called "the downturn". The party, according to this schema, had to turn in on itself, retreating to propaganda circles amidst a tidal wave of reaction in which "the very concept of Marxism itself was at stake". This theory was designed to justify the SWP's failure to make a major breakthrough and had little bearing on reality in a period in which there was mass struggle against first Labour and then the Tory governments.

But having concentrated purely on propaganda work to "build the party" it was insulated from the worst effects of the defeats, could pride itself on having predicted their "inevitability" and was able to build up a sizeable cadre base, particularly on university campuses. By the 1990s it could count its membership in thousands, it had a strong party apparatus, a range of weekly, monthly and quarterly publications and a large print shop produce thousands of placards for demonstrations.

The SWP cited the Seattle protests as evidence of a period of recovery from the downturn. This could not have come quickly enough for them, given that they had been arguing that the downturn had ended since 1992. The International Socialist Tendency, the umbrella that brings together the SWP's sister organisations in other countries, upon prompting by London, also threw it itself into building this new movement. This precipitated a split with the second largest group outside of the UK, the International Socialist Organisation of the United States.

In polemic with them, SWP theoretician Alex Callinicos argued that the ISO had "failed the test of Seattle" in refusing to mobilise large numbers for the demonstration². This came on top of other tensions that had emerged with the ISO during the Balkans war. The ISO had correctly argued that revolutionaries had a duty to fight for self-

determination for Kosova while also being against the Nato bombing. The SWP opposed this because they feared antagonising allies they had made in the anti-war coalitions – especially those from then official Communist parties who would brook no criticism of "socialist" Serbia and its brutal Stalinist dictator Milosevic. Already they were developing a concept that made the suspension of revolutionary criticism of their allies in joint campaigns a pre-requisite for their own participation. This became theorised as "the united front of a special kind".

This adapted version of the classical Marxist united front tactic was special for two reasons. First, the fronts were neither episodic, short-term projects for the party, nor were they to be permanent attachments to the party. They were to be formally independent organisations in which the SWP undertook the bulk of its campaigning work and kept a firm organisational grip on its membership and rigidly organised party apparatus. Second, the policy marked a conscious break with the classical notion of the united front as developed by Lenin, Trotsky and the Third International after the First World War.

The newly founded Communist parties in this period had to compete with larger social democratic parties that retained their hold on the leadership of the working class movement. In order to break workers from the reformists the Communists proposed to the workers organisations, trade unions and political parties, common actions against the capitalist offensive. The purpose of this united front policy was twofold.

First, to force the reformist organisations to fight on questions vital to their own members and the working class as a whole. Second, to win the best reformist militants to revolutionary ideas, by exposing the incompetence and treachery of the reformist leaders through joint action and merciless criticism. This criticism was *as essential as unity in struggle* as the Communist International stated: "While supporting the slogan of the greatest possible unity of all workers' organisations in every practical action against the capitalist front, communists in no circumstances desist from putting forward their views, which are the only consistent expression of the defence of working class interests as a whole."³ Without such criticism the counterposed character of reformism and communism would be lost and the latter would not appear as an alternative programme and leadership for the class.

In the coalitions, campaigns and alliances that they have established in this period, the SWP have seen an important part of their role to be arguing *against* their own paper policies, for fear of isolating their coalition partners. Having attracted trade union leaders like Billy Hayes and journalists like George Monbiot on to joint platforms, the last thing that the SWP wanted to do was criticise them, or argue for them to go further and fight more militantly. In Unite against Fascism, Globalise Resistance, the Socialist Alliance and the Stop the War Coalition, the SWP have refrained from providing anything resembling revolutionary leadership.

1 SWP Pre-conference Bulletin, November 2004

2 The anticapitalist movement and the revolutionary left, Alex Callinicos, 2001

3 Comintern Thesis from ECCI 18th December 1921



Stop the War Coalition, Globalise Resistance and the European Social Forum

By 2000 the anticapitalist movement was becoming big news. Meetings of the IMF, World Bank and WTO and other governmental summits were under siege from demonstrators. The SWP took the opportunity to launch Globalise Resistance (GR) as a "united front of a special kind" which it would use to build the anticapitalist movement. The founding conference brought together 1,500 young activists.

The opportunity existed to build a broad movement, based on campaigning initiatives and direct action and drawing in youth and student organisations, community groups, immigrants and trade unions. Early on, it organised direct action protests against banks and American arch neo-conservative Henry Kissinger's presence in London.

But the SWP soon began to exert tight bureaucratic control on GR's work. This naturally excluded the anarchists and libertarians, who had played an important role in the movement against the Criminal Justice Bill, Reclaim the Streets and the Stop the City "riots" in 18 June 1999. The SWP created a bureaucratic facade of an anticapitalist movement. It equipped the movement with a brand name, a logo, an office, a fulltime and steering committee, although this did not actually steer the organisation.

Unwilling to compete ideologically with the anarchists to win young activists drawn to the movement, the SWP made sure that only a sprinkling of non-party people were there to challenge them. It alternately rolled out or "parked" GR, according to its priorities. This soon led to the radical NGOs, journalists like George Monbiot, and the Green Party withdrawing with bitter complaints about an SWP stranglehold. The SWP fulltimers who represented GR in the media put forward a classless democratic anticapitalism devoid of any socialist content. Globalise Resistance has now lost the few active branches it ever had.

Was it really necessary to give the movement such a rigid organisational structure? If the united front's role is to mobilise action, all that is needed is the common agreement of different forces to act. Blurring the distinctions between united action and political programme simply obscures the role that the revolutionary party should play in link-

ing up the struggles and developing a revolutionary socialist strategy to see them through to victory.

Workers Power, seeing the emergence in 2001 of the social forums in Italy that drew in students, trade unionists, campaigning organisations, youth and the unemployed, argued that the movement should seek to build such co-ordinations in Britain, uniting these groups around common action against war, racism and neoliberalism. The SWP opposed their formation fearing the effect they could have on their control of the "united fronts of a special kind" like GR.

The antiwar movement provided rich opportunities to build real united front bodies uniting the struggles, but the SWP used their control of the Stop the War Coalition (StWC) to block the mass antiwar movement building local people's assemblies or social forums that could have lasted beyond the conflict and campaigned around other issues. The SWP argue that StWC was a classical, not a "special", united front. It did unite real mass organisations – trade unions, CND, the Communist Party of Britain, the Muslim Association of Britain – in common action against the war in Iraq. On 15 February 2003 it brought two million workers and youth on to the streets in Britain's biggest ever demonstration.

Yet even in a classical united front the SWP did not act as an independent revolutionary party fighting for its own strategy and tactics. It refused to do this or criticise its coalition partners. On 15 February it even let Charles Kennedy, leader of the bourgeois Liberal Democrats which supported the war as soon as it began, address the mass demonstration in Hyde Park. Union leaders were rightly given a platform in Hyde Park but SWP speakers did not take the opportunity to put them on the spot and demand that they call their members out in general strike action against the war. Nor did SWP speakers warn the hundreds of thousands listening that the union leaders might well fail to translate their words into action, and that unofficial strikes would probably be necessary to force the union leaders' hands and to stop the slaughter.

If the SWP leaders had done this, acting as Lenin and Trotsky insisted revolutionaries should do when engaged

in common action with reformists, two consequences would have ensued. First, the SWP could have taken a massive step forwards in rallying union members willing to take unofficial action and challenge the grip of the do-nothing union bureaucrats. Second, those self-same bureaucrats would have been angry with the SWP. The SWP knew this and made their choice, so revealing the inevitable outcome of the "united front of the special type".

Later, when the US and UK had successfully occupied Iraq and the trade union bureaucrats began to retreat from an anti-occupation position, arguing that the coalition troops could play a progressive role in Iraq and for the support of pro-occupation trade unions like the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), the SWP argued that StWC should not fight around the slogan "troops out now" and solidarity with anti-occupation forces in Iraq.

At the European Social Forum in London last November, activists from the Middle East and supporters of the League for the Fifth International protested at the presence of a member of the collaborationist IFTU on an anti-occupation platform. The protestors were condemned by Ken Livingstone's Greater London Authority (GLA) bureaucracy and the SWP who controlled the forum.

Indeed, having initiated the bid to hold the ESF in London, the SWP struck an unholy alliance with the TUC bureaucracy and the GLA and the mayor's clique of supporters in the secretive reformist sect Socialist Action. This secured significant financial support but in return granted the reformists a veto over the event's programme. Thus sidelining the radical youth and rank and file speakers and promoting trade union bureaucrats in their place, to the fury of much of the movement.¹

The SWP's opposition to building social forums and local co-ordinations to build for the event meant that they were left at the mercy of the trade union bureaucrats. But these bureaucrats did nothing to mobilise their memberships, leading to the ESF attracting only around 20,000 people, a third of the size of previous events in Florence and Paris.

1 See articles from Workers Power 289, 290 and 291

and the new social movements

The alternative to Labour: from left reformism to populism

The mass antiwar movement that was born out of the anticapitalist movement, the social forums and summit sieges of the last few years, has radicalised a new generation. This coupled with the rightward retreat of Labour and other social democratic parties has created real opportunities to break the hold of these parties on the working class.

In the UK, there have been two main initiatives that sought to build an alternative, both connected. The Socialist Alliance, established in 1998, brought different left groups together on a left reformist programme in elections. The SWP joined it a year later at the time of the London mayoral elections as part of their turn to new movements.

Due to the SWP's large size it quickly came to dominate it. Seeing it as another "united front of a special type", it became the most eager proponent of keeping it to a left reformist programme, that is, a programme that does not will the means – revolution – to achieving its socialist goals. They scuppered attempts to mobilise the Socialist Alliance for anything except electoral work, despite the fact that its most successful meeting was its conference of 1,500 trade unionists to discuss a campaign to democratise the political fund. The SWP blocked attempts to turn the coalition towards the task of fighting within the trade union movement for a new working class party. And, when

the project failed, they drew all the wrong lessons.

The SWP leadership looked empirically at the mass mobilisation of the antiwar movement on the one hand and the poor showing that the SA received in elections and inferred that there must be something wrong with the SAs. Lindsey German, a leader of the SWP, said at the founding conference of Respect that she felt "people were looking for something less explicitly socialist". This is a bizarre thing for Marxist to say. If socialism is to mean anything, it must be the objective interests of the working class. To say that a programme that could not achieve socialism was too socialist is merely to say that it fought too consistently in the interests of the working class.

The SWP were moving headlong to "non-class" based populism. They observed that large numbers of people on the antiwar mobilisations came from the Asian community. That this was because of the joint mobilisation for the demonstrations with organisations like the Muslim Association of Britain. And because the Asian community was concentrated in areas that meant its vote mobilised en masse could be significant in Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system. The SWP made it clear that principles should not stand in the way of this new project, with Lindsey German arguing at the party's annual Marxism event in 2003 that they should

not make a "shibboleth" out of gay and lesbian liberation if sections of the elders in the Muslim community did not agree with it.

The expulsion from the Labour Party of George Galloway, a reformist with a strong record of opposition to the UK's blockades and attacks on Iraq, prompted the SWP to form the populist antiwar coalition Respect in the autumn of 2003. The programme of the party was populist – it did not see class, and therefore the advancement of the interests of working class people, as its primary aim, and it did not argue that socialism was the solution.

Why? Because it realised there is a powerful middle class in the Muslim community that has influence over working Muslims; businessmen and Imams who could swing the votes of hundreds of workers. To get these votes Respect was to have to defend their interests too – the interests of the propertied class. That's why its programme reduces socialism to just the "S" in the name Respect and restricts itself to platitudes like "people before profit" and nothing else.

At the recent general election, George Galloway was elected MP for Bethnal Green and Bow, ousting the arch Blairite Oona King. This marked a major breakthrough for Respect, but it is one that will pose new and difficult questions for the coalition (see box).

The revolutionary party and the working class

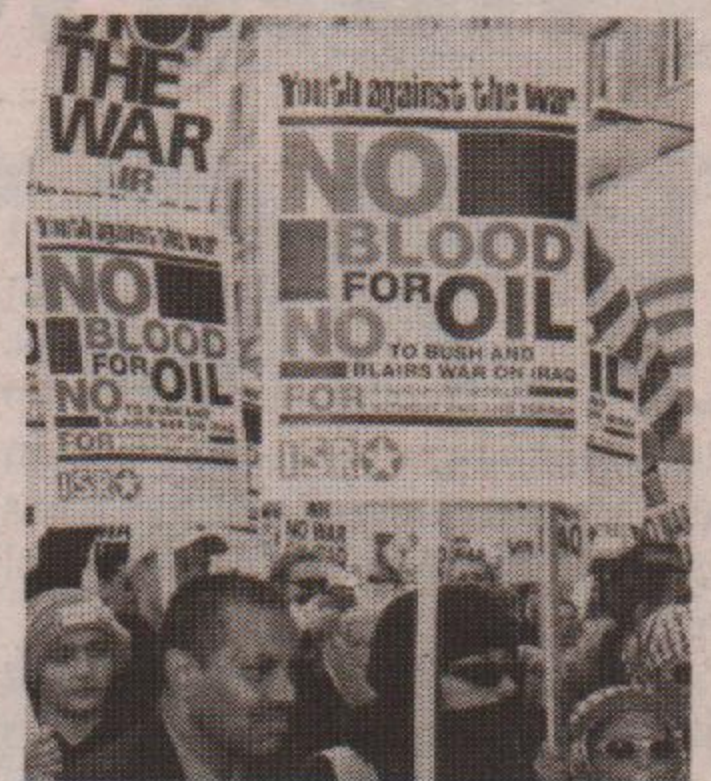
Six years ago the SWP identified the following problem. It found itself at the head of a mass movement that wasn't spontaneously either socialist or revolutionary.

The Marxist solution to this is to organise as a revolutionary party and fight for revolutionary politics from within the movement and the working class. Lenin famously clarified this in his pamphlet *What is to be Done?* But from very early on in their tradition, the SWP broke with this assessment, arguing instead that in times of crisis the working class becomes spontaneously revolutionary.

Hence, the SWP hands the job of bringing socialist consciousness to workers to a "spontaneous", evolutionary process determined by the economics of capitalism.

This underestimates both the ability of capitalism to defend itself from attack, and the spontaneous strength of reformism within the working class movement. Without a revolutionary party that fights consistently for revolutionary politics, not just in seminars but in practice, in terms of providing an alternative direction for the movement, then reformism is left unchallenged.

In the 1980s, during what they called 'the downturn', this left the



SWP unable effectively to challenge reformism because they did not believe that the working class could win. Today, with their emasculated version of the united front 'of a special kind', they themselves repeatedly promote and recommend reformist policies in the working class and anticapitalist movements.

In both cases, the SWP deny their own agency, their ability to change and affect the class struggle and to see it through to victory. This only highlights the need for a mass revolutionary party of the working class, the type of party Workers Power is fighting to build in Britain and around the world.

1 See *Marxism and the Party* by John Molyneux

Is Respect the alternative to New Labour?

George Galloway's victory in the Bethnal and Bow constituency in the general election followed by his explosive attack on US senators that was beamed across TV screens the world over has put the Respect coalition on the map. Galloway is now regularly portrayed in the mainstream press as "the leader" of the antiwar movement. Five of the other Respect candidates also scored impressive votes. Their success is indicative of the hatred felt by many working class people, particularly those from Muslim backgrounds, for the war in Iraq and Labour's pro-corporate policies.

The programme of Respect has a number of positive features. It calls for the immediate withdrawal of US and UK troops; it opposes privatisation and calls for the renationalisation of public services and it opposes Blair's attacks on youth with the "Asbos" laws.

But, it also allows its maverick leader George Galloway to oppose a women's right to choose whether to have an abortion, and to oppose euthanasia for the terminally ill. At every opportunity in the election Galloway stressed deep religious faith. This is because Respect

appealed to voters for support on the basis of their faith or ethnic background. This holds real problems for socialists who want to unite all workers across the world, regardless of ethnic, national or religious background, in the struggle for socialism.

Respect's programme was trimmed so that it would appeal to non-working class support and in particular influential religious elders and businessmen within Asian communities that could aid the mobilisation of votes. That's why when it comes to the question of what society Respect fights for it restricts itself to platitudes like the "organisation of society in the most open, democratic, participative, and accountable way practicable based upon common ownership and democratic control" but ownership and control over what? Respect dodges the fundamental question – private property or planned economy? Its vague formulation conveniently allows it to gather support from sections of the propertied class.

Socialists see the society we live in today as functioning on the basis of

class conflict. The corporations make their mega profits by exploiting workers. In the sweatshops of Indonesia or the call centres of the Midlands this rings true.

To get rid of this system we need to build revolutionary parties that put forward a programme to turn the struggles of today towards the task of overthrowing the capitalist state and building a socialist society. This will mean consistent argument among the workers and youth for this politics. Instead Respect is blurring class boundaries and the socialist solution. It is a populist coalition.

In the run up to the elections, Respect described itself as just an antiwar electoral coalition. Now, in the light of Galloway's victory, there is increasing pressure to turn it into a fully fledged party. *Socialist Worker* recently carried a supplement entitled "Our Hopes For This New Party" in which leaders from different wings of the Respect project put forward their different views. Underlying them all is the view that this is "just the beginning" and now comes the task of building a new [populist] party.

This presents particular problems for Respect's largest component, the SWP, which since the 1970s identified themselves as "the revolutionary party". Now it seems they could liquidate themselves into a platform for part of the Respect party, a move that could potentially provoke opposition within the organisation.

But the SWP has little in the way of internal party democracy. Platforms and factions opposed to leadership policy are banned in all periods except the three months prior to conference. The conference itself is a stage-managed affair with the central committee outlining the latest turn. The central com-

mittee members do not criticise party policy in front of the rest of the membership. It's interesting to note that in recent publications differences of emphasis appear to be emerging. Chris Harman, writing in *International Socialism Journal*, outlined the need for a revolutionary Bolshevik party (he meant the SWP) to operate within the Respect Coalition while recent copies of *Socialist Worker* have heralded the arrival of a new party.

Whatever is the case, Britain under a third Blair government, which he has promised in the election campaign will be "unremittably New Labour", will not be a country slumbering in class peace. Each struggle of youth against third world debt and the G8, trade unionists against privatisation and welfare reform, and antifascists against the BNP menace will put to the test Respect's class contradictions and reveal the crying need for a working class party committed to fighting in the interests of that class.

Middle class businessmen will be put off Respect if it supports militant indefinite strike action for a higher minimum wage, or self-defence against attacks by the police and racists. Class will out, because it is a real set of social relations, whether the populists of Respect find it convenient or not.

We call on all working class elements of Respect, alongside all militant trade unionists, the left wing groups and anticapitalist initiatives, to gather together allies in the working class movement and call a conference to discuss working class political representation. We in Workers Power and the League for the Fifth International will argue that this conference should found a new working class party on a programme of struggle for socialist revolution.



France says no to the EU constitution - now for a working class offensive

The French electorate gave a resounding no to the draft European Constitution in the referendum on 28 May. The Dutch followed this up with a second crushing rejection in under a week. Another nail was hammered into the coffin of this neoliberal constitution.

A relieved Tony Blair, facing the defeat of his own campaign in favour of this wretched constitution, indefinitely postponed the British referendum.

The two votes have brought the process of building a European super-state to a grinding halt. This is why Chirac and Schroeder are so alarmed. Their plans to build an imperialist power to rival the US are now in tatters.

But this defeat for Europe's bosses was a victory for the workers of Europe as a whole. In France especially, it was a victory for a mass campaign led by the Left and supported by a huge mobilisation of the working class.

Over 56 per cent voted no in France. The turnout was enormous - over 70 per cent. Defence Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie said the result was "a defeat for Europe and a defeat for France." Dominique Strauss-Kahn of the Socialist Party called it "a grave defeat and bad news for Europe."

Although 15 percent of the No vote probably consisted of supporters of Jean Marie Le Pen's racist Front Nationale, all serious commentators admitted that his vile chauvinism was marginal to the campaign.

While most company executives voted "Yes", 81 per cent of manual workers, 60 percent of white collar workers and 79 percent of the unemployed voted no. Amongst 18-34 year-olds 59 per cent voted no. The "Yes" was only a majority among those over 65.

It was also overwhelmingly a vote of the Left. The members and supporters of the French Communist Party (PCF) and the far left Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), which initiated and led the "No of the Left" campaign, voted against the constitution.

But 59 per cent of Socialist Party supporters and 64 per cent of the Green Party supporters also voted "No", despite the fact that their leaders campaigned hard for a "Yes" vote.

Thanks to the many local "No of the Left" committees the constitution's neoliberal, imperialist and undemocratic character came to the fore of the



campaign, leaving the Gaullist centre right and the reformist centre left floundering.

The campaign won because its message made sense to the workers. Their experience of neoliberalism at the hands of both Chirac and the right and Jospin and the "Socialists" alerted them to the dangers of the draft constitution.

The left's message triumphed because the campaign reached out into the heart of every working class community. Huge public meetings, in the big cities and in the small towns and even villages, called thousands into action against the constitution. Far from being chauvinist or anti-European, immigrants and "sans papiers" (those without a vote in the referendum due to being "without papers") were prominent at many of the meetings.

Speakers from the floor stressed time and again: "we are doing this not just for France but for all the working people of Europe". International solidarity and anti-racism were vital components of the no campaign.

Of course the traditional reformist "republican patriotism", a thinly veiled nationalism, was voiced by the PCF wing of the campaign. Jacques Nikonoff, former party leader and now president of Attac-France, wrote in *Le Monde* that the constitution's purpose was to "strangle the French-German dynamic." This Franco-German imperialist dynamic, Nikonoff refers to, aims to create a Europe against the United States!

But generally this kind of guff was

drowned out by the internationalist message of the campaign.

President Chirac responded to defeat by sacking his Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin. He appointed another of his unelected close cronies, Dominique de Villepin, to carry on with the neoliberal policies of privatisation and cuts that Raffarin was engaged in. This move also blocked Chirac's inner party rival, Nicholas Sarkozy, gaining ground in the ensuing political crisis.

In a parallel inner party coup, François Hollande, who led the "Yes" campaign for the Socialist Party, ousted Laurent Fabius who had campaigned for a "No" from within the SP leadership. This could yet lead to ructions in the party and the defection of many "No" activists.

While the vanquished squabble amongst themselves the task facing the French left and the working class is to use this victory to press ahead in the battle to defeat the neoliberal offensive once and for all.

Building on the victory

Last autumn, on the initiative of the LCR and the PCF, an Appeal was signed by 200 prominent politicians, union leaders and intellectuals, launching the "collectives" for a "No of the Left". Hundreds, sometimes thousands turned up at the many meetings held by these collectives.

The discussions were not only about the constitution but also about building united resistance to the ongoing

attacks by Raffarin and Chirac. Speakers called for "another Europe".

The LCR has now proposed that the one thousand plus local collectives must continue to meet, take on new tasks and hold a national conference. In its post-28 May statement the LCR says: "In France, on the left, the victory of the 'No' opens up new possibilities for building a radical anti-capitalist force."

Such a force is urgently needed because as soon as Chirac and De Villepin have picked themselves up they will be on the attack once again. That is why the call for demonstrations in Paris, in Brussels and in towns across France, issued by the Appeal of the Two Hundred must be taken up. But the struggle must not stop there.

The collectives must not become talking shops aimed at creating a new reformist electoral coalition or party. They must not become the bases for a new Front Populaire (FP) that PCF leaders have likened the No Campaign to. The FP (Popular Front) was an alliance with the bosses and the workers' parties that led to disaster for the French workers in the 1930s.

The danger is that the summer break will waste the impetus given by the referendum victory and that the PCF and even the LCR will turn their attention to political combinations of a purely electoral character, as they have done so many times before.

Against this the collectives must transform themselves as rapidly as possible into councils of action against the neoliber-

eral attacks. Defeating the plan to introduce private enterprise on the state railway system is an immediate task. The French railworkers, the front line troops of the French labour movement, can spearhead the resistance to this.

Since 2003, France has witnessed one day general strikes against pension reforms; a series of strikes by the workers in theatres, TV etc.; the struggle against the privatisation of state owned electricity company, EDF; a mass movement against Social Security reform.

The lycée (school) students also fought bravely for several months against a reactionary proposal for education "reform". A series of sectional strikes erupted in the private sector for wage increases and against factory closures.

These struggles have shaken and terrified the French bosses. In January 2004, the union leaders, under the pressure from the rank and file after more than a decade of wage restraint, organised a massive demonstration to demand wage increases. The introduction of the Euro had hidden a large rise in the cost of living, pushing millions of workers closer to the poverty line. Yet at the same time French multinationals, such as Total, made record profits.

The union bureaucracy and the Socialist and PCF leaders were afraid that a rising tide of struggles, if they coincided with the campaign against the referendum, would flow way beyond the safe and narrow channels of protest that they had tried to establish.

So, after the successful demonstration in March 2004, the trade unions leaders slammed the brakes on the struggle. They were afraid of a real class struggle, which might have gone on to challenge the power of the French, and even European, bosses.

The brakes must come off. Workers, political activists, young people, immigrants and anti-capitalists should flood the meetings of the collectives and demand action now, to smash Chirac and De Villepin's attacks and bring down their government.

At the same time they need to start building a revolutionary political alternative, a new revolutionary party that inscribes on its banners: another government is possible - a workers' government; another France and another Europe is possible - a Socialist United States of Europe.

Get active, stay active, join Workers Power

Even the onset of war did not stop the global revolt against it.

Across the world the working class is coming together. Globalisation has forced workers and activists from different countries and continents to unite, work and fight together. There have been huge Social Forums of resistance in Europe at Florence and Paris, in Asia at Hyderabad and Mumbai, and in South America at Porto Alegre.

Together with the L5I, which is represented on the European Social Forum, Workers Power campaigns to bring these movements together into a New

World Party of Socialist Revolution - the Fifth International.

This is a momentous time, one of those times when the true nature of the world we live in suddenly becomes clear to millions. Capitalism is revealing itself to be a system of war, conquest and global inequality. By taking to the streets against war and capitalism, hundreds of thousands of people are showing that they have seen through the lies.

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