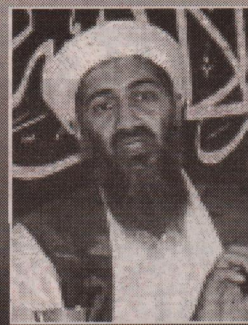


# Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 49. October 2001. 50p

# OUTLOOK

INSIDE



Who backs bin Laden?  
PLUS analysis from around the world

## Afghan civilians die in Blair and Bush terror campaign

# STOP

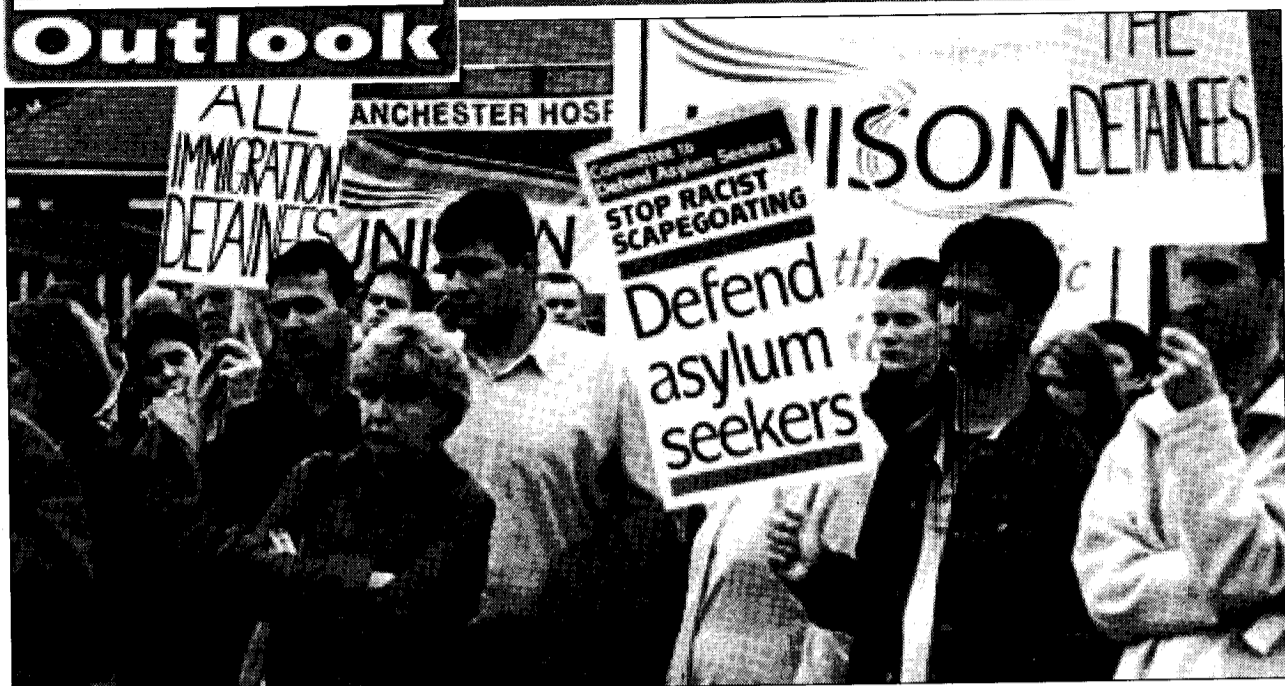
# THE



Jess Hurd

# BOMBING!

Stop the War Coalition PO Box 3739, London E5 8EJ 07951 235 915



Shahin O'Neill

Keeping up the fight against detention of asylum seekers: demonstrators outside Walton Prison

## Stop Blair's war on refugees!

### Terry Conway

THE LAST few weeks have been pretty eventful for campaigners in support of asylum seekers and migrants.

Blair's war drive has led to an increase in attacks on people of presumed Muslim descent - although it is difficult to get a detailed picture of this because the government have also discouraged media reporting of this.

The British government, along with their counterparts across Europe are intent on using the opportunity of war to accelerate their destruction of the 1951 Geneva Convention and further curtail civil rights. Proposed anti-terrorist legislation if passed, will mean that asylum seekers from places like Algeria, Sri Lanka etc will find it almost impossible to claim asylum.

### Hunger strikes

A long planned series of events in support of asylum seekers in detention over the weekend September 21-23 saw successful hunger strikes, vigils and demonstrations in a number and also in Australia.

'I have never committed a crime in my life, but I have paid the price of a murderer - just for fleeing from persecution in my homeland.'

These words, read to a 150 strong protest outside Walton prison in Liverpool, tell of the plight of more than one hundred asylum seekers currently detained in the prison. Along with convicted prisoners, they are locked in cells for 23 hours a day, subject to racist abuse,

and given adulterated food. English lessons are denied.

The Liverpool campaign to free the detainees has received strong support, much from trades unions in particular UNISON's North West Region and from the local FBU.

### Harmondsworth

Then the new detention centre at Harmondsworth opened on Thursday September 27. Already the complaints are piling up, facilities on the female wing are bad, there is no access to toilets, (if they have to go, they have to contact a member of staff, to let them off the wing). The womens gym has only half the equipment of the mens gym. Phones are not working, neither are the pagers.

There are no checks on whether detainees are taking food, (I think this may be illegal, management are responsible for the health of detainees and this means seeing that they are eating).

Visitors to the centre are taking nearly a hour and a half to get through the administration before seeing the person they have come to visit and all visitors are electronically finger printed.

The Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers had begun discussions earlier in the summer about trying to take steps to strengthen co-ordination between the various campaigns that are working either locally or nationally around different aspects of these issues.

Following 2 successful national meetings, three

important decisions have been made

To call a national joint day of action in support of asylum seekers and migrants, against racism and war for Saturday 3 November.

Encourage other campaigns involved in the defence of asylum seekers to join with us in organising a national conference in Manchester on 23 February 2002.

To involve other organisations to discuss better co-ordination of events, distribution of information and involvement in future activities.

As Alan Gibson from the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers and Suresh Grover, chair of the National Civil Rights movement said in their appeal for the second organising meeting on

October 7:

"Although the agenda for the conference is not set, we would like it aimed at bringing greater co-ordination between all the campaigns and trade unions involved in the defence of asylum seekers and setting out priorities for the coming year. One practical result of the conference would be a pamphlet giving activists practical tools with which to advance our common aims.

We believe that working together to build major public events would in itself move us all toward greater co-operation."

In the present political climate it is even more important than before that as much energy as possible is given to ensure these initiatives are a success.

## Glasgow housing stock transfer to go to ballot

Following an outrageous piece of bribery and gerrymandering, Glasgow City Council has decided to proceed to a first stage consultation on the proposed stock transfer of all Glasgow's housing stock.

For months the proposed recipient of the stock, the Glasgow Housing Association has been struggling to come up with a coherent business plan.

The right to buy potentially takes any good houses and over a quarter of the stock is too run down to repair and scheduled for demolition.

Other social landlords are being given the right to cherry pick good stock and the no guarantees from the government. Given all this why would financial companies invest?

GHA's solution was to demand money from the government to make it work.

They produced a draft report (draft 6?) which made it clear they expected the Government to provide money in hitherto undreamed of quantities to ensure this transfer took place.

Within the Housing department of the council this plan was looked at as a pipe dream. A report was produced in early August stating that none of the

councils agreed criteria, in particular financial viability, was in place. The recommendation was to reject the scheme and implicitly the transfer.

Suddenly the Scottish Executive was faced with its flagship housing policy going pear shaped. A meeting was held and the council told monies had been found.

The Scottish Executive went cap in hand to Gordon Brown and demanded around £2 billion for Scotland. Faced with this the Glasgow Council decided not to reject the scheme but to allow more time. Meanwhile a pro-transfer document was (probably in contradiction of the law) issued to all tenants.

To great acclaim the press was informed that the Government in Westminster was prepared to write off all Glasgow £900 million debt provided the transfer went ahead.

Next we hear that Right to Buy legislation has been changed so that it doesn't carry if tenancy changes.

We anticipate rule changes to limit right to buy to a maximum discount of £25,00. Whilst agreeing with these changes we fail to see why

## Medical secretaries strike again!

### Gordon Morgan

The dispute over the pay levels of Medical Secretaries looks set to widen with other Scottish NHS Trusts staff considering joining the dispute.

In the North Glasgow NHS Trust, there are 300 medical secretaries out of 12,000 staff in the Trust. Over the years the skill requirements of their job has increased but not their pay and they are engaged in an increasingly bitter regarding dispute.

October 1-5 saw yet another week of all out strike action. There are picket lines at all the 4 main hospitals in the trust.

The mood of the secretaries is high yet they are being starved of funds to continue the dispute.

The Scottish Executive knows that if they lose this dispute they will be forced to concede pay claims across Scotland. This would expose the executive's current NHS strategy of claiming to provide new resources whilst cutting some areas to develop others.

It will also highlight the limited room for manoeuvre of the Scottish Parliament in terms of setting needs based budgets. For this reason pressure has been brought to bear on the Trust not to concede the secretaries' claim.

Similarly the UNISON Scottish full timestaff are beholden to New Labour and

are actively undermining the dispute. The secretaries are fighting the employer, the Scottish Executive and their union.

The workers need funds to prevent being starved back. The effects of the dispute are beginning to bite and the Trust is beginning to realise that Medical Secretaries are essential to operations and treatment are to continue safely and the Trust is not to be open to claims over medical accidents.

Caroline Leckie, Secretary of North Glasgow Hospital's branch of UNISON believes that management will be forced to concede in the near future provided the dispute can continue.

In order to bring the dispute to a head, all out indefinite strike is being considered. A victory would boost confidence not just in the NHS but throughout the public sector. Funds are vital yet only a small number of UNISON branches or other Unions have donated funds.

A public appeal for donations from Trade Unionists across the UK has been launched. Please raise this at your union branch and rush donations to Kathy Maclean, Treasurer, UNISON North Glasgow Hospitals Branch, Cuthbertson Buildings GRI, Castle St, Glasgow, G4 OSF

## Unions Fightback

**A rank and file conference to take forward the fight against privatisation**

**Saturday 3rd November, 11.30-5.00pm, St Mary's Neighbourhood Centre, Upper Street/St. Mary's Path, London (tube: Angel or Highbury & Islington)**

Speakers include: **Mark Serwotka**, General Secretary, PCS, **Maria Exall**, CWU National Exec Council, **John Leach**, RMT National Exec, **John Page**, Branch Secretary, Hackney UNISON, **John Hendy QC**, United Campaign for the Repeal of the Anti-Union Laws, **Greg Tucker**, Secretary, RMT National Train Crew Conference, **Shirley Winter**, United Campaign (all in personal capacity)

● For more details, or to add your name to the list of supporters, mail [unionsfightback@yahoo.com](mailto:unionsfightback@yahoo.com) or call 07944 960103

### Business plan

With all these changes announced, a new business plan (version 9?) was produced. Unfortunately it still couldn't say if the plan was viable. It implicitly reduced the housing stock of the City to such a level that there was an anticipated 25,000 shortfall in the level of social housing required. No proposed lenders were in place.

Faced with this on September 25 the Council was presented with a report rejecting the proposed scheme as unviable. This report was presented to the District Labour Party having been endorsed by the Administration.

Suddenly the minister Jackie Baillie finds more money. £450 million new money is to be given to build the 25,000 houses demolished. The council is told to think again.

A new report is produced on September 28 the same as the previous - except the conclusions are changed from reject to support.

As no funders are even yet in place, the council has not fully endorsed it. The ballot date has been delayed to January or February from November. The council has been instructed to make it work. They are considering forcing council employees - who could face redundancy if the scheme goes ahead - to go round the doors explaining to tenants how nice the scheme is.

Tenants and Unions remain opposed to the scheme. If £1.5 billion is available if the scheme goes ahead surely it is available if it remains with the council. Hundreds of millions in transfer costs, VAT, interest charges and disruption will be saved. The repair work can be carried out in less time and rents would be lower.

The STUC and unions will be running a campaign to ask tenants to reject the blackmail.

**A**s we go to press, the bombing of Afghanistan by Bush and Blair has started. On Sunday October 7, cruise missiles rained down on the cities of Kabul, Kandahar and Jilalabad, together with missiles fired from heavy bombers. On the morning of October 8, Home Secretary Jack Straw informed the world that the bombing would carry on for weeks rather than days.

The first reports of the offensive on the BBC World Service referred to this as an American attack, but within minutes Britain's role had been acknowledged.

Socialist Outlook stands in complete opposition to the attacks on September 11 in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

We deplore the tragic loss of life that occurred on that day, which we do not believe in any way furthered the struggle of working people across the world for emancipation or justice.

But we say with equal vigour that a military assault on Afghanistan can do nothing to bring recompense for the loss of life that occurred on that day.

There was nothing progressive or anti-imperialist about the terrifying attack on the WTC. This is not just because the mass slaughter of office workers in this way is reactionary and indefensible, but because it has swivelled world politics sharply to the advantage of George Bush and the American right.

These events have brought Bush's presidency from the discrediting shadow of a ballot rigging scandal, and increasing international isolation after his rejection of the Kyoto Treaty on climate change and his plans for "Son of Star Wars" missile defence, into an unassailable position, with polls showing over 90 per cent support from the American people.

This has allowed him to seize the initiative world-wide, and increase the authority of US imperialism at every level. It threatens a period of reaction in which socialists and progressive forces and those defending their national and other rights face the possibility of serious defeats.

**F**or Afghanistan, after decades of misery and repression, the war seems certain to trigger a humanitarian disaster. However widespread and prolonged the bombardment, the casualties of the war will far exceed the hundreds or thousands who may be directly killed and maimed by missiles, bombs and bullets. Hundreds of thousands more, who are being driven from their homes as refugees, already face imminent starvation, or death from exposure as the cruel winter approaches.

In this context the cynical attempt by Bush and Blair to masquerade as "generous" bringers of "humanitarian" relief, with the air-drop of pitiful token quantities of food in the aftermath of the bombing runs stands out as the rankest hypocrisy.

But the hypocrisy runs alongside the sup-



Jess Hurd

# Imperialist hands off Afghanistan

pression of information that does not suit the war plans of London and Washington.

Most of the media have obediently ignored the offer by the Taliban – over a week before the bombing started – to hand over bin Laden to a court outside Afghanistan. The Taliban made only two minor provisos: that some Islamic jurists be involved, and that they be given evidence of bin Laden's involvement in the September 11 events.

**T**he fact that the US never seriously responded to this proposal shows that they are not interested in justice. This is confirmed by their continued arrogant refusal to present any convincing evidence to anyone to prove that bin Laden is guilty as charged.

The US and Britain claim to be coming as liberators to free the Afghan people from the Taliban, even though it is clear that western military strategy helped create both bin Laden and the Taliban, and now involves promoting the murderous thugs and rapists of the so-called "Northern Alliance" in their place.

We have no reason to believe that this war will have any more positive results for the oppressed of Afghanistan than previous military interventions. While the reactionary

Taliban may well be toppled from power, all history shows that any attempt by outside force to install a government against the wishes of the peoples of Afghanistan will simply result in more continuing bloodshed.

But the war is only just beginning. It already threatens to widen onto new fronts.

The labour movement should take warning from the careful words of George W Bush, who in his address to the nation as the bombing started made clear that "the battle is broader" than Afghanistan itself.

This has now been underlined as we go to press by a letter from the US administration to the UN Security Council, which also declares Washington's intention to wage its "war against terror" in other countries over and above Afghanistan. Many hawkish US officials and politicians have urged that the war be widened to Iraq, Syria – and even Sudan.

**A**ny such offensive would risk destroying the temporary unity of the "coalition" of governments painstakingly assembled by Blair and Bush: but this is no reason to assume that the US will hold back if it feels it can successfully press home its advantage.

The American ruling class have been all too

ready to use the "alliance against terrorism" to push through a raft of reactionary policies with greater determination. Attacks on civil liberties and the targeting of immigrants are aspects of this offensive that we are grimly familiar with here in Britain.

**B**ut another facet of this offensive merits equal attention: the cynical use of the post September 11 situation to step up the neo-liberal offensive and globalisation.

US trade representative Robert Zoellick has insinuated that any opposition to "free trade" is unpatriotic and tantamount to support for terrorism. Zoellick is heading up a campaign to get through Congress legislation which will facilitate the approval of treaties such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas which had previously been rather less likely to succeed, and had certainly aroused a good deal of opposition from the mainstream US trade unions.

Zoellick wrote in the Washington Post "Earlier enemies learned that America is the arsenal of democracy. Today's enemies will learn that America is the economic engine for freedom, opportunity and development. To that end, US leadership in promoting international economic and trading systems is vital. Trade... promotes the values at the heart of this protracted struggle".

Precisely. It is a war to defend and extend the power of the world's only super-power, and uphold its right to exploit the world's poor in pursuit of profit.

**I**n this barbaric attack on a defenceless Afghan people, as in every twist and turn in developing the so-called "alliance against terrorism", Blair has been at pains to promote himself as the closest possible ally of American imperialism.

Now the task for all socialists and for the labour movement as a whole must be to strain every sinew to build the biggest possible anti-war movement. We have to stop this murderous assault on one of the poorest countries in the world.

It is not the anti-war movement which has no respect for those who died on September 11, but those in power, who use their suffering to push through yet more attacks on working people world wide.

That's why we must not only oppose the bombing of Afghanistan, but also stand firmly against the accompanying attacks on civil liberties at home and abroad.

## Hard edge beneath Blair's woolly conference platitudes

TONY BLAIR'S speech to this year's truncated Labour Conference in Brighton has been hailed by his adoring fans in the media as his finest hour.

Generously sparing his party members a few moments in between running errands for war-monger Bush, Blair set out what some have called a visionary statement of a new world order, and some have rightly dismissed as deluded fantasy.

Comedian Andy Hamilton summed up Blair's glowing talk of a new world alliance that would solve the problems of global warming, poverty and hunger: "I recognised that speech: it's the one I give in the pub when I'm pissed."

To string together a few platitudes on what might be done after the current war is over is nothing new for social democracy: "holiday

speechifying" and promises of a land – or in this case a world – "fit for heroes" has been the stock-in-trade of social-patriots for well over a hundred years.

It has never meant anything other than a subservient commitment of the speech-maker to the cause of capital and the "freedoms" of the capitalist.

The problem is that the system Blair is going to war with George Bush to defend is precisely the same system that creates inequality, poverty, exploitation, hunger, and environmental destruction – and which indeed also fuels the frustration and oppression that are the breeding ground of religious fundamentalism.

Blair may be able to ally with Bush on Bush's agenda of stamping out terrorist cells, but if he thinks there is any common social

agenda with the right wing of the Republican Party, he is suffering serious delusions.

Bush – the President representing big oil, the drug companies and US multinationals – has not the slightest aspiration to tackle poverty, feed the hungry, tackle disease, or restrict the use of polluting fuels. Even if he did, he would probably start to apply these policies in the USA, rather than on a world scale.

Instead Bush and his big business backers see any attempt to solve global problems as a threat to the freedom of US corporations to make profits.

It seems unlikely that Blair has failed to notice this contradiction between his own vague "vision" – which combines a few liberal and egalitarian nostrums with the vague concept of a benign global

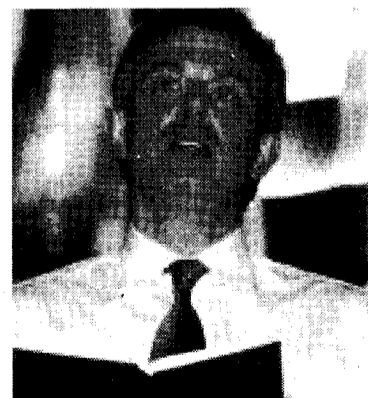
dictatorship – and those of his chosen "ally".

But he has been quite happy to take advantage of the moment and the mood to distract attention from what he and his government have really been doing on all these questions.

Far from seeking to restrain the excesses of global capital, Blair's government calls out riot police to beat anti-capitalist protesters, and acts as the most rabid advocates of neo-liberal policies.

Far from feeding the hungry, the British government and British banks dole out pitiful "aid" packages with an eye-dropper, while gathering huge interest payments from developing countries.

Far from promoting environmental policies, Blair refuses to raise the taxes required to finance a proper transport system that could



Oh God! Here he goes again

reduce dependence on the car.

And while he talks abstractions, dodges out of party politics, and focuses the media on the world stage, his own government's policies of privatisation and underfunding public services are running into crisis on almost every front.

The left must build an anti-war movement: but we should not allow ourselves to be deceived by the old conjuror's trick of distracting our attention.

The fight must also be waged on the "home front" – against the politics of New Labour, which are continuing behind the scenes.

## Al Christian

It is sometimes said that there is a democratic deficit in Europe, but whatever the democratic deficiencies of the European Union, they fade into insignificance compared with a Labour Party conference. The Conference Arrangements Committee is firmly in the control of the right, and only too willing to do the bidding of the Millbank machine.

Matters likely to be controversial are carefully time-tabled in obscure slots when the TV cameras are turned off, only four "contemporary"; motions are allowed, and these usually have all meaning composited out of them. Apparently random selection of speakers produces a succession of carefully crafted sleep-inducing on-message contributions.

The reduction of this year's conference by one day can have no possible justification. Arms fairs and fashion shows continued as normal. But in a situation where there was more to debate than in most years, the conference was curtailed.

Where war is being canvassed in defence of democracy, the first casualty was democracy. Even if there were no alternative to recalling parliament on the Thursday of conference week, it would have been perfectly feasible (even if unthinkable for Millbank) to continue without the MPs.

An emergency resolution arising from the events of September 11, moved by the FBU, was taken on Tuesday morning, although many other emergency resolutions that had been submitted were ruled out of order, for undisclosed reasons.

The FBU's resolution condemned unreservedly "the brutal terrorist attack on the people of New York and Washington" and called on the British government "to maximise support for measures to bring to justice the perpetrators of these outrages and to isolate the terrorists by increasing efforts to resolve deep-seated political problems".

It also called for "renewed international efforts to tackle poverty, social deprivation, racism and attacks on human rights in many parts of the world."

It added that "the international community's response to the dreadful events of September 11 must be measured and relevant."

"Indiscriminate bombing and other military assaults on poorly identified targets will only serve to increase violence by fuelling hatred and providing yet more martyrs for the terrorist cause".

The resolution was sufficiently general to attract the support of the NEC.

The contemporary motions which had been submitted fell into twelve groups by topic. Under existing arrangements, only four of these could be admitted for debate. The over-



Extra help was on hand this year for Labour's Conference Arrangements Committee seeking to gag awkward delegates

## Protestors brave rain – and police intimidation

Around 5,000 people demonstrated outside the LP in Brighton last Sunday despite torrential rain, which continued for most of the day.

The demonstration, which had been originally called by Globalise Resistance, the Green Party, and the Socialist Alliance against new Labour's neo liberal policies, became, in effect a protest against the current drive to war and the impending military assault against Afghanistan.

There were banners on the demonstration from a wide range of campaigns as well as from the trade unions. The most banners and placards, however, were from Globalise Resistance and the Socialist Alliance – which had its national banner as well as the banners of a dozen or more local alliances.

The police presence at the demonstration was massive – gone are the days when they walked along the side of the demonstrations trying to make conversation. Fully equipped riot police lined the route, glowering at the demonstrators with batons at the ready. Seven people in white overalls were snatched by the police and dragged away before the demonstration had even started. The conference centre itself was fenced off, with three separate police cordons, a line of horses and an air exclusion zone.

Green party MEP Caroline Lucas, told the rally before the start of the demonstration: "We have to be here to tell world leaders: 'what you are doing is not in our name' Ellie Whiston from the World Development Movement told the rally: "I hope this demonstration can be the start of building an anti-war movement in this country and around the world".

# Labour Party Conference 2001 An uneasy truce

whelming votes of the unions in previous years has meant that only those contemporary motions supported by the unions have stood any chance of being selected.

Because of this, constituency delegates had been promised that some kind of weighting would be introduced, to enable topics supported by the CLPs to be debated.

To the chagrin of CLP delegates, the CAC reneged on this promise, and any new way of selecting contemporary motions was deferred to next year.

In the ballot to choose those topics to be debated, as a consequence, those motions supported by the big unions received between 15 and 21 per cent, while those supported by the CLPs got no more than 5 per cent. Burning issues like rail, education and the privatisation of the London Underground were thus excluded, and only public services, asylum, fairness at work and the Equitable Life fiasco were tabled.

The UNISON-endorsed composite on public services that emerged from intense negotiation and government lobbying was a complete dog's breakfast, so feeble that it could be seconded by a constituency delegate who sang the praises of PFI, and carried on the recommendation of the NEC.

The GMB had wanted a much stronger motion (but were prepared to remit rather than push for a vote). The stand-alone resolution which appeared in their name, but was not debated, called for conference to oppose "government proposals for encouraging private companies to run state schools and plans to extend PFI beyond hospitals into primary care and social services."

The motion also noted that a recent survey commissioned by the GMB "shows that PFI is a pick-pocket system that steals cash from NHS clinical budgets to pay fortunes to private sector contractors".

The Fairness at Work composite

was proposed by the GPMU print union, and was very wide ranging.

Potentially, the demand made in one short paragraph was probably the most powerful, calling for the government to "carry out a fundamental review of existing employment laws with the object of ensuring that they are in line with ILO conventions."

If implemented, this would remove from the statute book many of the existing draconian anti-trade union provisions, and bring British law into line with international standards. The motion also welcomed the government's withdrawal of its plans to impose charges for applications to Employment Tribunals, and added that "there should be no place for costs awards". Predictably, the GPMU agreed to remit the motion to the NEC.

The most hard-hitting of the contemporary resolutions, though, was without doubt the TGWU composite on Asylum Seekers.

It called upon the Home Secretary "to abolish the voucher system immediately and to restore cash payments to asylum seekers." It also called for an end to the detention of asylum seekers and for the reform of the dispersal system.

This was without doubt the issue on which the government was most vulnerable; not least because a review of the voucher system had been promised at last year's conference, for which the initial consultation period had closed in December 2000, so far without any response from the government.

Debate was delayed until the last morning of the conference, to enable the maximum amount of arm-twisting and back room double-

dealing. In the event, Bill Morris, on behalf of the TGWU, agreed to remit the motion, agreeing to "trust" Blunkett on vouchers, and in return for a promise that the use of prisons for asylum seekers would end, but not detention itself.

It seems that the Home Secretary is preparing to make some very limited concessions on asylum seekers, as part of an extensive attack on civil liberties, in bringing forward in the next month or so a package of measures on immigration, asylum and "anti-terrorism".

In the elections for next year's Conference Arrangements Committee, only one candidate from the left slate – John Aitken of the TGWU – was elected: but he came top of the poll, indicating how important the trade union vote still is.

In the CLP section, both places were taken by government ministers, Yvette Cooper and Stephen Twigg, with 121,000 votes each, although it was by no means a walkover.

Left candidates Jenny Rathbone and John Cryer got 95,000 and 62,000 votes respectively. But in the election for the National Constitutional Committee the left achieved an unexpected success, when Rosina McRae beat the right-wing candidate by 114,000 votes to 97,000.

The conference remained subdued throughout, almost as if clapping too loudly or coughing would be seen as a mark of disrespect for all those who died on September 11.

But the mood began to lift as the week went on, as delegates started to realise that however tragic the events in New York, the domestic agenda, particularly the privatisation drive, would go on nevertheless.

There is a great deal of disillusionment, discouragement, doubt and dissent at the base of the party, and had it not been for September 11, the government would have had a much rougher ride at this year's conference.

Ministers cynically manipulated the circumstances, larding their speeches even as late as the last day of conference with routine references to New York, as if the delegates were in danger of forgetting.

Arguments suppressed in the conference hall found life at the fringe meetings. The "Take back the Track" meeting called by ASLEF was very well attended – Gwyneth Dunwoody could have had an alternative career as a stand up comedian.

Several hundred delegates attended a packed meeting on keeping the public services public, jointly organised by the T&G, UNISON and the GMB.

The annual Tribune rally attracted about four hundred to hear excellent speeches by Tony Benn, George Galloway and Mick Rix. Roy Hattersley had been billed to appear, but pulled out rather than be associated with an anti-war platform.

Next year's conference will surely be different, but much depends on the ability of trade unionists between now and then to hold their leadership to account.

The rash of remittances shows that the bureaucracies that run the big unions still prefer secret negotiations in the corridors of power to standing firmly in defence of their own policies and the interests of their members. If the Blair agenda is to be held in check, the trade unions hold the key.

● Al Christian is the pseudonym of a CLP delegate to the Conference.

## Counter conference success

At least 1,000 people attended a successful counter conference in London, organised by Globalise Resistance, on Saturday September 29.

The venue was split between the former Hammersmith Palais and the nearby Riverside Studios. Three rallies were held during the day in the main venue and series of workshops in the Riverside Studios.

The conference has originally been called to report back from Genoa and discuss developments in the globalised economy and the neo-liberal offensive. In the event

however, everyone wanted to discuss the impending war, and most of the discussions understandable returned to that subject.

The event was refreshingly open and more so than some previous Globalise Resistance events. There were also stalls from a wide range of campaigning and political organisations.

A popular feature of the conference was the video of the Genoa events – which drew a huge response from the audience. There were also a number of speakers which gave the event an international dimensions.

The strength of the anti-war movement in Italy was represented by Luca Casarini from the Italian White Overalls Movement. He said that after the attack on the WTC in New York it is clear that capitalism cannot exist without war: "This is the only way the system can maintain control when billions are dying from hunger".

The other international speaker was Oscar Olivera, a leader of the victorious struggle against water privatisation in Bolivia. He said "we had a victory for all those fighting for a different world – we expelled a multinational from Bolivia".

## Rail unions say no to war

### ASLEF Emergency Resolution to 2001 Labour Party Conference

"Conference condemns the terrorist attack on New York and Washington on September 11 and sends its heartfelt sympathy to the relatives of all the victims of all nationalities.

Conference is concerned that embarking on an ever-widening war will sow the seeds of a prolonged conflict between the USA and Britain, on the one hand, and millions of people around the world, in the Middle East above all, on the other. Further casualties among innocent civilians will be bound to ensue.

Conference believes that any action taken should conform with international law and be under the auspices of the United Nations and in particular welcomes the proposal by Tony Benn on September 25 that the United Nations General Assembly should hold an emergency session to discuss the present international crisis.

Conference believes that any lasting peaceful settlement in the Middle East must be based on concerted diplomacy, and an ethical foreign policy, as well as a halt to all terrorist activity.

Conference urges our Labour government to use its influence to explore every possibility for a peaceful resolution of the crisis, and to refrain from any military action which would exacerbate international tension or put the lives of civilians at risk."

### The RMT's Council of Executives adopted this policy statement on September 27

We condemn the attack in the USA which took place on September 11th 2001. We deplore the appalling loss of life that took place. We salute the response of the workers, emergency services and people of New York and Washington.

This Union sends its respects and condolences to the bereaved families.

Our Trade Union, in the historic traditions of the Labour Movement, Internationalism and of the cause of Socialism, totally rejects terrorism or any other forms of aggression, racism and militarism.

Therefore, we oppose any war of revenge and call upon the British Labour Movement to oppose any attempts at that. Further any military intervention must be sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council.

We remain vigilant and actively opposed to all racism and violence. We

also oppose any Government crackdown on civil liberties including the imposition of compulsory identity cards, any fast track extradition procedures or watering down of the Human Rights Act.

Further, we as a Trade Union totally reject any suggestion that we should moderate or give up our primary responsibility to protect our members' interests in all sections of the Union. Specific attention is given to our seafaring members who may be caught up in hostilities.

We completely reject any attempt to dilute our right to take industrial action in defence of our members.

We reiterate our Socialist beliefs and pledge our Union to this course of action and support the CND demonstration on 13th October 2001 in Trafalgar Square and invite Branches and members to attend with Union banners."



## Stop the War Coalition

### Aims and Objectives

The aim of the coalition should be very simple: to stop the war currently declared by the United States and its allies against 'terrorism'.

We in no way condone the attacks on New York and we feel the greatest compassion for those who lost their life on 11th September.

But any war will simply add the numbers of innocent dead, cause untold suffering, political and economic instability on a global scale, increase racism and result in attacks on civil liberties. The aims of the campaign would be best expressed in the name Stop the War Coalition.

Supporters of the Coalition, whether organisations or individuals, will of course be free to develop their own analyses and organise

their own actions.

But there will be many important occasions when united initiatives around broad stop the war slogans can mobilise the greatest numbers.

The campaign should have weekly open meetings that can divide into working groups as appropriate and a small number of officers who report directly to the weekly meetings.

We call on all peace activists and organisations, trade unionists, campaigners and labour movement organisations to join with us in building a mass movement that can stop the drive to war.

We are committed to opposing any racist backlash generated by this war. We will fight to stop the erosion of civil rights.

■ PO Box 3739, London E5 8EJ Phone 07951 235 915

## Brent and Harrow get organised

### Adam Hartman

A local Stop The War coalition has been set up in Brent and Harrow (NW London). The initial impetus for the coalition came from a statement circulated by Brent UNISON.

The coalition now has the backing of Brent Trades Council, Brent and Harrow Green Party, Brent and Harrow Socialist Alliance, and local supporters of the Socialist Workers Party, International Socialist Group and the Labour Party.

Brent East Labour Party had passed an anti-war resolution to be sent as an emergency resolution to Labour Party conference.

Unfortunately, like the majority of such resolutions it was ruled out of order and not debated.

We are kicking off with a series of street stalls in shopping centres across the two boroughs and aim to collect signatures for a petition against the war and to publicise the national demonstration on 13th October and other Stop The War Coalition activities.

We aim to work with Brent Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers and other local organisations to oppose any backlash against asylum seekers and the local Asian and Muslim communities.

We are also challenging the intention of the Home Office to deport a Pakistani journalist living in Brent, Syed Nasir Wajahad, who has been refused asylum despite having been threatened (and his family attacked) for exposing fundamentalist pro-Taliban groups in Pakistan.

A threat to carry out the deportation on 28th September was postponed for two weeks. A judicial review of his case is being sought.

Write to the Home Office to express your concern for his safety and support for his case.

## Hull – No, we won't go!

### Keith Sinclair

"One, two, three four – We don't want your racist war!" Around 150 people marched through Hull on October 6, to launch a public campaign against the war plans of George Bush and Tony Blair.

The march was called by the Hull Campaign Against World War Three, a local broad based campaign, which has been set up following an initial launch meeting of around forty people.

The march attracted support from the organised left locally, the Trades Council and those who have been involved in other local campaigns such as the fight to defend local asylum seekers.

The march was therefore successful in pulling together the various elements that can come together to build a serious

anti-war movement in the area.

As well as local speakers, the end of march rally was addressed by Stuart Richardson who brought solidarity greetings from the Anti-war movement in Birmingham.

The main speaker was Bruce Kent who explained that he was addressing anti-war meetings almost nightly. CND leader Kent was applauded when he highlighted the role of state terrorism in the world to day.

The march and rally were a good start to what may well be a long campaign against war. Weekly meetings are being held locally to plan future activities and the ground is being prepared for an escalation of the campaign in response to escalations of the part of the US and their allies.

## Greater Manchester rallies against the war

### Chris Edwards

Over 350 people crammed into the Friends Meeting House in Manchester on Thursday September 27 to approve a Greater Manchester Declaration of Peace and to launch a Coalition to Stop the War.

"A better world is possible," concluded Rae Street, of the Greater Manchester Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) who organised the meeting together with the Socialist Alliance, Green Party, Globalise Resistance, and other local campaigns, trade unions and individuals.

The meeting was also addressed by Bob Oram, Chair of UNISON's North West Region, local GP Dr Aneez Esmail, National President of the Medical Practitioners Union and Chris Bambery, of the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Alliance nationally. Vanessa Hall, Chair of the Manchester Green Party was unable to make it at the last minute, due to transport difficulties.

Bob Oram drew laughter from the audience when he said that "President Bush should have no trouble closing the bank accounts of Bin Laden – since his father probably set them up."

Aneez Esmail gave a powerful speech reminding the audience about the atrocities committed by Israel, supported by the US, against the Palestinian camps in Lebanon in the early 80s. This had been one source of the hatred of the US on the part of Palestinians.

Chris Bambery pointed out that the cost of one stealth fighter was greater than the GNP of Afghanistan.

Rae Street referred to information received by CND about discussion among military hawks in the US about the possible use of small tactical nuclear weapons in the coming war.

The audience included two Americans who told how they had been affected personally by the attacks on the US.

The discussion was very lively and there was a large measure of agreement. The meeting approved a statement which called on "all peace activists and organisations, trade unionists, campaigners and labour movement organisations to join with us in building a mass movement that can stop the drive to war – and promote peace."

A series of activities has been organised including a number of more local meetings as well as leafleting.

● The meeting was videoed by a Socialist Outlook supporter. Copies of the video are available on VHS tape or on the Internet at: <http://clients.loudeye.com/imc/nycap/manchesterorganisationsisdn.ram>

## 400 at Birmingham anti-war rally

### Bob Whitehead

Over 400 people of all races and religions attended an Anti-war meeting in central Birmingham, organised by the Birmingham Stop the War Coalition and Birmingham Trades Union Council. The Trades Council cancelled its normal meeting in favour of the joint anti-war meeting.

Speakers included Alan Simpson MP who argued for bombarding Afghanistan with bread and not bombs. He pointed out that after more than twenty years of war, there was little left to bomb. However, Alan Simpson also called for intervention into Afghanistan and seemed to have misjudged the mood of the meeting. The most rousing applause was for other speakers.

Whilst everyone agreed that the New York tragedy was a crime against humanity, John Rees of the National Stop the War Coalition pointed out that there have been no "minute silences"; for the half a million Iraqi children killed by Western sanctions.

Salma Yaqoob, a Muslim woman who is chair of Birmingham Stop the War Coalition talked about Muslims becoming a "besieged community" in Birmingham and described the abuse and suspicion cast on Muslims after September 11.

Carol Naughton, National Chair of CND, looked at the enormous waste of military spending and how this could be better spent alleviating world poverty and injustice.

# Islamicists play useful role for imperialism

**Gerry Foley**

As we go to press, the world is waiting for a U.S. military attack on Afghanistan. It is clear that the American rulers' objective is to demonstrate their capacity for destruction and their ruthlessness, and to score some general political points based on that.

U.S. government spokespersons are increasingly having to admit that in attacking Afghanistan they have little hope of hitting the terrorist networks that they accuse of responsibility for the Sept. 11 slaughter.

There is no evidence that any government, not even the Taliban, materially backs the constellation of groups inspired and financed by the Saudi Islamicist multimillionaire Osama Bin Laden whom the U.S. accuses without any proof of masterminding terrorist attacks on targets.

("Islamicist" is a term used to describe political currents that claim to want to build states based on a narrow interpretation of Islamic religious law. They represent a small minority of Muslims in the world and are themselves divided by different political interests.)

In the organisational and political vacuum left in the wake of Afghanistan's ruinous civil war and the guerrilla struggle against Soviet occupation, the Taliban may seek the help of relatively small groups of Islamicists against their internal enemies. But they have neither the resources nor interest in supporting any external terrorist campaigns.

All the available information about Bin Laden's organization Al-Qaida indicates that it is a loose network of small conspiratorial groups scattered in as many as 34 countries.

None of the alleged high-jackers have been linked to any mass movement in the Middle East. A few, including the so-called leader of the cell, Mohammad Atta, have been linked to the Egyptian Islamic terrorist organization, the Islamic Jihad, which was involved in the assassination of the country's president, Anwar Sadat, in 1981.

Following that event, there was a war between the Egyptian government and the Islamicist terrorist groups, lasting for more than a decade, which resulted in more than 1200 deaths, mainly of innocent civilians and Islamic activists themselves. The Islamic conspiratorial organisations were decimated. The prisons are still filled with their members.

Amman al-Zawahri, cited widely in the big business press as Bin Laden's "right-hand" man, served three years in prison on charges of being involved in Sadat's assassination. He left Egypt in the 1980s after being released.

In 1998, his organisation joined the Front for the Liberation of Islamic Holy Places, a grouping apparently inspired by Bin Laden.

In the same year, the Jihad was accused of involvement in the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam, and became the target of a major repressive campaign by the Egyptian government.

In 1999, Al-Zawahri was condemned to death in absentia as one of the defendants in a mass trial of Islamic fundamentalists.

An article analysing the Islamic fundamentalist groups in the Sept. 14 issue of the Egyptian daily *Middle East Times* noted: "While some of these groupings do not have a popular base, they



Reactionary opponents of US imperialism: Bin Laden and colleagues in 1998

do not need one to operate efficiently."

Ibrahim Naggar, one of the defendants in the trial that brought Al-Zawahri's death sentence, said that Bin Laden came out against attacks on the Egyptian government, calling on the terrorists to focus entirely on U.S. and Israeli interests, and calling for focusing their propaganda on military personnel.

These groups appear thus to be narrow circles totally innocent of any orientation to build mass movements opposed to imperialism in the decisive countries of the Middle East, which is more and more a social powder keg.

In general, such Islamicist fundamentalist groups, no matter how violent, represent little threat to imperialism's basic interests in the region, and can even be manipulated by the imperialists to defend their interests. Over the long term, they have been more of an asset than a liability for imperialism.

In the past, Islamicists were used to help bring down the nationalist governments of Mossadegh in Iran in 1953 and Sukharno in Indonesia in 1965.

In the later case, gangs organized by Islamicist leaders massacred at least half-a-million poor peasants and wiped out the Communist Party, with U.S. approval.

In fact, the state that has given by far the most "aid and comfort" to Bin Laden is the United States itself, which used him as an agent in the Afghan civil war. He played no political role before his Afghan involvement, beginning in 1986.

The U.S. government did not use him simply as a conduit of aid to the Afghan

fighters but as a means of reinforcing the most reliable social conservatives in Afghanistan.

In fact, the main leaders of the Afghan struggle, like the recently assassinated Sheikh Massoud, the hero of the Panjir valley and generally acknowledged to be the most effective of the military commanders, were quickly pushed from power by the Taliban with the aid of forces linked to Bin Laden.

The Taliban was created by the Pakistani special forces with the assent, and perhaps even the blessing of the United States. The Taliban appeared only in 1994, five years after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. And they first appeared as guards of Pakistani convoys.

After the Taliban captured the capital, Kabul, in 1996, the *Washington Post* wrote that they were "the best opportunity" seen in years "to put an end to the anarchy that has beset Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion in 1979."

The same paper noted, with implicit approval, that the Islamicist fundamentalists were "more antimodernist than anti-Western."

The *Post* gloated that the Taliban victory was a defeat for the Islamic government in Tehran, which backed the Mujahadin and still supports those who continue to fight against the Taliban.

The Afghan resistance to the Soviet-backed regimes and to Soviet occupation was largely local and fragmented, and divided among the different ethnic groups that live in the country.

The guerrillas had no united alternative to the Soviet-backed regime. After the Soviets withdrew and the regime fell, they splintered. In those conditions, a relatively small disciplined group with resources coming from foreign backers was

easily able to gain control of most of the country.

According to Sheikh Massoud, many local commanders were simply bought by Pakistani money.

Moreover, the Taliban was based on the Pushtun nationality, which straddles the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Pakistan, which the U.S. has now enlisted in its "war on terrorism," is a state based on Islam. It is the product of the British imperialist strategy of using Islamicists against the Indian national liberation movement.

And religious parties have always been a fundamental prop of the successive reactionary regimes that have ruled the country.

During the cold war, Pakistan was the key ally of the United States in the region. It was the central country of the CENTO Alliance, which was a threat aimed at the Soviet Union until it was shattered by the Iraqi revolution of 1957.

Now, of course, many of the Islamicists have turned violently anti-American.

However, Washington probably always knew that they were a double-edged sword, like most of the U.S. allies in the neocolonial countries.

In this way they are similar to the Salvadoran landlords, who could be relied on to organise murder gangs to crush the rebellious peasants but refused to carry out the limited land reform the United States considered necessary to allay social tensions.

They also call to mind the ruthless military regimes of Latin America, whose atrocities embarrassed the U.S. government before its own people.

The United States is now

seeking new allies in the Middle East, from the surviving mujahadin in Afghanistan, to the Iranian government, to the Pakistani military dictatorship, and the Hindu chauvinist government of India.

But the imperialists have always had to use reactionary allies in an attempt to maintain their interests, allies who tended at some point to become too discredited or too hot to handle.

No stable, much less humane, world order can be based on such alliances.

They have inevitably meant disasters for the peoples of the colonial and neocolonial world and ultimately to threats to the peoples of the developed countries themselves.

For example, 40,000 people were killed by the "war against terrorism" conducted by the Argentine military regime in the 1970s and 1980s.

The declaration of a "war on terrorism" after the attacks in Washington and New York promises an incomparably greater slaughter. Hundreds of thousands of desperate people are already trying to flee Afghanistan in anticipation of U.S. strikes.

However, no matter how much the imperialists may be blinded by their greed and arrogance, they are hardly so stupid as to think that the small conspiratorial groups can be destroyed by massive military action.

Whatever military strikes the U.S. military and its allies make, the real objective is to lay the political basis for tightening repression throughout the world. And the whole history of such attempts suggests there will be attacks on the rights of citizens of the developed countries as well.

## Osama Bin Laden: a creature of Saudi and CIA forces

Osama bin Laden was recruited by Turki Al Faisal, the Saudi intelligence Chief way back in the late 1970s or early 1980s, and became the CIA's chief organiser of the insurgency against the left wing government of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

With the anarchy prevailing in post "communist" Afghanistan and spilling into Pakistan, the CIA along with ISI (Inter Services Intelligence) started propping up the Taliban in 1994.

Ironically this took place under Benazir Bhutto's so-called progressive regime in Pakistan. The financial backing of this operation - apart from Saudi Arabia and the CIA - mainly came from UNOCAL and the big US oil conglomerates.

They had their own vested interests... in get-

ting oil and gas pipelines from Central Asian republics - mainly Turkmenistan - through Afghanistan down to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. The deal was struck under the auspices of the then US under-secretary of state Ms. Robyn Raphael.

The ISI also persuaded the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) military faction led by Shahnawaz Tanai to join the Taliban forces, and used his pilots to fly MIG 23 and Sakoi fighters of what was left of the Afghan air force and drive sophisticated Russian tanks.

The Taliban captured Kabul in 1996. US \$30 million was paid by UNICOL alone for the completion of this operation.

The Americans were not at all disturbed by the

ruthless and barbaric acts perpetrated by the Taliban upon the poor Afghan populace. They had no complaints about the repression of women by these monsters.

In fact, after coming to power the Taliban started playing with various oil multinationals who were trying to strike deals on oil and gas pipeline lines with them.

In 1997 the Taliban sent two delegations to the two competing bidders, UNICOL and Bidas (an Argentinian oil giant) to Texas and Buenos Aires. At the headquarters of Bidas in Buenos Aires, all the female staff were asked not to wear skirts, but to put on long trousers and cover their heads with scarves. Similar instructions were issued in Texas, USA.

The Taliban, however, deceived both: they took the advantages and then ditched the deals.

The Pakistani dictatorship benefited enormously from the US sponsored Afghan war during the 1980s. They not only got economic privileges to stabilise their regime but also stole large chunks of financial aid and weaponry destined to reach the Islamic fundamentalist groups during their counter-revolutionary insurgency in Afghanistan.

The army and the ISI indulged not only in looting from the war money but also in connivance with CIA in the drug trade. Here they made more millions.

But for Pakistan the chickens have now come home to roost.

# Will war drive world deeper into recession?

Andy Kilmister

**T**he last few weeks have seen endless speculation about the likely economic effects of the terror attacks in the USA and the imperialist war drive which has followed. Much of this speculation has centred on the idea that the attacks are likely to push the world economy into recession. But this view is misleading and over-simple.

It implies that global capitalism was basically stable before September 11 and can be thrown into crisis simply by a collapse of confidence and generalised fear.

In reality, the impact of what has happened on the economy needs to be seen in the context of increasing instability over the last few years, which already threatened to create an economic crisis before the attacks.

It is also important to distinguish between the effect of the attacks themselves and that of the subsequent military buildup. The attacks themselves have had an economic impact at three distinct levels.

■ Firstly, there is the immediate economic damage caused by the events of September 11 itself. This has been dramatic for certain companies located in the New York financial district but it is not generalised.

There will be arguments over who should pay for reconstruction, which will largely involve the insurance industry, but again the impact of this will be limited both geographically, and to particular economic sectors.

■ Secondly, there is the impact of the attacks on particular industries, notably the airline industry. It is possible, though by no means certain, that there will be a significant decline in the growth of air travel as a result of fears of terrorism.

But two things need to be remembered here. First, the airline industry was already in severe difficulties, both in the US and internationally, before September 11. Severe competition, in a market whose growth is limited by the availability of airline slots, was squeezing profit margins.

To a large degree, airlines and civil aerospace companies are using recent events to ask for state help to resolve their previous problems.

Second, these problems are also not generalised to the economy as a whole. If businesses and consumers are travelling by air less they will spend their money on something else. The security industry and the telecommunications industry may grow in a climate of fear where

businesses cut down on travel, for example.

■ It is at the third level that observers have seen the September 11 attacks as threatening an overall recession affecting the economy as a whole. This relates to the question of the effect of the attacks on consumer and business confidence.

The argument is that a number of economies, especially the US economy, are currently extremely dependent on such confidence and that a severe downturn in optimism and a sense of panic may stop people consuming and tip them into recession.

**T**his dependence is itself the result of the unbalanced nature of the US boom of the late 1990s, fuelled by record levels of debt, a stock market boom, and in the last year by rapid growth in house prices and land values.

In addition, internationally, the argument is that a collapse in confidence could cause renewed instability in the currency markets, as investors panic, and seek the safest assets possible.

It is important for Marxists to assess this kind of argu-



ment carefully. We have never believed that the primary factor determining economic booms and slumps is swings in the psychology of consumers and investors.

This is one of the main differences between Marxist accounts of economic crisis and Keynesian writings. For Marxists, crises are fundamentally determined by the conditions governing the exploitation of living labour in order to make profits.

These conditions are both objective, for example technological developments, and subjective, for example the willingness of workers to fight back.

However, the subjective conditions which Marxists focus on are rooted in the point of production, not in the financial markets or in consumption.

**Y**et it is also the case that in particular historical conjunctures, psychological effects can have an impact which can worsen the problems already existing as a result of capitalist instability.

An example of this in the last decade has been the crisis in Japan. While this has been fundamentally caused by over-production and bad debt as a result of the investment bubble of the 1980s, it does seem that psychological factors contributed towards making the crisis especially difficult to resolve.

Before 1990 large parts of the Japanese economy functioned through networks of trust, in which the behaviour of one firm depended on being able to predict accurately what other firms would do.

For example, each firm invested because it was confident that others would do the same, and so generate demand for its products, and as a result all would invest the prediction would be self-fulfilling.

These kinds of relationships enabled Japan to avoid to some extent the kind of instability found elsewhere in the world economy in the

1970s and 1980s. But the effect of their breakdown in the 1990s has been to create a psychological climate which has significantly worsened the fall in investment which resulted from objective factors.

Similar arguments apply to the way in which Japanese workers have responded to the collapse of what they previously thought were reliable promises made to them by employers.

**I**t is possible that the US economy may undergo a similar psychological downturn to that which has occurred in Japan over the last decade. If consumption drops dramatically, at a time when profits are already low and investment is falling, then unemployment may rise and the stock market



Wall Street's symbols survive, but will September 11 bring a deeper slump?

could plunge even further.

This would then lead to further drops in consumption and a vicious circle leading to recession.

It is important to note two things here, though.

First, these kinds of psychological effects are not the main problems facing the US economy at present. They might make a recession worse, but the central economic issue for US capitalism at present is its dependence on artificially high levels of consumption stimulated by the rapid growth of debt.

This will only be sustainable if the gamble of the last five years that the development of information technology and the internet will lead to lasting American productivity improvements turns out to be justified. And the importance of this issue remains unaffected by the events of September 11.

Second, it is not clear yet that US consumer confidence will be badly affected in the long run by the events of the last months. The Japanese example discussed above involved the destruction over the course of a decade of networks of trust that had been developed during a 40 year period. That is a different matter from the events of one day, however horrific.

It is also important to look at the economic impact of the war drive which has followed September 11. Here we need to distinguish between long-term and short-term developments.

If what is happening now leads to a significant rise in military production in the imperialist economies in the long run then this is likely to have important economic effects.

However, these cannot be predicted in a mechanical way. Over the last century there has been a long debate

amongst Marxists about the relation between militarism and the economy

Some Marxists like the proponents of the 'permanent arms economy' thesis in the 1950s and 1960s, for example Michael Kidron and TN Vance, have argued that military production can play a major role in lessening the instability of capitalism and avoiding economic crises.

Yet as Ernest Mandel argues in his discussion of such writers in 'Late Capitalism', this is too one-dimensional a view.

**T**he impact of militarism depends on a range of factors - the need for sources of demand to soak up surplus production, the technological impact of arms production, social struggles over the cost of military expenditure, and so on - and cannot be predicted in advance.

For example, the Korean War laid the basis for much of Japanese industrialisation in the 1950s, while the Vietnam War greatly weakened the US economy in the 1960s and 1970s.

This leaves the question of the short-term impact of the current campaign in Afghanistan and the surrounding region. Here there are two main options for US and British capitalism.

The first would be to finance the war drive by cutting expenditure in other areas. This would contribute towards worsening the possibility of a recession in the USA and Britain by transferring government expenditure overseas, and would be politically very risky.

The second is to try as much as possible to maintain previous spending while also boosting military expenditure.

This seems to be the policy being followed at the moment, especially in the USA where interest rates are being brought down to record lows and the government has been encouraging

spending.

**T**his is what lies behind comments of Keynesian writers like Larry Elliott in *The Guardian* of October 1, where he argues that there is a possibility that

"any short-term damage to the global economy will be followed by a period of sustained and strong growth.

"Policymakers are not so much on a steep learning curve as a steep unlearning curve, seeking to forget all the things they have been taught over the past 30 years: that inflation is the only enemy, that demand management doesn't work, that capital accounts should be opened up as quickly as possible."

For such writers, the possibility that war might force governments into more expansionary policies is an attractive one.

But this view ignores the way in which such policies are likely to contribute to the instability which has already been building up over the last five years.

Further cuts in interest rate and encouragement of consumption in the US risk worsening exactly the problems which existed before September 11, high debt levels and a record trade deficit. And to a lesser degree the same things are present in Britain.

The world economy looks increasingly unstable, and the measures being taken to avoid a recession are likely in turn to worsen the underlying problems of global capitalism.

In this context, the events of September 11 and what has followed should not be taken as the cause of a possible global slowdown.

Rather they themselves result from the crisis-ridden and inequitable nature of the system under which we live, which unless resisted is continually bound to produce instability and war.

Rulers gear for war, an anti-war movement emerges

# Mass shock and outrage in USA over terror attack



**Steve Bloom**

October 4, 2001—In the wake of the terror attack on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, the US government and mass media have been working overtime to arouse patriotic war fervor.

Threats and vigilante attacks were widespread against Muslim and Arab residents in the days immediately following the tragedy. But anti-war and anti-racist forces have begun organising a serious opposition.

The death toll stands at more than 6,000, with \$60 billion of estimated damage. No one was found alive in the rubble of the collapsed twin towers more than one day after the attack. The New York and American Stock Exchanges were forced to close for almost a week due to the destruction of telephone service and utilities in the downtown New York City area. When they reopened, stocks took a severe nosedive.

President Bush immediately declared that the US is now at war with terrorists. He is projecting a military campaign, arrogantly proclaimed "Operation Infinite Justice," which is expected to last for years, though the details of what is planned remain sketchy.

The one specific action taken so far is a diplomatic effort directed at the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, through Pakistan, to turn over Osama bin Laden for prosecution.

## Proof

This initiative failed when the Taliban demanded clear proof of Bin Laden's involvement in the September 11 attacks before complying. Bin Laden, a Saudi millionaire resident in Afghanistan, was originally trained under the auspices of the CIA as an operative to work against pro-Soviet forces in that country.

But he later turned the tools he was taught against the United States and its allies in the Middle East.

The US is working hard to pull together an international coalition, including Arab and Islamic regimes to pursue its military aims. Clearly, no "war against international terrorism" can



*Prayers for restoration of imperialist control: Bushes and Clintons sing from the same hymn sheet*

even be launched without their collaboration. In his speech to the nation on September 20, Bush took pains to explain that Islam is not the enemy.

Rather the USA considers itself at war only with terrorists who, Bush stated, distort the teachings of Islam by acting in its name. In another apparent effort to appeal to these regimes US rulers have made it clear that Israel will not be part of any joint military effort.

On October 2 NATO issued a statement saying that it was ready to act in alliance with the USA after being provided with "clear and compelling proof" of Bin Laden's involvement. But in a subsequent interview with the New York Times, Secretary of State Colin Powell stopped short of asserting that the US actually had such proof.

He said the assertion of the link was based on "pretty good information" and acknowledged that "it is not evidence in the form of a court case."

The paper quoted "A senior diplomat for one closely allied nation" as saying that there had been "nothing particularly new or surprising," in the NATO briefing and "it was descriptive and narrative rather than forensic. There was no attempt to build a legal case." The

Pakistani regime, an important US ally in this situation, said explicitly that the proof offered to them was far from conclusive.

The White House and State Department apparently do not plan to share even that evidence which they do have with the general public, claiming that it is "classified." So the American people are being asked to endorse a war based on faith in the judgment of their leaders. Right now, in the immediate aftermath of the WTC attack, this confidence level is high.

## Credibility

But historically such a stance has tended to create serious credibility problems, which could easily reassert themselves this time around as the immediate shock of what happened on September 11 recedes.

In a statement on September 25, Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney of Georgia expressed a sentiment shared by many: "Before the use of force occurs, the American people must see this proof too."

But so far all that has been offered are hints and suggestions, despite an extensive release of public information about the conspiracy as reconstructed by law-enforcement officials. Some of those alleged to be involved met with people

"linked" to bin Laden. Or they frequented clubs or mosques which bin Laden's supporters also attended.

No one, apparently, wants to remember that the track record of US presidents acting, along with the "intelligence community," as judge, jury, and executioner in cases of terrorism is not particularly encouraging.

Particularly noteworthy in this regard was the cruise missile attack, ordered by President Clinton, on a Sudanese pharmaceutical plant. According to "pretty good information" from U.S. intelligence, this factory was involved with making chemical weapons for bin Laden. It later turned out that this "information" was completely false.

On Friday, September 14, the U.S. Congress passed, with one dissenting voice, a resolution authorizing President Bush "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons."

The one courageous vote

against was by Democratic congresswoman Barbara Lee of California, who explained: "I am convinced that military action will not prevent further acts of international terrorism against the United States."

## Civil liberties

Congress is also considering legislation which would supposedly tighten domestic security by curtailing civil liberties. But here there is at least some resistance in Congress. The Bush administration wanted a provision which would allow the detention of foreign nationals indefinitely without trial.

In the legislation which is likely to pass, however, this is being scaled back to permit such detention only for a specified period. At the same time there is complete agreement to expand wiretap and other evesdropping powers, including the indiscriminate monitoring of internet communications by government agencies.

Bush is also asking for authority to resume economic and military aid to nations which had previously been cut off due to their record of human rights violations, provided only that they now enlist in the "war on terrorism."

Clearly the rulers of the USA want to use the events of September 11 as an excuse for expanding domestic

repression, even when the actions taken have no relationship whatsoever to any "legitimate" security concerns.

In the days after the WTC attack all of the political prisoners held in federal jails were placed in isolation. In many cases they are being denied access to mail, or the right to see their own attorneys and "spiritual advisors," actions which are in direct violation of the law.

And yet no one could possibly imagine that any of these individuals was involved with the events of September 11, or with any other threat against US security. Included in the crackdown are those imprisoned for completely nonviolent crimes, even those who adhere to nonviolence as a personal creed.

The international intelligence apparatus also wants to use this crisis to begin re-implementing murderous policies that have been responsible for thousands of deaths around the world in previous decades.

For the last 26 years it has been the official policy of the USA not to engage in assassination plots against the leaders of foreign states. There is now a move afoot to drop that policy, and to reinstitute other CIA covert operations which had been curtailed due to rampant and well-documented abuses.

The average citizen responded with humanity and compassion for the victims of the September 11 attack. The city of New York received so many contributions of food and supplies, and so many volunteers to help with the rescue effort, that Mayor Giuliani had to announce no more was needed.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the majority of the US population has also responded positively to the patriotic calls.

U.S. citizens of all ethnic backgrounds can be seen carrying American flags as they walk down the street, or else displaying them from cars, or homes, or offices. (Of course, a desire to make a statement of solidarity with the victims is involved here, probably as much as support for war).

Polls consistently show 80 to 90 per cent in favour of a military campaign against



"terrorism," though the figures decline considerably when the question includes the idea of a long-term effort that causes substantial civilian casualties in other nations. It seems remarkable, and a positive sign, that even 10-20 percent of the US population is still not buying the war propaganda under the present circumstances.

Every major sporting event and many cultural activities were cancelled for almost a week after the attack, including Major League Baseball and the National Football League. Political demonstrations were called off as well, though the reasons varied.

### Unions pull out

When the AFL-CIO pulled out of a planned demonstration in Washington at the end of September to protest meetings of the IMF and World Bank, its president, John Sweeney, issued a statement which declared that this was a time for "bringing people together to begin the process of healing and renewing our sense of community and confidence".

He called on the IMF and World Bank to cancel their meeting as well (which was subsequently done), but announced that the AFL-CIO would withdraw from the demonstrations no matter what.

By contrast, the organisers of a major protest in the case of former Black Panther and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, scheduled for Philadelphia on Saturday, September 15, planned to go ahead until the last minute.

They were forced to cancel, reluctantly, on the Friday, however, when it became clear that the safety of demonstrators could not be guaranteed given the prevailing atmosphere. Among other problems, organisers cited "numerous attacks on both Arab and Muslim people and their businesses in the city."

"One woman was attacked by a group of men, and when she tried to report it she was told that it did not happen. The local talk radio is filled with remarks like 'we need to do to them what we did to the Japs in world war II' and 'why don't they just send all the Arabs and Muslims to internment camps, that'll solve all these problems.'"

"Several businesses owned by people from the Middle East or even just with employees from the Middle East have had windows smashed."

This kind of anti-Arab and anti-Islamic fervour was widespread in the immediate aftermath of September 11, representing one of the more sinister aspects of the popular response.

### Alarmed at racism

Much of the establishment press and many politicians became so alarmed that statements were issued calling for a halt to such activity, stressing that Islam itself is not the enemy. No doubt this, too, was a factor prompting Bush's remarks to the same effect in his September 20 speech.

Nevertheless, threats of attacks, and actual attacks, took place from coast to coast. The *New York Times*, on September 12, for example reported, "Yasser Ahmed,

manager of an Arab-owned candy and grocery store on Broadway in Upper Manhattan, said about 10 people had come in shouting, 'You guys did it!' and other accusations."

The same *Times* article told of an incident in Dearborn, Michigan, where the publisher of an Arab-American newspaper reported hostile phone calls to its staff, including one death threat.

Mosques across the country were the target of bomb threats in the immediate aftermath, and Arab students across the nation were subject to threats and harassment.

In a Chicago suburb approximately 350 people, some waving American flags, attempted to march on a Mosque, though police intervened to prevent any violence.

In Chicago itself a man was arrested after he attacked an Arab-American gas station attendant with a machete, and a firebomb was tossed at an Islamic school. (It exploded outside without doing damage). One article counted dozens of incidents nationwide reported to police.

### Left and Greens

By contrast on the positive side of the ledger, traditional left forces from the Green Party to explicitly revolutionary organisations, while universally expressing their shock, outrage, and condemnation of the human tragedy, have rejected the calls for war. They have begun organising a movement to combat both the war fervour and racist attacks against Muslim and Arab people.

And antiwar sentiment extends well beyond the left. The National Council of Churches, for example, declared: "We must not, out of anger and vengeance, indiscriminately retaliate in ways that bring on even more loss of innocent life."

On Friday September 14, a contingent organized by "Not In My Name" (NIMN), a coalition which includes Arabs and Jews among others, participated in a large vigil sponsored by the city of Chicago. NIMN's signs read, "Arabs and Jews, We Refuse to be Enemies" in English,



(Top) Gunboat diplomacy: US warships heading for the Gulf. (Above) People of all nationalities have been waving the US flag - as have racists attacking Mosques.

Arabic, and Hebrew.

Participants reported an enthusiastic welcome from others present. On September 16 an antiwar rally, reportedly attended by 2500 people, was held in Portland, Oregon.

In Detroit, the city whose metropolitan area has the largest Arab population outside the Middle East, hundreds marched on Monday, September 17, pausing at an Islamic Student Center where windows had been smashed. Their banner said: "Arab Peoples Are Our Brothers and Sisters—No War!"

In New York a vigil took place in Union Square on Saturday, September 15, around the theme, "Islam is not the enemy. War is not the answer."

The following Friday a march from the same site to midtown Manhattan attracted thousands, and forces close to the Direct Action Network (one of the main groups behind the anti-globalisation protests in the US) has called for a weekly vigil every Friday evening.

Another New York City coalition, made up of more traditional left organizations as well as unaffiliated activists, has been holding planning meetings of up to 400 people. It is calling for a major march in New York City on Sunday, October 7.

Students around the country organised a day of action on September 20, with more than 130 colleges and universities participating. At the University of California, Berkeley campus, a rally was

reportedly attended by 4,000. The themes of the action were: opposition to any military response, to racist attacks, and to attempts to roll back civil liberties.

In general these same calls have constituted the political basis for unity expressed by antiwar forces, along with the idea of seeking peace and counteracting terrorism through economic and social justice on a global scale.

There have been some attempts to discuss more specific alternatives, including the idea of bringing the terrorists to "justice" through the application of international law rather than a military response.

But some raise objections to this, not wanting to make it seem as if the legal institutions of global imperialism, which also help to sustain imperialist domination, are any kind of legitimate alternative. This political discussion is still in the process of working itself out.

### Coordinated

The first nationally coordinated protests took place in Washington D.C. and San Francisco on Saturday September 29, with marches in both locations attracting 5,000 to 10,000 participants.

Students from campuses across the country were again prominent. There were also smaller protests in other cities, including Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Madison, Wisconsin; Durham, North Carolina; Columbus, Ohio; Chicago; New York, and elsewhere.

Labor activists and even

official union bodies have begun to raise their voices. The San Francisco Labor Council (AFL-CIO) adopted a resolution which declared, "The tragic attacks of September 11 should be treated as a heinous crime rather than an act of war. As we mourn this tremendous loss of life, we declare our resistance to efforts to use this tragedy to engage in military actions that can lead only to more carnage and senseless loss of life."

"We reject the idea that entire nations should be punished for the actions of a few. Bombing raids and military strikes will only fuel an endless cycle of revenge that can only bring the deaths of more innocent civilians, both here and around the world."

The council endorsed the September 29 protest actions in San Francisco.

### Union letter

In New York a letter that has been signed by more than 100 labour officials and activists from various unions declared:

"War will inevitably harm countless innocent civilians, strengthen American alliances with brutal dictatorships, and deepen global poverty - just as the United States and its allies have already inflicted widespread suffering on innocent people in such places as Iraq, Sudan, Israel and the Occupied Territories, the former Yugoslavia and Latin America."

It demands:

"NO WAR. It is wrong to punish any nation or people for the crimes of individuals—peace requires global social and economic justice. Justice, Not Vengeance. An independent international tribunal to impartially investigate, apprehend, and try those responsible for the September 11 attack."

"OPPOSITION TO RACISM - DEFENSE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES. Stop terror, racial profiling and legal restrictions against people of color and immigrants, and defend democratic rights."

"AID FOR THE NEEDY, NOT THE GREEDY. Government aid for the victims' families and displaced

workers—not the wealthy. Rebuild New York City with union labour, union pay, and with special concern for new threats to worker health and safety."

Dennis Rivera, the President of Local 1199 (Service Employees International Union), who went to jail as part of the protests against the US Navy's use of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques as a bombing range, announced that the union's delegate assembly had voted to oppose "launching a war against any nation because of the actions of a few."

He also condemned terrorism and demanded that those guilty of the WTC attack be brought to justice.

Robin Alexander, United Electrical Workers Director of International Labor Affairs issued a statement which read, in part, "As we mourn and as we rage, we also declare our resistance to efforts to use this tragedy to curtail our civil liberties or to engage in military adventures that can lead only to more carnage and senseless loss of life."

While all of the Democratic and Republican Party politicians (with the notable exception of Barbara Lee) have eagerly lined up behind Bush's prowar campaign, Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate in the last presidential election, declared at a rally:

"We must have the freedom of our minds to comment, reflect, and feed back because our government can make some serious mistakes, as they have in the past. . . . We have to begin putting ourselves in the shoes of the innocent, brutalized people in the Third World and ask ourselves, why do they dislike our foreign policy?"

Ongoing protests are being projected from many quarters, with some effort to establish coordination and a coalition approach on a local and national scale.

Even before the bombs have begun to fall it is clear that while there may be unanimity in the halls of Congress on the war, there remains considerable questioning and some outright opposition among the broader American public.

# Sept 11 means good times roll for Pakistan's generals

**Farooq Sulehria,  
(member Labour Party  
Pakistan)**

**P**akistan's generals reaching Headquarters in chauffeur-driven cars, wearing starched-uniforms studded with military medals, must be all smiles.

Pakistan's Army headquarters are situated in Rawalpindi city - only half an hour drive from the capital city of Islamabad. And the generals are also the incumbent rulers of Pakistan.

Since independence from British imperialism in 1947, generals have directly ruled Pakistan through martial law, for 26 years.

All of a sudden, things have turned good for them. Every new day, since September 24, has brought them good news.

■ September 24: Bush administration lifts sanctions against Pakistan that were imposed because of its nuclear programme and a subsequent nuclear test in 1998. Japan and Australia had already promised to lift sanctions. Colin Powell, in a 'Meet the Press' programme on NBC television, says that the US has no concern over its nuclear programme and "guarantees" that the Musharraf government would remain stable.

■ September 26: Thirteen countries reschedule debt repayment for Pakistan. These countries include USA, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Australia, Canada, Great Britain and Switzerland. Japan also releases \$40 million grant for Pakistan.

■ September 27: IMF releases third tranche of debt in an unusual move. Negotiations had been going on for this tranche for long time. IMF was not satisfied with the military government's economic per-



*If they can contain anti-US protesters like these in Quetta, Pakistan's generals stand to profit from their deal with US*

formance.

■ September 28: The USA releases \$50 million grant for Pakistan

All this is reward for Pakistan's support for the "international community" against "terrorism".

The present military government, headed by General Musharraf, overthrew the democratically elected civilian government of Nawaz Sharif on October 12, 1999.

The army coup was a reflection of the economic and political crisis facing the rotten capitalist system in Pakistan.

**T**hroughout the Cold War the Pakistani ruling class was the apple of the eye of US imperialism. A trustworthy ally against the Soviet Union, Pakistan under its corrupt ruling class, was

generously granted IMF and World Bank loans and grants.

The process reached its peak during the 1980s when the USA was engaged in Afghanistan. Pakistan became the third largest recipient of US aid after Israel and Egypt.

But these enormous sums of money did not in any way improve the miserable living conditions for the working masses. These grants would end up in offshore bank accounts of military generals, bureaucrats and corrupt bourgeois politicians.

The Pakistani working class became radicalised for the first time in the revolutionary decade of 1960s. The year 1967 witnessed a pre-revolutionary situation in Pakistan. Firstly, Pakistani military dictator Field Marshal Ayub Khan was forced to resign. Subsequent to this revolutionary movement, the

first ever general elections were held in Pakistan in 1970.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), promising socialism, emerged as the party of working class. Under a tremendous pressure by the working class, the PPP government introduced land reforms and nationalised some industrial as well as financial institutions.

Bhutto, himself a big feudal lord, was a bourgeois populist and Bonapartist leader. Following his re-election in March 1977, a military coup on July 5 sealed his fate. He was hanged two years later.

The working class had not forgotten the reforms carried out under Bhutto. They offered heroic resistance to this military regime, led by General Zia ul Haq. General Zia ruled the roost till August 16, 1988 when he along with his close aides died in a plane crash/sabotage.

In December that year, the PPP, now headed by Bhutto's daughter Benazir, was voted in to power.

This Benazir government disillusioned the masses by its anti-working class politics. The party had moved much to the right. Now it wanted to be an obedient servant of the IMF and the World Bank. But its working class base would not allow her to implement the IMF agenda.

Her government was dismissed in 1990. Her political opponent, Nawaz Sharif, a corrupt capitalist politician, was put in charge following a rigged election.

The last decade of 20th century unfolded a new international scenario in the wake of Soviet Union's collapse. Pakistan was no more needed as a base camp against Soviet Union. Now was the time to "pay back" the loans.

**P**akistan is an agriculture-based economy. But a feudal system dominates its agriculture. The industrial base is very weak. Debt servicing is possible only by IMF dictated "economic reforms" namely increased taxation, privatisation and mass redundancies of public sector employees, an end to state subsidies.

The civilian governments of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif failed to implement these "economic reforms", but their policies brought misery, poverty, and unemployment. During last 20 years,

poverty has doubled in Pakistan. The per capita income in Pakistan that was \$460 in 1990 is now \$340.

**T**he IMF also wanted the civilian governments to slash the defence budget. Forty per cent of Pakistan's annual fiscal budget goes to the army (another 40 per cent goes to debt servicing, i.e. interest on loans given by IMF, World Bank and other international donors. According to an estimate, Pakistan has paid \$12 interest for every \$1 it has borrowed).

The justification for maintaining this military big budget is enmity with India. Kashmir is the personification of this enmity. The ruling classes in both India and Pakistan encourage this enmity as it helps justify big war budgets.

However, compelled by the IMF regional agenda, in 1998 both India and Pakistan endeavoured to normalise relations. The Pakistan army, fearing any normalisation process, started a war in Kashmir without getting permission, or even informing the civilian government.

This contradiction subsequently resulted in the army coup on October 12, 1999.

The masses, disillusioned by democratic governments, hoping against hope, developed illusions in the military government. On assuming power, the military junta found itself in a difficult situation.

**T**he international scenario was not so conducive for military dictatorships. The US could not openly lend support to such regimes as it had done in 33 countries during the Cold War.

Now being the champion of human rights and democracy, it had to slap 528 restrictions against Pakistan following military rule. Already the US, EU, Japan and Australia had imposed curbs on Pakistan following its nuclear blasts in 1998.

Also, to stay in power it struck a deal with the IMF. The deal was: the IMF would not demand a cut in Army's budget, while the military regime would keep paying back the amount of loans wanted by the IMF at the expense of the working class i.e. through privatisation, increased taxation, massive redundancies and so on.

Over a hundred thousand workers were laid off; taxes on toiling masses were increased. Within a couple of months, the military regime became really unpopular among the masses. The illusions had been dispelled.

The democracy movement started to build up. And in August 2001, the military dictator announced a schedule for elections and restoration of democracy.

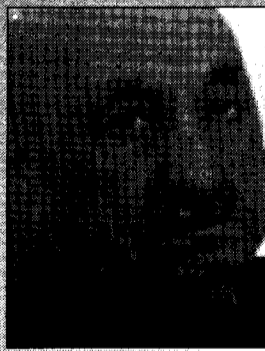
But then, all of a sudden, following September 11, everything began turning out good for Musharraf.

The USA would like to have an unelected, dictatorial government in Pakistan during would-be Afghan war. Demands for the restoration of democracy will not be raised.

It's hard to say right now if Musharraf, like his predecessor General Zia, will stay in power for ten years. It depends on a number of factors.

## Interview with leader of Afghanistan Labour Revolutionary Organisation

Adil is leader of a small left wing organisation based in Afghanistan. He is himself in exile, but travelled illegally to Jilalabad for three days from 16 to 19 September to see the mood and to agree future strategy with his members. He spoke to Farooq Tariq in Lahore on 24 September.



*Waiting in the wings: ex-King Zahir Shah*

**On conditions in the city**  
"Jilalabad was in a state of absolute shock. Everyone from there was talking of leaving Afghanistan as soon as possible. To reach to Peshawar, you need at least 200,000 Afghanis (\$2).

Then you need another \$5 to bribe the Pakistan official at the border to cross.

So any one who has this amount is leaving.

An average wage of an Afghan government clerk at present is around 300,000 Afghanis (\$3) per month. A daily worker in Jilalabad would get around 10,000 to 20,000 Afghanis

So when Taliban say they will not hand over Osama to Americans, it has nothing to do with their courage or their service to Islam, they are unable to hand him over: Osama has more Islamic militants than they do."

**On the Taliban**

"They have lost support in absolute terms. The people I spoke in Jilalabad are openly against the Taliban. I think it is only Talibs (the militant students) who support them. No one else supports them in Afghanistan. If the Americans come they will lose power not so much through the attack but more because they have no social basis.

Taliban are most vicious and brutal government of all-time. But America and Pakistan have supported them from the beginning. They say today that Taliban government is no good, we were saying it from the first day."

**On ex King Zahir Shah**

"He is an 86-year-old ex king who seemed to get the support of all the parties in Afghanistan apart from the Taliban. The black, red and green coloured flags of Zahir Shah's party are seen everywhere in Peshawar at least.

Our party at this time supports him for a transitional period. The American plan is to hand him powers after the fall of Taliban, and then he can call elections in a year's time.

But it clear that he will not be able to solve the problems of the people.

We have no other choice apart from supporting him for a transitional period."

**On American military intervention**

"We are totally opposed to American military intervention, but we are in favour of an immediate ending of Taliban government."

# Dictatorship's U-turn signals all change in Pakistan's politics

By Farooq Tariq,  
General Secretary  
Labour Party Pakistan

The 11th September incident has had a devastating effect on politics in Pakistan, polarising forces to an extent never seen before. The Pakistan Peoples Party, the party of the Bhuttos, is now openly supporting the stand of the military regime in support of the Americans. So is the Mutihida Qaumi Movement (MQM) the party of the immigrants with a mass base in Sind cities.

In the North West Frontier province, the National Awami Party, the largest party of the Pushtuns has also changed sides - from opposing the military regime to openly supporting it.

Before 11th September the PPP and ANP openly opposed the military regime and were part of the Alliance For Restoration of Democracy (ARD).

The PPP also tried its best to please the military regime by participating in demonstrations on the so-called Solidarity Day called by General Musharraf on 27th September.

Some of the smaller alliances of the radical and Stalinist parties are also openly supporting the standpoint of the military regime. "The US must be supported to root out terrorism" is the cry from these ex-left parties justifying their support for the regime. These "left" parties include the National Workers Party and Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party (Communist Workers Peasant Party). They have now abandoned their anti-US sloganeering.

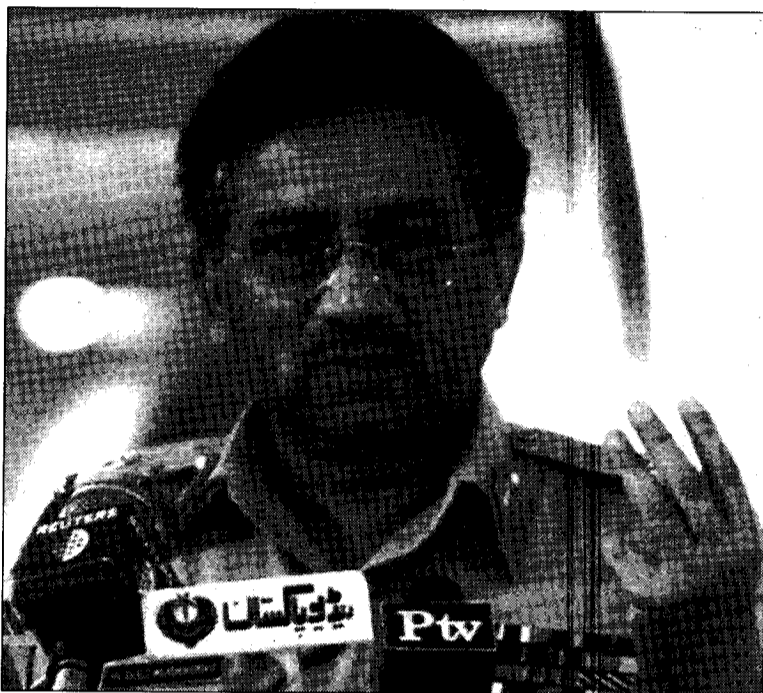
The Muslim League of ex Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the other hand is trailing behind the religious fundamentalists, and is half-heartedly supporting the Taliban and opposing the military regime's support for Bush.

The religious fundamentalist forces are propagandising for all out support for Osama Bin Laden and an all out war. Over 50,000 demonstrated in Quetta on 2nd October in favor of the Taliban led by Jamiat Ulama Islam, a religious party that has openly supported the Taliban from the beginning. It was an ally of Benazir Bhutto's PPP while it was in power from 1994 to 1996. It was this period when the Taliban took over Afghanistan.

As she comes on side with the military regime, Benazir Bhutto is now claiming that she was "about to go against" the Taliban regime in 1996, when she was overthrown.

In fact it was her period in office which paved the way for the Taliban taking over in Kabul. The first act of the Taliban at the time was to hang the body of Dr. Najibullah in the main centre of Kabul for a few days, after he had been taken out of the United Nations office and killed.

Nobody, not the UN, the Americans or Benazir Bhutto, had anything special to say about this barbarian act of the Taliban. Dr. Najibullah had been the head of Afghanistan government from 1988 to 1992, until he was overthrown by the Mujahadeen in 1992, and took



Hypocrites united in supporting war effort: Musharraf and (below) Bhutto

refuge for four years at UN headquarters.

The military regime has for the first time hypocritically condemned the terrorist attack on the Indian held Kashmir assembly where in a suicide attack, 32 were killed.

The Jaish Mohammed, a religious fanatic group, which has claimed responsibility for this brutal attack, has a base in Pakistan. The regime could no longer say the attack in Srinagar was part of the "national struggle" but that the attack in New York was a "terrorist attack".

Jaish Mohammed's leader Masood Azhar was released only two years before from an Indian jail on the demand of the hijackers of an Indian plane. After his entry to Pakistan from Afghanistan, he was allowed to form the Jaish Mohammed group, collect funds from all over and to train the terrorists in Pakistan. Most small shops all over Pakistan have a box inside with an appeal to help the Kashmir Mujahadeen with funds.

The Kashmir Mujahadeen has nothing to do with the national struggle of Kashmir, but plans to make Kashmir another Afghanistan, controlled by a new Taliban. They had the full support of the Pakistani state under the military and under the previous civil governments of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto.

From a position of full support of the Taliban and Mujahadeen, the military regime has taken a U-turn to support the even bigger terror, US imperialism, to carry an all out attack on the Afghanistan people.

The 11th September attack has also polarised the organisations of civil society. Some are taking a position of No to War but yes to "ameasured response". This position was taken by a group led by former chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and renowned human rights activist Asma Jahangir.

Her article in the Daily Dawn on 30th September revealed her position quite clearly. On the other side, many other are advocating a position of "No to War; No to



Terrorism", condemning both and declaring their solidarity openly with the international peace movement. Fareeda Shaheed of Shirkat Ghah and Nighar Ahmed of the Aurat Foundation lead this trend.

The Labour Party Pakistan position is very close to the position of "No to War; No to terrorism".

We have no confidence in the UN to solve this issue by legalising the war on Afghanistan. Nor will we support the creation of International Criminal Courts (ICC), as this will be another institution for the cover of the crimes of the US government.

From the very first day, the LPP condemned both the terrorist attack and the policies of US imperialism carried out in the past against the colonial countries.

The LPP would never justify the terrorist attack for any reason. But we are also consistent in our opposition to the methods and program of US Imperialism.

The LPP was already organizing the anti IMF and World Bank movement in Pakistan. It also started to build a peace movement as like others, it is anticipating a fully-fledged war on Afghanistan.

The LPP has to oppose religious fundamentalism and the powers that were harbouring it, mainly the military regime of Pakistan in general and the ISI (Inter Services

Taliban: no longer seen as useful to US or Pakistan's generals



Intelligence) in particular.

Unlike the others we did not support the 'lesser evil' philosophy. More and more political trends from right to left are justifying their betrayals in the name of having no choice but to support the 'lesser evil'. The US is supporting the lesser evil (the Pakistan military regime) in comparison to the Taliban. Pakistan is supporting the lesser evil (the US), according to General Musharraf in his televised speech.

The position of the official labour movement is also more and more to support the military regime. The Pakistan Workers Confederation main leadership has openly supported the military regime, with an appeal to the US not to attack Afghanistan.

The trade union leaders within the PWC who are members of LPP are waging a fight within the labour movement against support for the war. These trade union leaders, including Yousaf Baluch, are receiving a good hearing from the workers.

The religious fundamentalists have a different level of influence in different parts of the country. They are now losing ground in the cities, mainly Lahore and in Karachi to. But they are in a more favourable position in the main cities near Afghanistan like Peshawar and Quetta.

They are also making headway in the small towns and villages across Pakistan. The war has not yet started but the war within the political organisations is reaching new heights.

The most commonly asked question is "what option did the military regime have"? And what difference could American aid make to the Pakistani military regime?

It is clear that the capitalist economy internationally is in a period of crisis. Through different institutions like the IMF and World Bank they had made agreements that put the entire burden on the already sinking economies of the third world countries.

Against these injustices, a strong anti capitalist movement was developing in the advanced countries. We saw hundreds and thousands of workers in different parts of the advanced world protesting in anti capitalist demonstrations.

After 11th September, it is clear that American government has got new friends. They have lifted sanctions against Pakistan and have announced a good friendship relationship with the military regime.

The general impression is created that the American aid would help the sick economy of Pakistan. But this is not true. Pakistan's exports have been deeply affected since September 11th. Many export orders have been cancelled or postponed.

The main crisis of the Pakistan economy is productivity. That will decrease even further. All the conditions of the IMF and World Bank have made the life of the workers and peasants even worse than before the military took over in October 1999. In these circumstances, the revival of the Pakistan economy does not seem possible - even if US imperialism pumps in massive injections.

Aid will make the life of the rich and the ruling class better, but not the life of the workers. That was the case in the eighties. Over \$30 billion were pumped into the Pakistan economy after the Russians entered Afghanistan.

This massive amount did not change the life of the masses. But it did help the generals and their sons and daughters to become the new rich. We will see many more Ijazul Haqs (son of General Zia UL Haq, the military dictator from 1977 to 1988) and Hamayoons (son of another military general close to Zia).

They are both now very rich and own factories and many big houses. The American aid (if it comes) will be a real treat for the military generals.

US aid will make a difference to the possible length of the military regime. Before 11th September, the regime was losing its social base quite rapidly. But the terrorist attack and its U turn towards American imperialism has earned Musharraf good new political friends like the PPP. The regime has strengthened its position for the time being.

But once the war starts, the mood can change within the military where at present it seems there's total support for Musharraf's position.

There are religious fundamentalist elements within the army top ranks, who have been forced by the pressure of the events to keep quiet - but they have not been kicked out of the army. Once the war starts, the anti American feelings can gain more of a social base.

It seems very likely that the Taliban regime will lose power soon. This will definitely boost the morale of the military regime and help them to remain in power longer than the expected three years.

The U-turn of the military regime in favour of the US has many negative aspects. It has given a new life to the fanatic forces. It has endangered the life of the progressive and left forces within Pakistan.

The labour movement has to oppose American intervention. But it cannot close its eyes to the growing influence of the religious fundamentalists.

The religious fundamentalist forces are in contradiction with US imperialism, but workers cannot gain by siding with either of these forces against the other.

# Attacks derail plans of Italian campaigners

**Flavia D'Angeli**

In the first few days of September it seemed clear that we were heading for a hot autumn in Italy.

After Genoa itself, there were the huge demonstrations at the end of July against state repression. The Italian anti-globalisation movement was constantly in the newspaper headlines of the newspapers for the whole of August.

In the first days of September, it was apparent that all the ingredients were present for the beginnings of a strong social movement organising itself. This embryonic movement obviously had the capability of putting the Berlusconi government in difficulties.

In every town, and also small villages, Social Forums were created, mirroring the Genoa Social Forum which had grown up in the run up to the international demonstration in July.

These formations grouped together various community organisations and centres, unions, and political organisations, as well as a large number of people not involved in any organisation.

The initial meetings showed what great potential there was, with more than 1,000 people attending each of the Rome, Naples, and Milan meetings.

At the same time, the Genoa Social Forum (GSF), for its part, meeting on September 9-10, decided to initiate a process of creating an Italian Social Forum.

This was not simply to be made up of the national organisations which co-ordinated the Genoa demonstrations, but also involving the various local Forums, and thus the construction of a broader and broader movement.

In this context, the events of September 11 in the United States and the dynamic of Nato towards war came as a real shock. The movement was immediately able to react to the international crisis and place these issues at the centre of its thinking and of its mobilisations, both rejecting terrorism and opposing war.

The movement thus represented an alternative to the anti-Islamic and racist crusade, of which Berlusconi has made himself the spokesperson, but which has not met any real opposition from the moderate left.

The "anti-globalisers" have been able to keep open spaces for the democratic expression of social conflict demonstrating in various towns from September 20 onwards. Several thousand people marched in Rome



*Movement against globalisation grew before Genoa, and was boosted by protests at police violence*

Bologna and Turin and then 30,000 took part in a major mobilisation against the NATO summit in Naples on September 27.

Rifondazione Comunista has been fully involved in this course of mobilisations. Its national demonstration last Saturday which obviously itself became an anti-war demonstration, drew 50,000 people.

The whole agenda of the movement, therefore, has been upset by the events of September 11. It is obviously not straightforward to move from a critique of neo-liberal globalisation to opposition to war and to the imperialist offensive.

This shift requires a leap of elaboration and analysis on the part of a large section of those forces who have been the actors who at the forefront of the mobilisations of the last period. From this point of view the national assembly of the movement, which has been called in Florence on 20-21 October, will be an important moment in testing the movement's capability for resistance and riposte.

At the same time the coming weeks present rich possibilities for the further development of mobilisations.

On the one hand the traditional march for peace from Perugia to Assisi on October 14 this year will see a new protagonist in the anti-globalisation movement which represents the possibility of broadening it out to involve a significant pacifist element.

Pacifism has remained a strong sentiment in Italian society since the Kosovo war.

On the other hand there is the concrete possibility of a convergence with social struggles against the employers' policies, backed up by the budget presented by the right-wing government.

The crucial factor from this point of view is that an industry-wide engineering strike has been called on

November 9, while there is a national demonstration against the World Trade Organisation organised by the GSF the following day.

The strike has been called by the FIOM union which is part of the Genoa Social Forum and was an important actor in the Genoa demonstration.

Now the challenge is for the antiglobalisation movement and Fiom to identify concrete forms of co-ordina-

tion and interaction of the two mobilisations, and common points of in their respective platforms.

If demands ranging from opposition to the war to opposition to neoliberal policies of both the WTO and of Confindustria (the Italian employers' confederation) can become part of both mobilisations the movement will have crossed another frontier - by no means an unimportant one.

## Only mass action and democracy can defeat terrorism

**From the National Secretariat of Rifondazione Comunista, Italy**

The national secretariat confirms our strongest condemnation of the terrible attack which has convulsed the cities of New York and Washington in which thousands of people have been killed.

Our opposition to terrorism is indomitable and absolute.

Our grief for the innocent victims and our solidarity to their families and to the people of the USA hit by this tragedy are sincere convictions. This tragedy will weigh heavily on the international equilibrium, on world politics, on our own initiatives.

In a dramatic, unexpected way, there follow deep reflections on what will be the future scenarios and on the crisis of the processes of globalisation. Immediately, we affirm the

need to stop the potential descent into a destructive spiral of further violence and devastation.

Our perspective is that the response must not be a further shutting off of the fortress of the West against the rest of the planet, in the name of defence against its enemies.

Such a response would not only be mistaken but ineffective in stopping the explosion of blind and destructive violence, as this tragedy shows. We think, in contrast, that we must look to the background, to dialogue and comprehension between diverse cultures.

We must, therefore, say no to retaliatory actions and, at the same time, to all kinds of fundamentalism whether they be religious, political, ideological or "imperial".

We think that the response must not be one of a further restriction on the space for democratic political action.

## US Frankenstein attacked by its own monster

**Alain Krivine MEP, Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) France**

HORROR and indignation... There are no other words to describe the violent attacks which have just struck New York and Washington.

No cause can ever justify such a monstrous act, aimed at making as many civilian victims as possible.

Now we have to understand why there is such denial of the motives behind the attacks. George Bush's military cheer-leading can not, in this regard, make the world forget the responsibility of the great powers, and the American empire particularly, for unleashing the violence which has put the planet permanently on the edge of the abyss.

To guarantee unlimited power for a handful of industrial and financial giants, these powers have never hesitated to destroy Third World economies, to support the worst dictatorships while they incited coups d'etat themselves, to hit with embargoes those countries they have taken upon themselves to label "outlaws", even to bomb them when it suits them.

Neo-liberal globalisation has thrown entire regions into total chaos. They have happily financed and armed pawns, temporarily disguised as "freedom fighters".

And since it came to office, the new American administration has made a point of opposing any treaty which might impede its hegemonic freedom to act - even opposing ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

No one knows, so far, who is behind the murderous actions of September 11.

But it is not unlikely that a Frankenstein's monster may have turned against its creator, using that creator's own weapons against it: blind cynicism, brutal force, sophisticated military technology and financial power.

How, for example, can we ignore the fact that Saudi billionaire Bin Laden, toward whom so many accusing fingers are pointing, would never have found himself leading a terrorist multinational without initial help from the CIA?

This must move us to vigilance, that no one can begin taking advantage of the mood created today, to direct public outrage against the Muslim world, the Palestinians or Arab peoples, not to mention immigrant peoples, the designated targets of the Vigipirate plan, [French public security "anti-terrorist" crackdown during the Gulf War and other crises - trans.] which has just been reactivated

September 12, 2001



*Anti-war protest in Turkey*

On the contrary, we relaunch the idea that the only antidote to violence is democratic participation by the mass of people.

We need to expunge war from history, to find new responses to the piercing contradictions of the world today.

We believe that the movement against capitalist globalisation confronts the crucial question, representing a possibility of beginning a process of criticism and

transformation of politics and the economy, which can give hope of escaping from the crazy logic of war and destruction.

At this hour and on this day, all our territorial organisations, our institu-

tional representatives, jointly with the political and social democratic forces, are pledged to participate in initiatives of mobilisation and of discussion about what is developing in as many cities and workplaces as possible.

At the same time, the Liberazione festivals which are ongoing represent a garison of democracy in which we can meet and build relationships and begin initiatives in the same direction.

# Palestinians under fire as Zionists exploit war drive

This article was written for the early October edition of the US newspaper *Socialist Action*. While there have been further twists and turns in the situation both on the ground in Israel and Palestine, and in the relations between the Israeli state and the US government since, the fundamental issues that are examined here remain pertinent.

**Gerry Foley**

The unilateral ceasefire decreed by Yasser Arafat on Sept. 18 and the subsequent order by the Zionist government to withdraw Israeli troops from the areas ceded to the Palestinian Authority reflect the political pressures fostered by the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Since Arafat apparently got no promises of any new real concessions in return, his unilateral ceasefire was a retreat. At the same time, he announced his intention to join the "Alliance Against Terrorism" sponsored by the United States.

But the Zionists also had to pull back from the offensive they had launched in the wake of the slaughter in New York.

The ruthlessness of their onslaught was highlighted in the remarks of the Israeli minister of defense, Benjamin Ben Eliezer, who boasted to the Hebrew daily *Yedioth Aharonoth* on Sept. 14: "It is a fact that we have killed 14 Palestinians in Jenin, Kabatyeh, and Tammun, with the world remaining absolutely silent. It's a disaster for Arafat."

On Sept. 16, the Israeli army invaded the centre of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, shooting up PA security posts as well as private homes, killing one Palestinian and wounding five.

Despite Arafat's attempt to pull back, the more intransigent organizations of the Palestinian movement, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, refused to accept Arafat's ceasefire, and the prospects for any renewal of negotiations seemed precarious indeed.

The U.S. rulers have had



some success in exploiting the revulsion against the ruthless assaults on American civilians to inflict a political setback on the national liberation movements in the Middle East. But they are not yet in a position to launch a major military assault on these movements, despite their blood-thirsty rhetoric.

Therefore, U.S. imperialism still has to manoeuvre, negotiate, and offer some concessions, to the apparent disappointment of the right-wing Zionist government, which had taken advantage of the shock created by the slaughter in New York and Washington to step up its attacks on the Palestinian people.

## A precarious game of alliances

The Israeli premier, Ariel Sharon, had gone so far as to equate Arafat with the Islamic zealot Osama Bin Laden, named by the U.S. administration as the author of the murderous attacks on civilians in the United States.

But well-informed and critical news media, like the British *Guardian*, reported that the U.S. authorities considered Sharon's denunciation of Arafat as unpolitic and sought instead to drag the Palestinian leader into their "antiterrorist alliance."

For the moment, the American rulers seem to have achieved this objective. But they have not overcome

their fundamental dilemma. Disillusion with the fruits of the Oslo Peace accords forced Arafat to go along with the Palestinian uprising against Israel for fear of being swept aside.

Critical Palestinian observers have pointed out that he is not in control of the uprising, and has not even tried to lead it. For the lack of an alternative leadership with an effective program, they have warned, the movement is in danger of anarchy and exhaustion.

In order to win the support of the Palestinian masses, Arafat has to show some significant fruits of "negotiations." But he cannot do that so long as the Zionist rulers of Israel refuse to give up their historic ambitions of maintaining a state for Jews alone.

That is shown by the actual results of the Oslo Peace Accords. The Zionists really gave up nothing and in fact inflicted more suffering on the Palestinians.

U.S. imperialism has always played and continues to play a precarious game of combining an alliance with the Zionists, along with collaboration with reactionary and opportunist forces in the Arab and Muslim world in order to hold back national liberation movements in the area.

The "Alliance Against Terrorism" is the latest gambit in this game.

The Gulf War alliance against Saddam Hussein was a major gain for imperialism. It enabled the United States for the first time to establish

U.S. bases on the Arabian peninsula.

Washington is now clearly anxious to maintain and deepen its achievement. It hopes to do that by managing to include the Zionist state openly in the "Alliance." At the time of the Gulf War, it had to keep Israel in the closet in order to get the collaboration of the reactionary Arab regimes.

Both the suicide bombings aimed by Islamic fundamentalists against Israeli civilians, as well as the attacks by Islamic zealots in the United States, have politically strengthened Washington's hand for the moment. However, they have not changed the basic terms of the game.

It is already clear that if the U.S. can include Israel in the "Alliance," they are going to have, at least, to subject the Zionists to some arm twisting and keep them in the background.

U.S. military strikes against real or alleged enemies in the Middle East risk blowing its cards off the table and provoking a challenge to imperialist control of this part of the world far greater than anything it has faced up until now.

## Palestinian officials condemn WTC bombing

As for the Palestinians and the neighboring Arab peoples, they have recognized that the slaughter in the United States was no vic-



Sharon: taking advantage of situation to send in tanks

Bin Laden was foreign to most Palestinians. He certainly is not seen as any kind of folk hero or a saviour that people have any faith in.

"His photos have never been lifted in demonstrations, and he has never been mentioned in statements of the various Palestinian organisations, including the radical Islamic ones like Hamas and Islamic Jihad."

Bin Laden has no history of supporting the Palestinians. They were no less oppressed by Zionism when he collaborated with the CIA in Afghanistan.

The origins of his antagonism to the U.S. were religious, without expressing opposition to imperialism or even Zionism as such.

In fact, in its Sept. 19 issue, *L'Orient Le Jour*, a French-language newspaper published in Lebanon, reported a protest by the Algerian government that the United States had ignored Islamic fundamentalist terrorism in its country that cost the lives of over 100,000 people – and still refused to extradite a terrorist responsible for a car-bomb that killed 44 people. So much for the "Alliance Against Terrorism." Needless to say, the Algerian statement was not reported in the big press in the imperialist countries.

An editorial in the same issue of *L'Orient Le Jour* pointed to the fact that the United States's new allies against "terrorism" are really a basket of crabs that cannot long be held together and can even bite the hands of their imperialist sponsor – as Bin Laden has.

That is obvious. It is also evident that the U.S. government is playing a game that it cannot control forever. If at the moment it is emboldened, that only means that the dangers for the American people, as well as for the peoples and mass movements of the Middle East, have increased.

In Palestine itself, the front line of the struggle against imperialism in the region, the best political answer to the imperialists' attempts to pit one religious-political group against another is to renew the fight for a democratic, secular state in which all citizens would have equal rights, regardless of their religious identification.

**Statement of  
Central  
Secretariat of  
Inquilabi  
Communist  
Sangathan (Indian  
Section of Fourth  
International)**

# Indian left opposes war drive Why Marxists oppose terrorism

**A**s Revolutionary Marxists we unequivocally condemn the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. The killing of thousands of ordinary working people is absolutely criminal and has nothing whatsoever to do with the struggle for human liberation in any form in any part of the world.

Indeed, this atrocity will undoubtedly make this struggle more difficult and aid the forces of capitalist reaction, something that progressive Indians have been seeing over the years in Kashmir. There, too, the rise of extremely communal and terrorist forces has weakened the progressive struggle for Kashmir's national unity and self-determination.

In occupied Palestine, there is apparently no shortage of young men willing to sacrifice themselves as human bombs against the Israeli population. However, apart from being morally repugnant, such indiscriminate acts are a complete political dead-end.

Each suicide bomber who carries out his or her mission in an Israeli town, is actually weakening the Palestinian struggle and helping strengthen the hand of the Israeli regime and its US backers.

Such acts as indiscriminate bomb blasts, the use of suicide bombers, etc., fail in



*Young Palestinians fight back: their revolt is part of the mass intifada against Zionist rule*

their objectives, because even when the event results in the death of a few notorious oppressors, the ruling classes find replacements, while they exploit cynically the event to draw attention away from the far greater acts of terrorism their state-sanctioned, legitimate violence involves.

**T**hus, were the mass action based intifada to be replaced by such acts, the likely consequence would be, the death, not only of a few hated figures, but also of innocent civilians, which in turn would be powerful elements in driving the Israeli

masses towards the most reactionary responses and inhibit the development of any radical opposition forces among them.

Throughout the history of the modern socialist movement, revolutionary Marxists have carried out a fierce polemic against the policy of assassination that is, the killing of hated figures of an oppressive regime. Our objection to this kind of terrorism is not only based on morality - but on the grounds that it simply does not work.

The ruling class can always replace individuals. This is true even of authoritarian regimes. This is therefore particularly the case in bourgeois democracies. However devoid of real popular control be a bourgeois democracy, with the great weakening of a genuine socialist democratic alternative, the popular masses tend to identify substantially with it.

To carryout terrorist attacks in a bourgeois democracy creates a hostile impression in the mind of significant sections of the masses about even the best of causes.

**F**urthermore and most importantly, employed as a strategy, such terrorist acts actually demobilise the mass movement. Only the struggle of the masses can change society.

The combat of a small band of terrorist-avengers relegates the masses to the sidelines and makes them mere spectators of a contest between the terrorists and the regime, rather than participants in their own liberation. Even morally speaking, such acts are therefore repugnant, insofar as they go against the self-emancipatory struggles

Moreover, the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon represent a completely different kind of terrorism: the wanton and indiscriminate killing of civilians is part of the methodology of imperialism

and its accomplices, not of the progressive forces fighting for liberation from this inhuman system.

Those who have organised these attacks are no part of any progressive anti-imperialist struggle.

**W**e totally differ from those like CPI(M) leader

Prakash Karat or others, who see in this terrorism an extreme form of anti-imperialism.

In a struggle between two extreme reactionaries, both products of late capitalism, an age of political, economic,

moral degeneration of world capitalism, it is not the duty of revolutionary Marxists to choose the lesser evil between them, but to point out that the way ahead lies through fighting both of them.

It might be argued that even such terrorism is de facto anti-imperialist. This is to confuse between the objective conditions that gave rise to such political movements, and their actual character.

There is a need to distinguish between the anti-Shah struggles of the Iranian masses in 1979, and the reactionary forces, led and symbolised by Khomeini, who seized the leadership of that struggle.

In the same way, there is a need to distinguish between progressive struggles, even when they take recourse to terror - for example the IRA at various times, different national liberation movements, and Maoist political currents in different countries - and clearly reactionary movements.

The situation is more complex in non-imperialist countries, where even right-wing forces, including those using terrorism, can use anti-imperialist rhetoric. But in judging them, one has to

clearly understand the relationship between such forces and the working class and other progressive forces of the countries concerned.

Revolutionary Marxists oppose any "war on terrorism". Military attacks by the US and its imperialist allies on the alleged terrorists and/or states that allegedly harbour them will not end acts of terrorism.

On the contrary, such a war will only result in more loss of innocent lives, and deepen the nationalist hatred of Americans that has provided a recruiting ground for the organisers of terrorist acts of the World Trade Centre type.

**W**e condemn the diplomatic and military games being played by India and Pakistan. Both sides are trying to turn the sudden intensification of US gaze near South Asia to their advantage by offering military aid to the US in return for US backing on Kashmir.

Socialists are struggling for a world that is free of violence, oppression and exploitation. The only force which can accomplish this tremendous historic task is the working class and oppressed masses of the world.

Terrorism has no part in this struggle. But nor can the toiling people line-up with imperialism when, in the name of fighting terrorism, it seeks to smash all resistance to its domination, and to destroy all vestiges of civil liberties and democratic rights, thereby becoming the biggest terrorist outfit itself.

*[This article has been extracted from a longer statement by the ICS]*

## Peace movement slams Vajpayee response

The Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) condemns the indiscriminate mass murder perpetrated in the USA on 11 September, 2001 using hijacked passenger aircraft as weapons.

CNDP joins the world in expressing its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and the American people. There can be no justification for mass murder committed either by stateless fanatical groups or by states.

This is the reason that the peace movement, all over the world, opposes weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

September 11 has shown that mass murder today does not need sophisticated technology. Such barbaric activity poisons all peace processes, and sets back all efforts at disarmament.

This crime also shows that neither nuclear weapons nor defence shields like National Missile Defence provide any additional 'security'.

There will be forces in the United States government and elsewhere calling for retaliatory strikes and reprisals. Any response that does not distinguish between perpetrators and innocent people will be no different from the barbaric acts of 11th September that have drawn justified worldwide condemnation.

It is also necessary to distinguish between the acts of terrorism and the causes driving it. Addressing only terrorist acts will not stop the current spiral of violence. Negotiated and just settlements of various conflicts around the world are the only long term guarantees for peace and against terrorism.

It appears that the United States, is now preparing for unilateral action in Afghanistan. CNDP strongly believes that any such action should only be under the aegis of the UN.

CNDP believes that India should not be a party to such unilateral US action and, deplores the Vajpayee government's willingness to compromise India's sovereignty.

## Bombay unions oppose imperialist war drive

We strongly condemn the killing of civilians in the terrorist attacks carried out in the US on 11 September 2001, and all other acts of terrorism against innocent civilians.

We believe it is crucially important to give justice to the victims of such attacks as well as eliminate the causes of acts of terrorism to prevent them from occurring in future.

We note that US policies in the so-called Middle East have played a major role in leading to the attacks of September 11. In particular:

From 1979 onwards, the US funded, armed and trained Osama bin Laden, the Taliban and other jihadi groups in Afghanistan through the Pakistani ISI, which it also supported. Even on 27 September 2001, The Wall Street Journal reported that former president George Bush, the father of the present President George Bush (Jr), still has substantial business connections with the bin Laden family.

The US has undermined secular, democratic movements and governments - for example, overthrowing the democratic government of Mossadegh in Iran in 1953 and installing the brutal dictatorship of Shah Reza Pahlevi, providing unlimited support to the suppression of the Palestinian liberation struggle by the Zionist state of Israel, and so on.

These policies have fuelled the growth of fundamentalist and communal forces.

The US and UK have bombed Iraq repeatedly for the past ten years, killing over 200,000 Iraqis. In addition, US-imposed sanctions have killed at least 1 million civilians, more than half of them children. In August 1998, the US bombed a pharmaceutical factory producing the bulk of Sudan's life-saving medicines, as a result of which

hundreds of thousands of people - again, many of them children - have died. These and similar atrocities fuel the anger which produces recruits for terrorist groups.

We condemn the racist and communal attacks against Arabs, Muslims and others which have followed the attacks of September 11. We oppose all attacks on civil liberties carried out in the name of the war against terrorism, as well as the diversion of tax-payers' money from health-care, education and social welfare to military budgets.

We strongly oppose any military strikes against Afghanistan, Iraq or any other country. These would only result in the killing of more innocent civilians as well as retaliatory acts of terrorism against civilians in the countries carrying out or supporting the strikes. Instead, we call on the UN to:

- produce a consistent definition of 'acts of terrorism' which does not depend on the race, religion, nationality or any other characteristic of the perpetrator or victims; and

- speedily set up a permanent International Criminal Court, as resolved in 1998, which can try, and if convicted punish, perpetrators of acts of terrorism and other crimes against humanity, as well as those who provide them with material support.

We call upon trade unions and workers everywhere to support these demands in order to avert a catastrophic escalation in violence and terrorism worldwide.

● **The Trade Union Solidarity Committee (TUSC) is a co-ordination of about 25 independent/unaffiliated/internal unions in the Bombay region.**

# Chechens pay price of Bush's coalition with butcher Putin

**A Dirty War, by Anna Politkovskaya, Harvill Press, £12**

**Reviewed by Sheila Malone**

Russian president Vladimir Putin has always called his present war against independence fighters in Chechnya a "war against international terrorism". His stated pretext for this was an incursion into neighbouring Dagestan by some Chechen separatists claiming adherence to Wahhabite Islam, and a series of bombings in Moscow which killed over 200 people.

These bombings were blamed on "Chechen terrorists" said to be linked to none other than Osama bin Laden – although they are widely thought in Russia to be the work of Putin's own secret police, the FSB.

And the fighters in Dagestan turned out to have been financed by Kremlin insider, millionaire businessman and alleged arms dealer Boris Berezovski.

Nevertheless, a government-led media campaign whipped up anti-Chechen feeling throughout Russia and in October 1999 Federal troops were sent to the Caucasus. The brutality of the occupying forces and the imposition of a Moscow-friendly regime in Chechnya answerable to the FSB have met with sustained resistance.

Anna Politkovskaya is one of the few courageous Russian reporters who went herself to discover the truth about the war. Her book, *A Dirty War* gathers together the articles she wrote for the Russian Newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* between the summer of 1999 and autumn 2000.

The book does not give answers or overall solutions to the war. Instead Politkovskaya offers us damning criticism and passionate condemnation of its realities, both in her own commentaries and through the voices of its heroes and villains, victors and victims, as they speak here for themselves.

During the build-up to the war, Politkovskaya writes scathingly of the cynicism and corruption of much of the Russian military already damaged and demoralised by the previous war, together with compassion for the frightened, unwilling conscripts about to be sent wholly unprepared into combat.

Then there are the Soldiers Mothers Committees – women in Russia who are not prepared to see their sons killed and maimed in a cruel, unwinnable war. Instead they take direct action and travel



themselves to the battle zones and forcibly bring them back home.

Sometimes these are mothers who have already had sons lost or disabled in the previous war, like Lydia Burmistrova:

"I brought my sons up by myself. The state gave me nothing, not a kopek. But when they needed someone to die for them, then they were at the door, in a flash.

"The regime couldn't resolve the conflict itself, so they decided to go to war. Now we must hand over our children to correct other people's mistakes. Never."

Nothing has really prepared Politkovskaya for the suffering she witnesses when she arrives in Chechnya. Grozny, the capital has been called "the Hiroshima of the Caucasus".

The centre is completely flattened, a wasteland of rubble, peppered with lethal or horribly maiming landmines. Here the remaining population survive in cellars or on the town's outskirts.

Until recently no water, heating, sewerage or communications systems remained intact, although efforts have been made to restore some gas and water supplies. Besides this destruction, people also live in fear of constant Russian sniping.

Then there are the "zachistki" or "clean-ups" – arbitrary arrests and detentions, usually involving beatings and sometimes deaths of anyone accused of supporting the guerrillas. And in the night come the looters, allegedly from both sides, who have found no other way to survive in this chaos.

Given similar conditions in other towns and villages up to 250,000 – nearly one quarter of the population – have fled the country during

fighting and live in appalling conditions of hunger, cold and disease in refugee camps in neighbouring Ingushetia.

One of the most shocking and saddening stories in the book concerns the refused evacuation of the Grozny Old Peoples Home – leaving up to 100 old, sick and infirm people to endure the bombardment of the city.

Politkovskaya's anger boils over when she discovers this is not due merely to cold inhumanity, but is because a local bureaucrat fears his previous embezzlement of funds will be discovered in the home's files.

Yet his official explanation is that such evacuations could be highly dangerous because "terrorists might thereby enter Russian territory from Chechnya" – presumably disguised as busloads of pensioners.

Politkovskaya has a splendid nose for ferreting out those who are simply profiting from the economic chaos and social breakdown caused by the war.

But she also recounts many tales of self-sacrifice, solidarity and courage – like that of the most popular doctor in Chechnya, Salman Yandarov, who gave up his wealthy practice in St Petersburg to return to his homeland, and now daily risks his life working in hospitals lacking basic medicines and equipment.

She describes the many teachers carrying on their lessons in bombed out buildings and the workers who take it in turns round the clock to guard their ruined factories from looters, while they wait for rebuilding material to arrive from Moscow – which never comes.

One reason behind Chechen sep-



*Politkovskaya captures the horror of Grozny's devastation – and the corruption that has accompanied the war.*

of people in Chechnya do not benefit at all from the thousands of tons of oil illegally shipped out of the country, nor from the endless proliferation of arms.

At the same time it is proved by the involvement of people like Berezovski that the corruption trail goes right to the top. It is people in Moscow itself who are profiting most from this very dirty war.

In recent weeks Putin has mouthed some words about a ceasefire and talks with ousted president Aslan Maskhadov. But his real message, and the one delivered to the US and world leaders after September 11 has been clear:

"I have been fighting terrorism for years in Chechnya. Now you in the West must keep quiet about alleged killing, atrocities and human rights abuses down there. Then I will, of course let you use my old military bases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to do whatever you want in Afghanistan in pursuit of your own recently proclaimed 'war on terrorism'".

The human tragedy behind this cynical horse-trading is not only that Soviet troops also entered Afghanistan in 1979 from Uzbekistan, and were bogged down for 10 years in a war renowned for its savagery on both sides. Tens of thousands died, the country was torn apart and ruined and the Soviet Union forced eventually to withdraw.

It is also the case that over the last 10 years Russia has been caught up in and bogged down in two equally brutal and unwinnable wars in Chechnya. Up to 50,000 died in the 1994-6 invasion and an estimated 50 Russian soldiers a week and many more – mostly civilian – Chechens are dying in Putin's so-called "war against international terrorism" of today.

Yet this has always been a war largely ignored by world leaders and unreported in the world's press. The Council of Europe did suspend (and then restore) Russian voting rights for a brief period of a few months, and anti-war and human rights organisations continue to campaign for an end to the conflict.

But the US and UK and Blair in particular have always seen Putin as a good man to do business with – a favoured ally. Now that his support for their war coalition is absolutely vital the carte blanche demanded over Chechnya will easily be granted, and the likely consequence, as with all hidden wars will be an escalation.

Meanwhile Politkovskaya's book is a moving and valuable testament to the people who actually suffer from its cruelty and injustice.

The most common graffiti on the walls of Russian conscripts' quarters are simply "I want to go home"; the most common plea of the Chechens "Please leave us alone". Their voices are the strongest arguments for an immediate withdrawal of federal troops and the granting of Chechen independence.

arartists bid for independence as the Soviet Union broke up in 1991 was that oil and gas reserves and a skilled workforce would help ensure viability as a separate state.

In reality, lack of recognition and therefore of aid and investment from Russia and the rest of the world prevented the new Republic from rebuilding itself.

But Politkovskaya also sees the weakness of Chechnya's own leaders as partly responsible. She argues that both former presidents Dudayev and Maskhadov handed out oil wells as booty to their fellow fighters. In fact it is more likely that neither of them were able to control growing lawlessness and corruption caused by the war.

Chechnya's own oil deposits are now much depleted, but syphoning off from the Baku-Novorossiisk pipeline is widespread and lucrative. Local Chechen and Russian gangs simply bore holes in the pipe, drain the oil into pits in the ground and burn off the unwanted fuel oil before selling off the remaining prize. There are hundreds of such "barns" with their smoking "samovars" in Chechnya, – and plenty of buyers in the illegal trade.

The federal troops turn a blind eye – maybe in exchange for Chechen silence over the astonishingly corrupt but also widespread and lucrative practice by the Russians in Chechnya of selling off their own weaponry to the guerrillas they are fighting.

As one Chechen dealer boasted after stocking up on automatic weapons, grenades and ammunition, "I could have bought a tank from them if I'd wanted to". Who knows, he was probably right.

What is clear is that the majority

# Terror as usual – Israeli style

**SINCE September 11, the world's press has been filled with eye-witness accounts of the events of September 11 in New York and the aftermath. But this grim result of terrorism should not be allowed to obscure the daily reality of state terror wielded by the Zionist state in its efforts to maintain its control over the dispossessed Palestinian population. The following eye-witness account from a Palestinian woman – who for understandable reasons does not want her name revealed – describing recent events in Ramallah helps to redress the balance.**

**Y**ou would not believe what we have been through two days ago. I saw death with my own eyes and to tell you the truth it was not pleasant. I thought to write you all about it just as an example of what people have to go through here every day.

I finished my course in Birzeit on Monday, my last three days were very intensive where I had 15 hours of teaching. In celebration, I decided to go out with my mother and sister to my cousin's on the outskirts of Ramallah. The building is on the edge of town, right opposite to one of the Israeli firing posts.

So we drove to her house and went to the third floor where she lives. We spent a really pleasant time and then decided to leave around 8:30 in the evening.

Reem, my sister, went first because she drives the car, and then my mother and I followed down the stairs.

We got to the bottom of the stairs, Reem was just outside the main doors of the build-

ing and she switched on the car from a distance, with the car remote key, at that exact moment, the Israelis started firing heavily at us.

**W**hat seems to have happened is that, as Reem was leaving the building, the Israelis saw some Palestinian policemen passing by the same building.

So the Israelis started showering the entire neighbourhood with bullets using machine guns. However, we did not see the policemen because they've already passed the main door of the building and only saw the showers of bullets fired at us.

By that time my mother and I were just a few steps away from Reem, but still did not exit the building, we were just at the door.

We shouted at Reem to enter and the three of us just fell on the ground with the bullets still flying over our heads. I really do not know how Reem managed to fall on the floor because if I were in her place I would have instantly died of the shock. Luckily she did fall quickly.

The shooting did not stop for a second and there was the three of us lying on the ground at the entrance of the building without any cover.

My mother and I were not sure that Reem did not get hit and kept on shouting till she raised her head and said something, so we were sure then that she was not hit.

We did not see the Palestinian policemen and did not know what happened to them, but later found out that they escaped unharmed.

**T**he bullets were coming inside the entrance of the building where we were

sheltering and we could not move back inside to get into any of the flats because the bullets were barely missing us. We shouted for someone to open their door so we can crawl into their flats, but no one could come near their doors, the bullets were going through everything.

I really do not know if the Israelis could see us, but the main doors of the building were open and the bullets



*Rubble and dust everywhere: daily life for so many Palestinians under Zionist rule*

kept on flying for while, which seemed like a life time for me. Then suddenly all the lights in the building and around it went off, all we could see is the light of the flying bullets over our heads.

The next thing that followed was a huge burst of water, the Israeli bullets hit all the water tanks on the roof and there were rivers of water pouring from the roof. The sudden water burst made the Israelis stop for a second, then we crawled to the nearest flat door and started screaming to let us in and they did.

**W**hat we saw inside was even more terrifying. There was a mother and a father and their three very young children, the eldest child must be 3 years old. The mother and the children were screaming and in a state of hysteria. The father was trying to calm them down and seemed so helpless.

The room that we walked in, supposedly the safest in the flat, had no furniture but mattresses on the floor and a small table with a TV set on it, so there was no furniture that we could use to shelter behind. We realised that they could not open the door for us earlier because the kitchen door faces the flat's main door.

Their kitchen is right opposite to the Israeli post and thus all the bullets were coming through the kitchen door and hitting the main door. So it would have been impossible for them to let us in without getting killed. If it was not for that water burst that made things calm down for a second, we would have surely been killed.

Anyhow, the minute we walked in, we all clustered in a little space, next to the wall in the middle of the room, which seemed the safest in that flat away from any doors. Then the firing started again. This time it was not bullets anymore, it was shelling, the woman and the children were screaming. They were so terrified. For

us, it was heaven compared to a minute ago.

**T**hen came a big shell to the veranda, which is attached to the room where we were, and blew it out of existence, all of us flew off the surface of the earth, but luckily were not injured badly. Just rubble and dust everywhere and our terror, shock and slamming into the floor and walls.

Then a flying bullet hit the opposing wall and bounced back and hit the man's leg who was sitting right next to us, for five minutes he did not say anything and did not want us to know. When his wife saw the blood coming out of his leg, she nearly died, the poor thing, we all were terrified.

By that time the woman nearly lost it and wanted to walk outside the flat to run away, under the bullets. She was in such a state and none of us could do anything but carry the children on our laps and try to calm them down. The shooting and shelling went on for about half an hour.

With every shell fired we looked at each other to see if we were still alive. The scariest thing was Reem's face, she was totally yellow, she wanted to cry but could not, she was in a state of total shock because initially she was the most exposed to the firing. I felt so bad for her, but could not do anything.

**W**e remained like this for a long while, saw death with our own eyes and I felt so bad for people who will later mourn us. We all knew deep in our hearts that that is it. No way we were going to leave that room alive and it is only a matter of time.

The bullets kept on flying around us and bouncing back here and there. We all stayed in the same spot clustering and waiting. Then the shooting started to die down, to intensify again and then die down.

Eventually it calmed down

and there was just random firing with regular guns and no more machine guns. Someone then came to the flat's main door, there was no need to knock or anything, it was full of bullet holes and half of it was blown up.

It was my cousin's husband, he was on his tummy and told us that he crawled like this from the third floor to see what happened to us. He said that the rest of the building only had bullets and that the flat where we were was shelled because it is the most exposed.

**H**e said that we have to crawl quickly to leave that flat because if another shell comes into it, that side of the building will fall on our heads. Another person came from the upper floors as well and helped us carry the children and the wounded man and we left to my cousin's on the third floor.

It took us some time to get there because we had to crawl and avoid the random bullets that were coming inside the building from the windows and main door of the building. We managed to get there in one piece despite our terror. We found everyone living on that floor in my cousin's flat because it is the safest. They could not believe it when they saw us alive.

After that the shelling stopped totally and the firing went on for nearly another half an hour, but not as bad as before. We just waited till it died down totally. Everyone's faces were pale as the freshest lemons.

There was a young couple clinging to one another like two statues petrified with fear. There was a mother with her 8 days old baby girl, the mother could not handle the terror and kept on fainting. We then started thinking how could we leave the building alive, if the shelling starts again the whole building will crumble down. We were not sure if we will be shot at if we attempt to leave the build-

ing. There was no back door to the upper floors of the building.

**T**here were at least 50 people in that building, nearly 30 of them are children. We thought we could throw something out, if it is shot at, then we will not leave, if it is not then we will attempt to leave.

So one of the people went to the flats facing the Israeli post and dropped a plastic pot from the window, when it hit the floor a million bullets turned it into liquid plastic. So there was no question about attempting to leave. The Palestinian policemen whose passing near that building initially started the entire thing were not around anymore - there was not even a cat in the neighbourhood.

We were so helpless and did not know what to do. Then we thought if we call the ambulance maybe the Israelis will not shoot at it and then we can leave in it. So we phoned them, apparently they were just 100 meters away trying to reach us and were not able to. The entire town was watching what is happening to that building and not able to do anything.

**T**hey told us to just calm down for another 15 minutes and then they will try to move in. We did and they came and stood next to the doors of the building. They were not shot at and provided us with cover as we all left that building. It was the only building hit - and the flat was totally damaged.

I must say I am glad to be alive. For two days my entire body has been aching and I stayed in bed. But I am really really happy that no one got physically injured in that building, apart from that man. Though I am sure the psychological scars will remain with everyone for a lifetime, especially the terrified children.

I really do not wish that you were here.



**T**he Good Friday agreement in Ireland is now officially in crisis. As we go to press it seems increasingly certain that the Stormont executive will collapse, and that the collapse will be, as Socialist Democracy always predicted, due to a rising tide of right wing sectarian reaction.

However the main feature of the crisis will be how little immediate difference it makes. The British will remain in charge and they will pick and choose which elements of the agreement they put into cold storage and which they continue to operate.

They have just put under their belt one of the most significant gains of the last 30 years in re-establishing the RUC as the unchallenged state police. For the first time ever, it is formally supported by the local Catholic middle class and the Dublin government.

For all of that, the crisis is significant. It may not be the beginning of the end of the present imperialist offensive, but it is almost certainly the end of the beginning.

The previous attempt by imperialism to resolve the Irish question in Britain's favour, the Sunningdale agreement, also fell to the right. It was argued then that the unionists had been willing to accept a power sharing government but had opposed an all-Ireland dimension.

On the ground it was quite clear that raw sectarian bigotry drove the reaction to the Sunningdale agreement. An identical bigotry drives reaction today.

Then the unionists were able to rely on British compliance to scrap the accord but were unable to impose their own agenda. Today the vast majority of unionists are perfectly happy with the gains the Good Friday agreement has brought them.

They refuse absolutely to pay the price of rubbing shoulders with Sinn Fein in the government - many of them are unwilling to share power with any Catholics - but they are not blind to the power and privilege that the present structures offer. They know that their gains will be preserved and their patronage continue after the fall of the executive.

The immediate result of the crisis is a dawning reality check amongst nationalist workers. This is as good as the Good Friday agreement gets - and the reality is a sectarian bearpit, with no genuine reform or hope of real change.

But "as good as it gets" is no solution for the British. In the absence of a stable executive the North of Ireland will continue as direct colony, with political convulsion always on the horizon.

**H**owever for the instability to be resolved in the interests of the Irish working class would require a political opposition and, given the collapse to the right of Sinn Fein and of the vast majority of its republican base, this opposition will take some time to build.

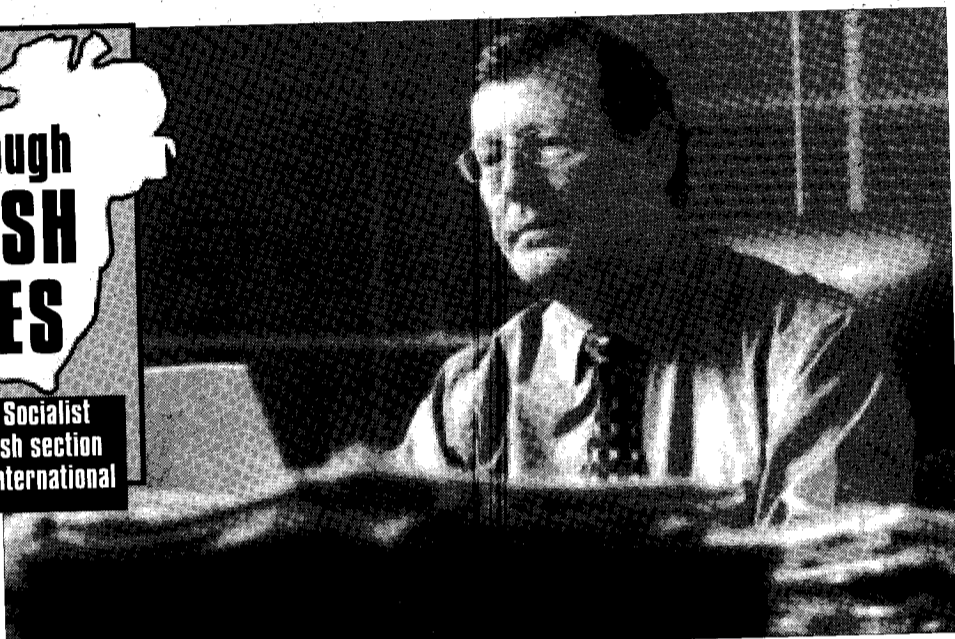
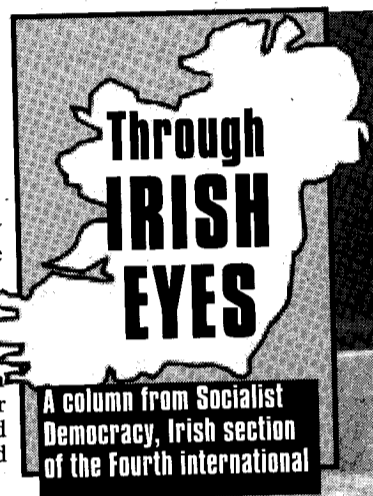
The grim reality of the 'new' society is being spelt out on the streets - nowhere more so than on the streets of Ardoyne. Here blind bigotry has led to the grotesque sectarian abuse of primary schoolchildren and their parents and a very substantial victory for the bigots.

Everyone concerned appears to accept the sectarian logic of the situation. Alternative democratic or working class logics have been removed from the agenda. The result is that a form of harassment that would cause outcry anywhere in Europe with any other ethnic group is dismissed as a mundane 'cross-community' dispute.

This can happen because of the support of the state institutions, the police and the British government for a sectarian logic. The RUC consider themselves above reproach if they allow the children to go to school while simultaneously guaranteeing the right of the bigots to intimidate them.

The British define their role as 'bringing the two communities together' and preside

# Crisis in Ireland Plus ça change - plus c'est la meme chose!



Preparing for his next ultimatum: loyalist leader Trimble

over 'negotiations' - made difficult by the lack of any loyalist demands other than the prevention of the Catholic children from entering school through the front door.

The trade unions, once so vociferous in opposition to republicanism, are determined that nothing will draw them from their well of silence.

All of the forces point silently to the Catholic bourgeoisie in justification for their stance. On day one of the renewed intimidation, following the summer holidays, the board of governors of Holy Cross suggested the 'compromise' that the pupils walk across fields to the back door.

At the height of the disturbances the SDLP and the Dublin government endorsed the RUC - the force who actually guarantee the sectarian intimidation.

In truth the Ardoyne dispute is but part of a wider mini-war of intimidation, sectarian harassment and ethnic cleansing focused in North Belfast and extending across the North of Ireland.

The role of all the players has remained the same - simply writ large. The loyalist groups were bribed into supporting the Good Friday Agreement with a combination of peace grants and manipulation of the electoral structure to help them enter politics. The RUC turned a blind eye to racketeering, protection and drug empires in loyalist areas.

However the loyalists were bound to fail at politics, lacking any programme but that of their unionist masters. The best they were able to do was a kind of populist class envy of their masters expressed within the framework of loyalism and imperialism and developed by the Progressive Unionist party - voice of the UVF death squads.

**T**he fact that they were able to even present this tawdry mish-mash as any sort of policy owes a great deal to the media, and shamefully, to large sections of the left, who presented the thugs as the authentic voice of the Protestant working class.

As their political popularity waned the loyalist groups returned to what they did best. First they fought each other in a war over drugs and territory. Then there was an urgent need to intimidate Catholics who felt they were free to move out of the ghettos and an equal need to reassert a sectarian

unity that would keep Protestant workers in the grip of the thugs.

They are able to do this with almost total impunity. Only after a month of intimidation did the RUC arrest six of the ringleaders, only to release them on bail after preferring minor charges.

**A** regular routine has seen the Chief Constable meet with the British Secretary of State to determine if the UDA were still on ceasefire, only to decide that they were. Reid gave a 'final warning' to the loyalist groups only to have the UVF murder reporter Martin O'Hagan and the UDA launch a fresh pipe-bomb offensive in North Belfast.

Reid then appeared on the British Labour Party conference platform to announce that there would be new legislation against sectarianism, ignoring the fact that there is existing legislation against incitement to hatred which is never enforced.

The message could not be clearer. The UDA are not breaking the Good Friday agreement. They are defining it. The agreement does not oppose sectarian intimidation. It includes it as a feature of the new society.

And loyalist death squads don't operate in isolation - they are part of a wider political reaction.

In the earlier argument between Paisley's DUP and Trimble's UUP, the UDA provided muscle for the DUP attempts to preserve an unchanged sectarian privilege while the PUP/UVF backed Trimble's argument that the agreement could be 'improved' and the Nationalists broken away from their republican allies.

Trimble proved 100% right and has now achieved a police board with overwhelming unionist representation supported by the SDLP and Dublin government. However this is not enough to assuage the reaction.

It became clear at the Weston Park meeting in the summer that Sinn Fein were ready to agree the disposal of arms and what was being discussed was how to deflect criticism from their base.

This fed the reaction, with Unionists and loyalists indicating privately that they did not want disarmament - rather their real aim was to force the Republicans (and Catholics in general) out of government.

Trimble applied his usual technique of

adopting the programme of his critics on the right. He intends to put a motion demanding that Sinn Fein be expelled from the executive. If this falls (as it must - the sectarian rules of Stormont demand that a majority of nationalists vote for it also) he will collapse the executive by withdrawing the unionist ministers.

Sectarian logic applies here too. The resolution come jointly from the Unionists and the PUP, voice of the death squads, making clear that it is republican guns that are the issue and not those held by the sectarian thugs of the UVF.

Sunk without trace in the current situation is the central element of Sinn Fein strategy. The nationalist family, stretching from Irish America to Dublin, the SDLP and the Catholic church to Sinn Fein itself, was to face down the unionists and force the British to behave fairly.

**O**n all the major issues this coalition has now, unsurprisingly, become the imperialist family, apparently allied against Sinn Fein. Led by the Catholic church, they signed up to support the RUC and, led by George Bush's delegate Haas, they are queuing to take Sinn Fein by the neck and insist on the destruction of weapons.

Nothing illustrates the desperation of the Dublin government to obtain some form of stability more than the recent killing of reporter Martin O'Hagan by the UVF. When a Dublin crime reporter was killed by criminals some years ago it led to one of the biggest campaigns in the history of the state and a major shift in legislation, substantially eroding civil liberties.

O'Hagan's death has been met by silence, by a desperate need to placate loyalism, to keep silent about the sectarian hellhole they are helping to reconstruct in the North and by the need for a capitalist stability.

But the nationalist family has not gone. The illusion that the forces that made it up would support progress was simply a mechanism which allowed Sinn Fein to transform into a capitalist party with policies little different from the other partners.

So in the current call for support for the RUC Sinn Fein are not the opposition, but are simply demanding further improvement before they sign up.

Similarly it is blindingly obvious that they do not oppose the current calls for the disposal of arms, but simply plead for the right conditions and guarantees. Hence in six weeks, without comment, the IRA had moved from withdrawing offers on weapons to promising a full engagement with the decommissioning bodies.

The attack on the structures of the agreement from unionism creates a very real difficulty. The Provisional leadership are unwilling to dispose of arms only to find that the structures they claim as victory have shut down.

The clock is also ticking towards an election in the Southern state where, in order to achieve their dream of a place in a capitalist coalition, they have to convincingly represent themselves as an unarmed body. The decisive factor here is likely to be a private US ultimatum telling them that the time for equivocation has gone.

**W**hat is changing significantly is the attitude of many working class supporters of the Provisional movement. They voted for the Good Friday agreement seeing it as a reform and as a way forward with no alternative.

Many still see no alternative but the agreement has lost its shine and the sectarian logic that underpins it is becoming more apparent. This will become even clearer when the British announce that guns by themselves will not be enough - the agreement has to be further 'improved' to placate unionism further and to make it clear that they will have the lion's share of sectarian privilege.

For a minority it is becoming more and more obvious that there will be no alternative to fighting the agreement and defeating a Sinn Fein leadership that supports it.

Sinn Fein recently lost a court case in which they argued that the Good Friday Agreement did not require them to fly the Union Jack from their Stormont ministries. They complained bitterly - but there is no suggestion that they intend to withdraw from the ministries. The symbolism will not be lost on a growing band of opponents.

**SWP and the left in anti-war campaign**

It is important that the Stop the War Coalition has got off the ground as strongly as it has – and it is all credit to those who have been involved.

But the process by which it did so – an appeal by the Socialist Workers Party for an anti-war rally (which it organised) followed by an organising meeting to set up a campaign (chaired by Lindsey German) – effectively bypassed the Socialist Alliance and holds some lessons for its function and its future. ALAN THORNETT reports.

The way this happened was not just the responsibility of the SWP, however. None of the organisations involved in the Socialist Alliance (including the ISG) or the independents took the initiative in the immediate aftermath of the attack on the WTC to call for an emergency meeting of the Alliance EC to discuss both the events and the Alliance's response to them. But it is a problem.

After a few days Mike Marqusee drafted a statement on the war for the Alliance, which was quickly agreed, and then the CPGB called for an emergency EC

**Should the Alliance have taken the lead?**



Paul Herrman

where the issue was eventually discussed. By then the SWP had already called the rally and invited a platform of speakers. An Alliance speaker was agreed in retrospect.

This did not stop the Stop the War Coalition getting off the ground – and in the immediacy of the situation that was the most important thing. But it did make the process more fractious and does raise issue of what the Alliance is for between elections.

Surely this is an example of a time when the Alliance itself should have taken the initiative to convene the

rally and launch the call for an anti-war coalition. It is after all the organisation which contains the bulk of the far left including the SWP in alliance with independent socialists. John Rees argued at the EC that such an initiative needs to be taken by a relatively highly organised party like the SWP – but does this argument hold water?

True the Alliance would need to be more politically geared up and organised (and probably with its own publication) than it is at the moment to play such a role, but why shouldn't it be if we are to build it as an alterna-

tive to Blairism? If the Alliance is not able to take such initiatives then its role between elections is one simply of supporting and mobilising the campaigns which exist around the various issues – like Globalise Resistance and the ANL.

It is true that the SWP has the resources and the organising ability to do such things, and that is important today given the decline of the CP and the Labour Left. But there is a danger that the SWP will see the Alliance as just one of several united fronts dealing with aspects of

the struggle – in this case electoral interventions.

But the Alliance is not a "united front" in the way the ANL and the GR seek to be. It is a political organisation with an extensive programme and an elected leadership.

Obviously it should support important initiatives like the ANL and GR, but it is not the same as them. It has a global political view of the world and that means that there will be times when it takes initiatives, which are not elections, in its own right.

It may be that all this reflects the debate as to whether the SA should remain an alliance in the longer term, or whether it should become a new party of the left. In Scotland, for example, it was the Scottish Socialist Party which made the call for an anti-war movement, rather than an individual component of the SSP.

If that is the case it needs to be discussed, because it is hard to see a long term future for the Alliance unless it establishes itself as a political force between elections as well as during them – and that means intervening and taking initiatives in its own right when it is appropriate to do so.

Unfortunately, in some places, there was a local

expression of this problem as well. Some local Alliances (my own in Southwark for example) were faced with anti-war meetings fully organised in advance by the SWP, and were given no more than the opportunity to endorse them.

Of course, many of these were successful meetings (including the Southwark one).

But the issue is not the short term success of the meetings (important as that is): it is the long term development of the Socialist Alliance as a united political alternative to new Labour.

The emergence of the Stop the War Coalition as a broad campaign embracing a wide variety of political currents now gives an opportunity to build anti-war campaigns nationally and locally in a positive framework.

But this experience should serve to remind us of the parallel issue which will be crucial for the development both of the Socialist Alliance and of the SWP and the wider British left: the importance of being able to build a united front against the war or on other central issues of British and international politics, on a correct political basis, and in an open and democratic way.

**Fourthwrite**  
For a Democratic Socialist Republic  
Issue No. 7 Autumn 2001 Price £1

**Brendan O'Leary interview**

Force debate continues

Catch up on the debate on the left of the Irish republican movement. NEW issue of *Fourthwrite*, £1.30 inc p&p from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

**Obituary: Pat Jordan**  
**Key to linking British marxists with Vietnam Solidarity Campaign**

**Tony Southall**

In the early 1960s there were two organised Trotskyist currents in Britain. The Militant group led by Ted Grant was buried in the Labour Party – in fact so deep it was scarcely visible to the outside world.

By contrast the Socialist Labour League led by Gerry Healy which had left the Labour Party in 1961 had embarked on a sectarian binge.

They proclaimed themselves the only true defenders of the working-class and denounced mass organisations such as CND, which experienced its first big surge then as "petit bourgeois" and "led by middle class intellectuals".

World-wide there was a drive towards reunification of the Fourth International, to which both of these groups proclaimed their allegiance: but neither was likely to be recognised as its British representatives.

Pat Jordan was at the centre of the eventually successful attempt to reform the British section

Based in Nottingham, a weekly duplicated magazine *The Week* was edited and printed at his tiny bookshop and largely financed by his skill in retailing second-hand books and comics.

A tiny number of older comrades like Charlie van Gelderen, along with Ken Coates, and a lot of younger students from Nottingham University formed the

embryo group, which would eventually evolve into the International Marxist Group.

It was recognised as British section of the Fourth International at the 1969 World Congress.

By that time the group had expanded enormously, partly by some of us moving around the country, but critically because under Pat's guidance we had recognised the central importance of the war in Vietnam, and thrown ourselves into the Solidarity movement, around support for the freedom fighters there.

We were happy to combine our long-standing work in the Labour Party with building an open Solidarity campaign.

I first met Pat and Ernest Mandel at the summer school organised by *New Left Review* in 1962. But my abiding memory will be of his dedication to getting out *The Week* – while living on a constant diet of boiled eggs!

I visited Nottingham every weekend until early 1963. In his later years Pat worked full time for the International Marxist Group and then for the Fourth International, when he helped in the work of the Africa Commission.

In 1985 he was struck by a chronically disabling stroke, and removed from active political involvement.

But he should be remembered as a person who played a crucial role in the 1960s revival of Trotskyism.

Over 100 Scottish Socialist Party members attended the International Socialist Movement platform conference which was held in Glasgow over the weekend of September 29-30. GORDON MORGAN reports.

The ISM is a revolutionary marxist platform within the SSP. It contains many ex members of Scottish Militant including most of the non-SWP leadership of the SSP. In all it claims between 150 and 200 supporters. It produces a theoretical journal *Frontline* which is a worthwhile read for Marxists throughout Britain.

Last year's ISM conference had voted to leave the Committee for a Workers International (CWI). The fight with the CWI, led by Peter Taffe, had lasted some years and the break was seen as allowing the ISM to concentrate more freely on building the SSP and a Marxist current within it. A group of around 30 ex- Scottish Militants split at that time and formed the CWI platform of the SSP.

At the February 2001 conference of the SSP, the ISM was effectively relaunched, and the first issue of *Frontline* was produced. At that time, a number of Marxists within the SSP from a non-Militant background felt able to join the party for the first time.

Since then the ISM has supported the discussions with the SWP which led to all their Scottish members joining the SSP. This was a step which has strengthened the SSP as a whole and has resulted in there now being two significant marxist platforms within the SSP; the ISM and the SWP.

Upwards of 80 per cent of SSP members are however, in no platform.

In the run up to the conference, invites were issued to socialist groups in other countries with whom the ISM or SSP has had discussions. A number of subscribers to *Frontline* from England were invited as well as groups, including the ISG, active within the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales. The meeting was also open to SSP members not in any platform. After discussion it was decided not to invite the SWP platform to the conference.

The agenda for the conference was changed within the last week to reflect the events of September 11. The lead item on Scottish perspectives was extended to reflect the need to analyse the impact of the war.

### Perspectives and the War

Alan McCoombes introduction and the documents analysing the events share an analysis common to Socialist Outlook readers. The discussion however, was the most informative I have participated in, due to the range of contributors from the US, Canada, Brazil, France, Belgium, Ireland, Australia and so on.

One of the valuable points made was that the picture seen in Britain and the US of events is not common to mainland Europe, let alone Latin America, the Middle East or the 3rd World.

Each country being brought into the "coalition"; has dusted off its favourite reactionary agenda: nuclear parts for Pakistan and India, a free hand against Chechnya for Putin, identity cards in Britain, freedom to assassinate for the CIA.

Whilst we can see medium term positive developments in the consciousness of activists in the west or Latin America, the situation in poor Islamic countries is grim.

Repression will strengthen the hands of fundamentalists who can offer food and training and identifiable enemies.

Many contributions concentrated on the effect on the anti globalisation movement. The consensus seemed to be that anti globalisation and anti war were easily linked with defence of civil liberties, protection of union rights, of refugees, to be taken up within the movement.

It was suggested that some countries like Belgium are pushing on with anti globalisation and not building anti war movements, as there is in fact no war. In Brazil the media are attempting to associate the left with terrorism. Faced with currency collapse, the left is focusing on state terrorism and in effect taking a left turn.

A preliminary discussion on the likely effects of recession noted that Scotland is likely to be hit harder than UK overall, and that the national dimension must be taken up - not least in presenting our alternatives to

## International Socialist Movement Conference

# Scottish marxists debate the way forward



LCR banner on Euromarch protest in Cologne: SSP has opened links with European left parties

the SNP.

The key issues for the ISM will be defence of civil liberties and asylum rights, the right to strike and winning the battle for ideas. An SSP anti war pamphlet is being produced.

### Workshops

Conference finished Saturday with a series of workshops on Cuba, the Middle East and the Scottish National Question.

The Scottish discussion focused on the fractures within the British state and the question of Europe and a referendum.

Alan McCoombes insisted we be up-front with our position of calling for an independent Socialist Scotland.

How socialists take up the national question will be key to the success of our fight to develop a socialist consciousness within the Scottish labour movement, particularly given the divisions throughout sections of the bourgeoisie on Europe.

### Internationalism

Having left an International current the CWI, but considering themselves Internationalists, the ISM faces the question of how best to build Socialism internationally.

International speakers from the USFI, the UIT (a left current of Morenist origins within the Workers Party in Brazil), the French LCR, and the DSP in Australia contributed to this discussion.

Murray Smith indicated the ISM has been attempting through the SSP to forge links with other organisations which we define as socialist.

The SSP has participated in two meetings that have been held with other European parties of the left held to co-incide with European Union summits.

A third meeting is planned in Brussels in November. The aim of these meetings is to increase active co-ordination of similar organisations at a European level rather than to try to launch a new International. The ISM/SSP also co-operates with the Labour

Party of Pakistan and with the DSP.

At a wider level the ISM supports the initiatives around the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and sees the beginnings of a theoretical debate with sections of social democracy who are now participating in this forum. The building of internationalism will take place on several levels.

Francois Vercaemmen from the Fourth International noted that the starting point of the discussion was our failure to build a mass international, but argued that it was wrong to give up this aspiration.

The proletariat is bigger than ever and more heterogeneous. The sections of the Fourth International have comrades playing a leading role in the workers' and social movements in many countries.

He welcomed the various international forums that exist which the Fourth International is fully committed to whether it be the European Conference of the Left or Porto Alegre, or discussions with individual organisations like the SSP.

The overall aim remains building a political international. He said that some groups would be invited to contribute to the Fourth International's discussions through attendance at its leadership meetings.

Luciana Genro, the MP for Porto Alegre noted that Lula, the leader of the Workers Party (PT) may win the forthcoming Brazilian presidential elections. This would lead to the PT government confronting the working class, and the UIT was anticipating a split in the PT.

The UIT works with groups in Argentina, Peru, Spain, and Belarus as part of a broader organisation. Fighting globalisation on a world scale requires unified struggles.

The basis of an international is democracy

not centralism; it should be federative, and not exclusively Trotskyist. Europe needs Latin America and vice versa. We must start coordinating.

Francois Duval from the LCR commented on the difficulties his organisation had as the largest section of the Fourth International. It is dangerous he argued for an international to be dominated by one organisation.

The LCR was building links with other parties; in Portugal, Denmark, the SSP, the SWP - working together because each has a role to play in regroupment. Many hours are spent discussing the type of party required. We agree the type of party we don't want.

The DSP noted it had links with several dozen parties in Pakistan, France, Russia, Indonesia. These parties include ex Maoist groups so it would be wrong to insist on Trotskyism as a common starting point. It is better to debate the requirements of the world and then put the question of regroupment in that context.

In a wide ranging discussion it was noted that in the US many youth who created Seattle are anarchists and not keen on Marxists: these should not be excluded but involved in debates. We must reinvent presentation but retain essence of marxist methods and ideas.

The role of organised Marxists was key to building broader alliances e.g. the role of the ISM in the SSP. In summary there is no blueprint for building the International. There seemed to be agreement that the conception of the organisation required had more in common with the first and second internationals than the 3rd.

The ISM will continue to forge links and collaborate internationally.

### ISM Organisation

Possibly the least satisfactory session of the weekend was that on ISM organisation.

The ISM is a current within the SSP whose main aim is building and strengthening the party as a whole. It is no exaggeration to say the SSP would not exist without the ISM. But there was a wide range of views as to how the ISM should organise within the SSP.

Some leaders of the SSP felt that platforms did not require full time organisers, others that the existing structures of the ISM were too loose.

It was necessary to delineate the role of the ISM from the SSP, but there were differences on how to do this.

Some of this disagreement has become focused since the SWP joined the SSP.

The reason that ISM plays such a prominent role within the SSP is that its members are trusted and experienced. In contrast, the SWP's apparent commitment to build their organisation before the SSP has reduced their credibility.

But on the other hand the SWP were recruiting to their platform, particularly amongst youth, while the ISM was less visible. Debates between ISM members took place in SSP there was no caucusing.

It was noted that most SSP members don't understand why platforms exist. The ISM has to be open and tap into the thirst for discussion in SSP, offer training and development, offer members the opportunity to join if they wish.

The ISM is probably in a transitional phase as a number of people argued. No one wanted to respond to difficulties with the SWP by acting in the same way. The SWP behaviour has in fact led to several SSP members joining the ISM.

It was pointed out that it was important to recognise the diverse levels of experience within the SSP. The ISM needs to have informed discussions which are difficult in open SSP meetings.

The fact that this discussion took place against the clock left a number of these questions unresolved. It was however agreed that a new newsletter of the ISM is required and that *Frontline* should aim to move towards a monthly.

Overall, The ISM conference was a serious and educational experience. The level of discussion and analysis was of a high order and clarified how socialists in Scotland should respond to events both locally and internationally.

I believe the ISM has shown its importance in the past and proved why it should continue to exist in the SSP.

## Socialism on the internet

Socialist Outlook web site: [www.labournet.org.uk/so](http://www.labournet.org.uk/so)  
International Socialist Group: [www.3bh.org.uk/ISG](http://www.3bh.org.uk/ISG)

# Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 49. October 2001. 50p

# OUTLOOK

## After student grants fiasco, council services chaos, Railtrack collapse ...

# Fight Labour's

# failing



# policies!

THE RAILTRACK gravy train has hit the buffers.

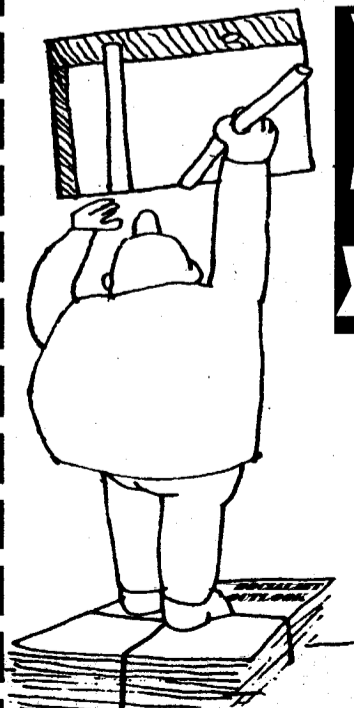
As the first bombs fell on Kabul, news emerged of the government take-over of the bankrupt infrastructure company, which had been siphoning in government subsidies and pumping them back out as profits for shareholders.

Railtrack went to the wall owing £3.3 billion, after failing to persuade even Tony Blair's government to prop it up with another round of taxpayer's money.

Ministers have been eager to argue that the body to take Railtrack's place will be another "private company". But it will be nationalisation in all but name: the company will impose no redundancies, will have no shareholders, will include trade union representatives on its board, and will recycle any 'profits' back into the rail industry: there is not even a promise to compensate shareholders in the now worthless company!

The lesson is clear: the collapse of Railtrack has destroyed any credibility for New Labour's agenda of "partnership" with the private sector. Rail unions must step up the fight to stop the imposition of the PPP scheme on the London tube, and for renationalisation of the remainder of the rail industry.

And the fight on all fronts against Labour's privatisation agenda must be stepped up.



**You get a much better view if you read**

## Socialist Outlook

**every month!**

**Don't miss an issue: SUBSCRIBE now!**

20 pages of internationalist news, views and marxist analysis each month. 12 issues delivered for just £10. OVERSEAS subscribers 12 issues for just £20.

**SPECIAL OFFER (UK only):** One year of **Socialist Outlook**, PLUS one year of **International Viewpoint** (Fourth International magazine) for only £30.

PLEASE send me

12 issues of **Socialist Outlook**

12 issues of **Socialist Outlook** plus **International Viewpoint**.

I enclose £...

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

**SEND TO: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU**