

Workers International Press

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Unholy alliance

Denies independence for Chechnya and Kosova

Workers International Press Statement

POLITICAL leaders in Europe and the US are raising a storm of hot air about the suffering of the Chechen people at the hands of the Russian government. Earlier this year, they wept crocodile tears about the miseries inflicted by the butcher Milosevic of Serbia on the Albanian people of Kosova.

Kosovans, like Chechens, have a legitimate and historic claim to complete independence which is trampled underfoot as capitalist governments pursue selfish interests at their expense.

Workers International reaffirms its complete support for the independence of both nationalities, and warns that the leadership of the struggle for this independence must not only be bold and determined but also understand the international

enemies it faces.

Capital calculates, not on the basis of overcoming inhumanity and destruction, but of financial profit and loss. The people of Chechnya and Kosova are pitted against a reactionary alliance and deserve the support of workers and socialists everywhere.

On 18 and 19 November, at a summit conference of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Istanbul, the world was promised that western leaders were heading for a confrontation with Russia over the latter's indiscriminate violence in Chechnya.

In the event, US President Clinton talked mildly about his "respectful disagreement" with the Russian government over the military campaign.

The next day, western leaders and the Russians "put their differences aside" in order to agree a European security charter.

Despite a lot of angry rhetoric in the media, Clinton and the European leaders in the end agreed a document which contained only "cosmetic" phrases vaguely allowing OSCE a role in resolving the Chechen crisis.

Of course nothing practical will be done. Western governments do not intend to turn a finger to secure the independence of Chechnya.

Effectively, the OSCE conference freed the Russian government to do as it likes in Chechnya. Shortly after the delegations went home, the Russian army launched its final all-out assault on Grozny, arrogantly threatening to slaughter anyone who was either unwilling or unable to evacuate the city.

Many thousands of Chechen refugees are spending the winter on the road or in refugee camps, dragooned by Russian troops. The Russian government has created enormous difficulties about the delivery of humanitarian aid. The leaders of the capitalist world gave a nod and a wink to let this happen.

The threats to cut International Monetary Fund (IMF) and aid from western governments to Russia will also turn out to be more rhetoric than reality.

The imperialist powers depend on "their man" Yeltsin to keep the masses in check and push ahead the introduction of capitalism in Russia despite the tremendous suffering this has inflicted on the country.

Yeltsin is using the war to distract Russians from the enormous problems they face in everyday life and de-mobilise the growing workers' movement which has shown increasing confidence and independence recently.

The "successful" military campaign has done much to re-establish the prestige of the Russian armed forces, and generals and former generals like Alexandr Lebed are clearly jockeying for a political role should a "strong man" be needed to suppress the working class

in the future.

The leaders of the west also have not the slightest intention of helping Kosova to gain its independence.

Clinton's visit to Pristina was no more glorious than his stay in Istanbul. Naturally big crowds turned out because they thought that Clinton was their friend. However, cheers turned to complaints when he made it absolutely clear that western leaders have no intention of helping an independent Kosova to be established.

Imperialist leaders like Clinton "respect" Yugoslav sovereignty because they rely on Milosevic (as they rely on Yeltsin) to play his part in keeping the masses in the Balkans at each others throats.

Corrupted as they were, the social gains of the October Revolution and the Yugoslav Revolution of 1944 could not be demolished by peaceful means, but only through growing anarchy and chaos. Imperialism depends on the Yeltsins and Milosevics to stir the chaos without letting it get out of hand and allowing the masses to take the initiative.

The struggle of the Trepka miners in Kosova to assert their ownership of the vital mineral resources has run up against a sinister alliance of Milosevic (who stole the mines from them) and the French Kfor troops who physically prevent them from entering the pits.

Kosova is kept in humiliating occupation by foreign troops and denied any real independence. But freedom and independence are essential if Kosovan Albanians are to live in equality and friendship with other nationalities in the region.

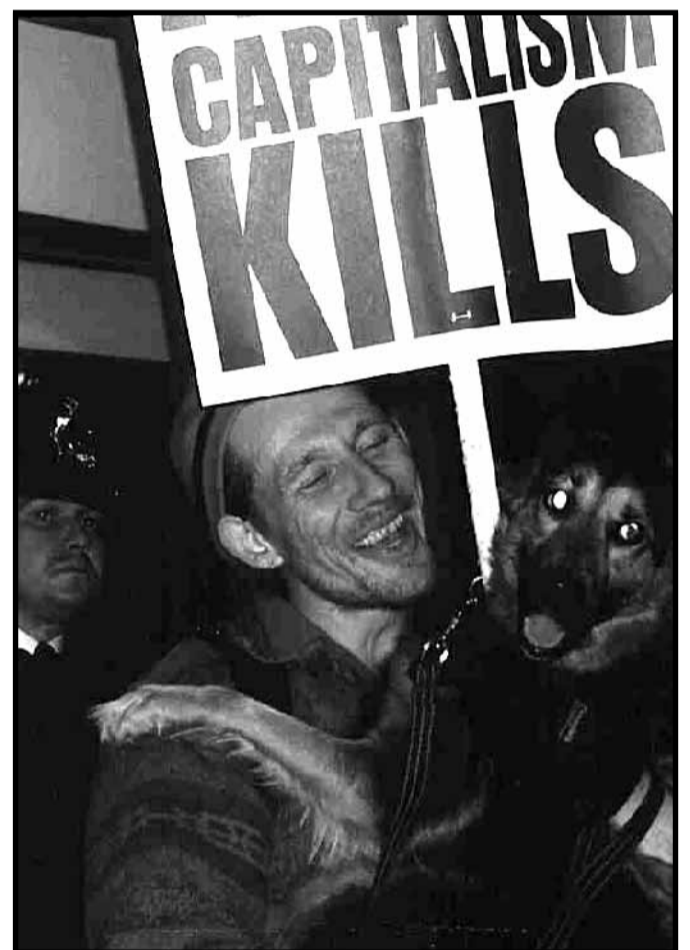
So long as Kfor troops keep Kosovans in chains, they perpetuate the conditions for ethnic strife and bloodshed in the area.

Hypocritical denunciation by the occupying powers of Kosovan Albanian attacks on Serbian residents fail to address this simple fact.

- Independence for Chechnya!
- Independence for Kosova!
- Down with imperialism

Capital calculates, not on the basis of overcoming inhumanity and destruction, but of financial profit and loss. The people of Chechnya and Kosova are pitted against a reactionary alliance and deserve the support of workers and socialists everywhere.

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A supporter of the Reclaim our Railways protest at London's Euston station on 30 November joined the worldwide action against the WTO

After WTO-

A discussion meeting, to be opened by
editor, Bob Archer

Monday 31 January 2000, 7.30pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square
Nearest Underground, Holborn



WTO reports:
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**the way forward for
anti-capitalist fighters**

Workers International
Press

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

Economy

What happened to the "Asian" crisis?

BOB ARCHER looks at the political questions raised by the recent economic crisis. Capitalism has been able to make the working class pay for the temporary and uneasy recovery. The crisis of leadership is a major problem hampering workers' struggles

THE economic slump which exploded in the Pacific rim "tiger" economies in 1997 was a dramatic reminder that imperialism is a system in crisis.

Currencies across the region plummeted into free-fall, closely followed by the prices of industrial and banking shares. As the local currency values fell, domestic prices in those countries soared, forcing millions into poverty just as their jobs and livelihoods disappeared because of firms going bankrupt or cutting back production.

Stock markets, currency exchange dealers and finance houses in Japan, the United States and western Europe had severe difficulties in overcoming the resulting "turbulence". Indeed, there were collapses and near collapses of major finance houses.

This emphasised the parasitic and essentially vulnerable nature of the growing predominance of finance capital over the whole capitalist economy.

"Emerging markets", countries whose financial and industrial sectors offer new and lucrative fields for exploitation by capital, are an essential part of imperialism. This need to export capital into colonial or semi-colonial regions "ripe" for exploitation is a central feature of modern imperialism identified by many commentators at the beginning of the century and emphasised by Kautsky and Lenin. (This is one reason why their work is such an essential starting point for any understanding of the current crisis of imperialism).

The rate of profit on capital invested tends to fall, above all because, as technical improvements are made, the proportion of capital invested in machinery, plant, raw materials and power rises compared with the amount invested in living human labour. However, since labour is the source of surplus value (from which the capitalist draws his or her profit), there is a constant downward pressure on the rate of profit.

Capitalists therefore have to seek ever new fields for investment, thereby staving off temporarily, but in fact storing up for future and even bigger crises, the contradictions inherent in their mode of production.

Bound up with this process, in the age of imperialism, finance and banking capital more and more predominates over the whole of capitalist economy. A major expression of this is the

huge and apparently endless inflation of stock and share valuations on stock markets in North America and Western Europe.

The "Asian" crisis exposed huge weaknesses in "emerging markets" like Russia and Brazil, not least because they failed to slake the capitalists' thirst for a restoration in the rate of profit.

This "turbulence" in Asian and other "emerging" markets on several occasions nearly led to "meltdown" on the finance and stock markets of the main imperialist centres.

These experiences dealt a severe blow to carefully-revived illusions that "free market economics"—the naked rule of capital freed from legal and social controls—is a harmonious and peaceful path to the development of humanity. The contradictions brought to the surface by the "Asian" crisis were too blatant to be explained merely by cronyism or financial mis-management, although many spokespeople of capital tried to portray them in that light.

The reverberations of the "Asian" crisis have not yet died down. Indonesia is in political, social, economic, religious and ethnic turmoil.

Last month it was reported the giant Korean "Chaebol" corporation, Daiwoo, has debts of 50 billion and desperately needs "re-structuring" if it is to survive at all. This will undoubtedly mean massive job-losses and speed-up for the remaining workers.

Last April a British bank, Standard Chartered, took over a bankrupt Indonesian institution, Bank Bali. The "Guardian" newspaper (25 November 1999) reports:

"Now the British bank is ruing ever getting involved with Bank Bali ... It is fighting to survive in a maze of deals and political machinations that could leave it cancelling the agreement or being forced out. In either case the reverberations will be enormous, both for Standard Chartered and Indonesia's economic prospects."

Nevertheless, one must accept that for the time being and by and large imperialism has managed to overcome the crisis of 1997-1998, postponing the con-

traditions for a profounder explosion at a later date.

If the outbreak of the crisis raised important questions for Marxists, accepting that it has been (temporarily) overcome and accounting for that fact are twice and trebly important. We must avoid above all merely commenting on the crisis from the sidelines, however correctly, simply recording and trumpeting forth all the "bad" news about capitalism.

On the contrary, the more or less conscious intervention of human beings organised in classes is itself a major factor in the crisis of imperialism.

Imperialism has been able to survive the crash of 1997-1998 above all because of the political and organisational weakness of the working class all over the world.

Here we must again recall a warning from Lenin: There are no "impossible" situations for the bourgeoisie, as long as the working class is unable to take advantage of capitalism's crisis.

Even where the crisis has

the premise that what is good for capital is good for society.

The "recovery" has involved an enormous intensification in competition and consequently of exploitation.

(Some of the implications are discussed in the report on the protests over the World Trade Organisation ministerial conference in Seattle). All this was tending to take place anyway, but the crisis of 1997-1998 sharply accelerated the process.

The storm of 1997-1998 swept away ramshackle local capitalist structures. Spear-headed by US dominated bodies like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, global capital seized the chance to "reform" national economies in South Korea and elsewhere in the region, opening them up to foreign investment and removing restraints to the naked rule of capital.

The Korean "chaebol" are being restructured at great human cost, and the profitable parts are now savagely undercutting competitors in the main markets in the US and Europe.

Japan is undergoing a major "big bang" economic reform. This will subordinate the giant combine which forged the country's post-war economic miracle to banks and international finance.

The fate of the giant Nissan company shows what this means. The company is now partly owned by France's Renault company. Shareholders have insisted that Carlos Ghosn should supervise a rationalisation of the firm. Ghosn is well-liked by bankers (but hated by car-workers) because he bulldozed through the closure of Renault's Villoerde car plant in Belgium in 1996. Before that he supervised the merger of Michelin tyres in the US with Uniroyal, also cutting back ruthlessly. He is seen as "just the man to chisel the Japanese into shape".

Trade union leaders in every country are in the forefront of imposing such measures, boasting that they can persuade "their" workers to accept more and more onerous conditions at work as long as some jobs are saved. Union leaders of Ford workers in Britain only last month trumpeted that they had saved "British" jobs at the expense of German workers by making concessions in negotiations.

Socialist governments everywhere have systematically prevented working-class mobilisations along class lines and systematically put forward the views



Singapore stock exchange

of capitalists and businessmen.

Workers have faced a blizzard of new methods to make them work harder and harder. Employers know that it always takes workers a while to understand new working practices and turn them to their own advantages, so the pace at which such new schemes are introduced is now constantly accelerated.

Behind all this lurks the fear of unemployment and the knowledge that anti-union laws will stifle active opposition, while union leaders leave militant workers isolated and subject to intimidation by managers.

Not satisfied with leading the attack on jobs, wages and conditions in the workplace, centre-left and "socialist" politicians have taken the initiative in privatising the state sector. This is first of all a giant gift of huge wealth to private owners. It directly answers the need of capitalist bankers and financiers to find a way of restoring the falling rate of profit by the most blatant theft of state property.

Very often companies who have taken over state industries like transport and water and power utilities are granted direct subsidies from the state budget to carry on the activities.

A recent report estimated that Britain's privatised water companies are making annual profits of between 30 and 40 per cent.

The second effect is to weaken and confuse workers in the newly privatised industries. With the collusion of trade union leaders, "market forces" and the threat of job-losses are used to impose de-manning and ever more intense exploitation in these industries.

Thirdly, public services where "profitability" is the only yardstick are bound to cost ordinary users more and provide a less effective satisfaction of needs.

Transport, the health service, education, unemployment benefit, even welfare services and social security, are placed in private hands. Even some pris-

ons and the passport service have been privatised in Britain.

The profits from this process go to restore confidence in the banks and investment funds whose investments fuel the booming stock-markets.

Nevertheless capitalist politicians themselves are worried at the hectic rate of these changes. Moreover, there is sullen and dogged resistance to such measures in many countries ruled by "socialist" or "left" governments. Jospin in France is reduced to subterfuges like the introduction of the 35-hour week as a cloak for attack workers' rights in the workplace.

In Germany, the Schroeder government was severely punished in the local and regional elections for daring to tamper with the "social" state.

In Britain, following another disastrous crash on the privatised railways, opposition is growing to further privatisation.

This has caused momentary hesitations among the former socialist leaders of these major capitalist countries about launching an all-out general offensive against the working class.

Capitalists are also extremely nervous about the continued boom in share prices. Despite boasts that modern technology has solved the contradictions of capitalism, shares in information technology companies like Microsoft have seemed extremely vulnerable recently.

And underlying economic growth is still only hovering between one and three per cent. To sustain and increase the rate of profit, it would need to reach between five and seven per cent per year.

But this is a breathing-space which cannot last long. The key question for the working class is to move forward from isolated and sporadic resistance to refound its international organisation and unity.

The Workers International dedicates itself to assisting and encouraging this development with every means at its disposal.

Euro falls!

THE European currency, the Euro, fell steadily in value last month, ending up near parity with the \$US. Earlier in 1999, the Euro had been worth \$1.18, but its value has inexorably slithered downwards.

Political leaders of "Euroland" refused to allow steps to stop the decline during November. They probably hope that the fall will cheapen European exports to the US, encouraging sales and trade. However, the fall is hardly a vote of confidence in the common currency. It contrasts starkly with the strength of the Deutsche Mark before the launch of the Euro.

Many Germans are deeply perturbed by the loss of the currency which has been a symbol of economic stability since the late 1940s. Apparently the European Central Bank was keen to intervene but "socialist" German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder was opposed to this.

The decline in the currency will increase fears among British and US manufacturers about being priced out of export markets.

It will add a twist to the spiral of pressures which is forcing British industry to shed staff, intensify production and cut costs.

been most sharply expressed, for example in Indonesia, and despite the fact that there are students, trade unionists, political activists and national liberation movements fighting against the Indonesian ruling class and behind them world imperialism, there is no directing centre in the struggle. Temporary gains, as when the opposition forced the withdrawal of repressive public order legislation, or the vote for full independence in East Timor, are far from secure.

Everywhere the people who traditionally lead and guide the working class, the leaders of the official Socialist and Communist Parties and the trade unions, have been at the forefront in imposing the cost of the crisis onto the masses in a variety of different ways. Although they cloak the real thrust of their actions under talk about "the Third Way", everything they do is based on

CWU rep sacked by Royal Mail

Dave Chapple, a postal worker and Communication Workers' Union activist for the past 21 years, has been sacked after strike action by postal workers in Bridgwater.

The staff walked out on 1st September after they claimed the local manager had broken a written agreement.

Dave has been Branch Secretary, Royal Mail Section Secretary, Deputy Divisional Rep, National CWU delegate to the TUC, and has been local rep. in Bridgwater for the last 10 years.

He is President and former

Secretary, of Bridgwater and District Trades Union Council.

Dave and the 128 members at Bridgwater Delivery Office have built up a strong union organisation, with effective local agreements.

Dave's dismissal is a signal by Royal Mail that they wish to destroy the CWU at Bridgwater, and obviously other strong, local CWU workplaces in the future.

He has been given 12 weeks notice—his last day at work will be 3rd February 2000.

His appeal will be taken by senior national union officer Mike Hogan, and heard by a spe-

cial National Appeals Panel.

Royal Mail cannot be allowed to succeed.

Supporters claim Dave has one hundred per cent support from members at both Bridgwater and the huge West of England Mail Centre in Bristol. The Bristol Branch, as well as the South West/South Wales Division have pledged full support.

The local CWU Chair of Committee, Eric Payne was also charged with inciting an unofficial strike, but has been let off with a warning.

Members in Bridgwater & Bristol are being greatly encour-

aged by the many messages of support they have already received, from within the CWU, and also from the wider trade union movement.

Please send messages of support to:

Dave Chapple, CWU Rep, Bridgwater PDO, 25 Friar Street, Bridgwater, Somerset, Tel. 01278 450562, e-mail: glen@redsw.fsnet.co.uk and

Kevin Beazer, CWU Branch Secretary, Bristol & District Amalgamated, 20 Church Road, Lawrence Hill, Bristol, BS5 9JA, Tel. 01179 350055/ Fax 01179 351169.

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The Irish worker – compiled by John Steele

Sinn Fein ministers will use state machinery to defend "peace" deal

On 30 November, as the world press gleefully reported the formation of an executive at Stormont that included Sinn Fein ministers, another news item also made the headlines.

In Palestine, Yasser Arafat had ordered the arrest of a large number of his critics. These were leading academics and heroes of the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation who had accused his administration of widespread corruption, mismanagement and of "selling out" Palestinians in the peace process with Israel.

During the IRA campaign Irish republicans were keen to draw parallels with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and prominent wall murals in many republican areas of Belfast and Derry celebrated the similarity and solidarity of the two struggles.

With the presence of Martin McGuinness and Bairbre de Brun as ministers in the executive of the restructured six-county Stormont parliament, Sinn Fein is set to follow the example of Arafat and the PLO leadership in using all the machinery of the state to defend the "peace" deals hatched by the leaders of world imperialism.

There should be no equivocation on what the Sinn Fein leadership has done. They have taken a movement which, at various times over the past thirty years, threatened Britain's rule in Ireland and channelled it into legal and parliamentary structures which strengthen the partition of the country.

Since 1968 the nationalist revolt has involved tens of thousands of mainly working-class youth in acts of rebellion and sacrifice against the state. This

revolt removed the old, hated Stormont and forced the British state to discard much of its facade of democracy. From internment without trial through police and army brutality and manipulation of the loyalist terror gangs, the full panoply of state oppression was used against the youth.

Now, on the backs of this revolt and sacrifice, Adams and McGuinness are prepared to help in the reconstruction of a Stormont parliament and the strengthening of the state apparatus, including its armed forces.

It's no wonder the Dublin and London governments, as well as the Unionist leaders, are gloating. "This is a partitionist settlement. Sinn Fein, who were abstentionist republicans, are now buying into a partitionist settlement and that is a considerable strengthening of the position here in Northern Ireland," trumpeted David Trimble.

McGuinness and de Brun cannot avoid the fact that they are now "Ministers of the Crown". The 1998 Act which established the Stormont Assembly makes it plain that executive authority remains vested in "Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II."

This is not a small matter for Irish republicanism. Elected Sinn Fein MP's will not take their seats at Westminster because it necessitates taking an oath of allegiance to the British queen.

The Assembly delegates are not being asked to take an oath of allegiance, and whether or not you are labelled a Minister of the Crown may not make any difference to everyday working practices, but it is still an indication of how far Sinn Fein has travelled and to what extent they have been sucked into the system.

One of the carrots that the



The new Ulster executive in session, including Sinn Fein Ministers of the Crown

British government dangled in front of Sinn Fein was the proposition that Britain had no longer any economic, strategic or selfish interest in the north of Ireland. This was reinforced by Mo Mowlom who, when she was Secretary of State and trying to force through agreement on the deal, constantly said that the status quo of direct rule "was not an option."

Her position was clear. Either accept the Belfast Agreement or the Labour government would impose a form of self-government. But when Peter Mandelson replaced her he soon confirmed that if there was not a consensus between the nationalist and Unionist parties to form the Stormont executive, direct rule from London would continue.

There is no way that Britain would loosen its control over the

six counties without having the Sinn Fein leadership on board and in full agreement with its decisions. In its new way of ruling imperialism now depends on Sinn Fein.

After decades of describing the northern state as a "failed political entity" Irish republicanism is now engaged in trying to make it a success. But it did not "fail" because the Unionists imposed a regime that included electoral gerrymandering, job discrimination and the anti-democratic legislation of the Special Powers Act.

These were necessary for the continuation of religious sectarian divisions. The six-county state is not "above" these divisions but depends on them for its very existence. It cannot be reformed and changed into a liberal bourgeois democracy.

On this issue of the reform of the state, Sinn Fein has now joined with other revisionists like the Communist Party of Ireland, the Workers Party and the ex-Militant group in the Socialist Party all of whom have welcomed the "peace process" and the Stormont Assembly in the belief that they will allow "normal" class politics.

Adams and McGuinness have sold the deal to the republican movement on the theory that continued success in the southern Irish economy and an increased inter-state harmonisation through the cross-border bodies will make the border irrelevant and reduce it to a formality, even in the eyes of unionists.

It is this belief in the progressive nature of capitalism that allows them to participate in a ruling executive with open repre-

sentatives of the bosses like the Unionist, Reg Empey, who, as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment has already reassured big business and the international investors on the profit-friendly nature of the Stormont regime.

An early test of Sinn Fein's compliance with the capitalist agenda will come when Bairbre de Brun, as Minister of Health, will be asked to oversee the closure or change of status of small local hospitals and one of Belfast's maternity hospitals.

The basic instabilities of the state cannot be overcome through the workings of a Stormont parliament. These instabilities will be reflected in the continuing crisis within unionism and the actions of the growing number of dissidents within republicanism.

Fight continues to save hospital health services

Crawley Hospital Campaign joined the September lobby of the Labour Party conference.



Photo: Simon Burgess

THE campaign against health-cuts and closure plans at Crawley Hospital and for the building of a new NHS Hospital in North Sussex has taken an important step forward. The last

meeting of Crawley Hospital Campaign agreed to organise a lobby of the Department of Health in the new year.

The decision to organise the lobby

was taken after the new Health Minister, Alan Milburn failed to oppose plans by the local Area Health Trust to downgrade health services at the towns hospital.

Palestine opposition flays Arafat

TWENTY prominent Palestinians last month signed a manifesto "The Nation Calls Us", denouncing the results of the Oslo peace process and accusing Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat of encouraging corruption.

Arafat immediately ordered the arrest of two leading intellectuals who had signed the declaration. Nine members of the

Palestinian parliament who signed were threatened with the loss of parliamentary immunity.

The manifesto noted that Arafat "opened the doors to the opportunists to spread their rotteness", a reference to the rampant corruption and nepotism which reportedly swallows up to a third of the budget.

"The Nation Calls Us" says that the peace process turned out

to be "a bartering of the homeland for the enrichment of the corrupt and the corrupting in the Palestinian Authority".

One of the signatories, Abdul Jawad Salih, said: "This is a country that gave martyrs for a homeland, not for a mafia".

Other signatories include Bassam Shaka the former mayor of Nablus, Hussam Khodr, and PFLP member Ahmed Qatameh.

Eddie Gilfoyle is innocent

In 1993 Eddie Gilfoyle was convicted of the murder of his wife Paula. Eddie has always maintained his innocence and that he is a victim of police incompetence.

On 4th June 1992 Paula Gilfoyle, eight and a half months pregnant, was found hanging in the garage of her home in Upton, Wirral.

Eddie's family and supporters have gathered compelling evidence — never seen by the trial jury — that Paula was not killed, and that the investigating police conspired to pervert the course of justice. Despite this evidence Eddie's appeal against conviction was rejected and Eddie remains in prison. Eddie Gilfoyle has suffered doubly — losing first his wife and unborn child and then his freedom.

On the 4th June Eddie left for work around 11.20am, arriving there at 11.30am. Paula left the house at the same time to go to the Post Office.

He came home from work early to take Paula shopping but she was not there. Eddie found a suicide note in the kitchen. But mistaking it for a letter saying that she was finally leaving him, he read only the first few lines before driving to his parents house to seek advice.

He was distraught. He returned home with his parents at 6pm to begin phoning around to try and find Paula. He found her body hanging from a beam in the garage.

Eddie was found guilty of murdering his wife although the police investigation was negligent and vital evidence was destroyed.

After the trial, Eddie's family lodged a complaint with the Police Complaints Authority about the conduct of the investigation, listing over 100 irregularities. An appeal was prepared and a police investigation could find no evidence that a crime had been committed.

Appeal Court Judge Beldham opened the hearing by stating that he would not allow any criticism of the Merseyside Police or the former defence. He refused to hear any of the evidence uncovered by the PCA

investigation including the planted rope and sent Eddie back to prison. As the prison officers took him down to the cells Eddie shouted "I'm Still Innocent."

An hour-long TV investigation described the investigation conducted by the Merseyside Police as a 'Keystone Comedy of Errors.' It was those 'errors'

that prevented the jury from hearing all of the evidence that was available in this case and resulted in the conviction of Eddie Gilfoyle.

A report from Dr Jack Weir, a former Consultant Psychiatrist and an expert in suicide during pregnancy concluded that the suicide letters written by Paula were genuine.

The programme also highlighted the fact that there was money worries. Paula was the main breadwinner and with the baby on the way their financial prospects were bleak.

Full text of Campaign: file:///NCADC/Desktop%20Folder/eddie.html
Candlelight Vigil and March
Assemble 12.00pm
Saturday 11 December 1999
Wakefield Prison, Love Lane, Wakefield, Yorkshire
letters and cards of support to:
Eddie Gilfoyle, X 1827, HMP Wakefield Love Lane, Wakefield, Yorkshire
E-mail: EddieGilfoyle@ncadc.demon.co.uk
Eddie Gilfoyle Campaign, c/o 5 Heygarth Drive, Greasby, Wirral, Merseyside

When they heard how the Seattle police were treating protestors, these demonstrating farmers in Manila hurled rotten fruit and vegetables at the local US embassy



WTO discussions collapse

THE WTO ministerial conference in Seattle broke up without reaching agreement on a new round of negotiations to "liberalise" world trade.

Disagreements among the various groups of capitalists represented, reflecting real rivalries and mutual hostilities, led to a failure.

Even though the main imperialist countries, above all the US, are clearly enormously more powerful than the others, they could not prevent the humiliating collapse of the conference.

The leaders of the main imperialist nations are obviously in somewhat of an impasse.

They suffered a setback with the rejection of the Multilateral Investment Agreement (MAI), which would have removed many restrictions of the freedom of capital to move around the globe and exploit its victims. A massive campaign by the same forces which demonstrated in Seattle persuaded a number of governments to withdraw support for the agreement.

The popular and growing opposition to genetically modified organisms has also forced some of the massive companies involved into a tactical retreat.

Moves to introduce Thatcherite policies and remove social and trade union protection in mainland Europe are continuing, but German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder suffered severe punishment at the polls for daring to attack his country's "social state", and French Premier Lionel Jospin is obliged to proceed with extreme caution, artfully concealing his attacks as concessions.

Schroeder has had his first taste of working class opposition. Now apparently in ignominious retreat, he has granted government aid to the bankrupt building firm Philipp Holzmann. This runs directly against the "free market" economic orthodoxy his capitalist masters expect.

The European Central Bank are determined to push through Thatcherite reforms and loudly oppose Schroeder's present course. This crisis at the heart of the European Union has worried currency dealers and led to a collapse in the value of the Euro, down from \$1.18 earlier this year to about \$1.

The leaders of Britain and the US must also be concerned about growing working class opposition.

American trade unions suf-

fered badly when the North American Free Trade Area was established, embracing the United States, Canada and Mexico. Jobs in US manufacturing industry haemorrhaged into Mexico, where labour costs and on-costs were much less. The fact that social provision, health, education, housing and many other aspects of life are far inferior in Mexico played a part in making it tempting to locate production there.

Trade liberalisation is just one strand in the ruling class's attack. In order to break up the powerful longshoremen's union on the west coast, US capitalists have smashed the Mexican dockers union at Veracruz and developed rail and road links northwards to the US.

Clinton and Blair seem to want to find ways of co-opting some of the opposition into the discussions within the WTO

itself while disarming sections of the unions with the promise that minimum social provision will be part of any trade deal.

All this is designed to head off a protest movement which is taking on impressive proportions, involving new masses of young people in political struggle, and providing potential recruits for socialist and revolutionary groups.

The growing movement is all the more threatening to the capitalists because it starts to link poor farmers and labourers in semi-colonial countries with environmentalists, youth and trade unionists in the main capitalist centres. (Developing these links, making them firm and durable, developing a tactical sense of how to combine apparently disparate groups, will take more than goodwill or one series of demonstrations).

The governments and the bourgeoisie of many "developing" nations protested that if the

exploitation of labour in their countries was restricted in any way, they would be unable to compete with the developed west. Their economic "success" is based on the right to exploit cheap labour, often provided by women and children who lack any social protection.

The Indian and Pakistani governments among others therefore raised strong objections to any mention of labour or social protection in negotiations. They wanted it right off the agenda.

While they wanted a free hand to exploit their own labour without let or hindrance, they were also totally opposed to attempts to couple trade liberalisation with free movement of US and European capital investment inwards into their countries. Like the Chinese and many other poorer nations, they certainly intended to protect them-

selves from unbridled penetration by European and American banks.

The Japanese and European representatives on the other hand were eager to re-introduce all the matters sidelined when the MAI was rejected.

The conference finally collapsed when African delegates walked out because they had been excluded from backroom negotiations.

The contradictions shaping up in the Seattle round of talks are rooted in the contradictions of imperialism itself. In any case new conflicts will arise in the course of negotiating agreements which at one stage or another will make agreement impossible and lead to "a continuation of politics by other means".

Already imperialist military experts are mapping out the battlefields of the new century and critically assessing the weapons at their disposal.

Workers International Press comments...

Prepare Third Congress of Workers International!

THE big and varied mobilisation to oppose capitalism and its effects, focussing on the Seattle WTO conference, is a sign of a welcome change in political life.

Hundreds of thousands of ordinary people in almost every corner of the populated world are starting to draw their own conclusions about life under capitalism/imperialism and seek a way to do something about it.

The experience of the 1997-1998 economic crisis has started to break up the appearance of invincibility and necessity attaching to 'market forces'.

People know their jobs and livelihoods are threatened by capital. They know they are driven to work ever harder because workers in different countries are pitted against each other in "competition for jobs".

They know their general living conditions are being undermined by capitalist attacks on state-run industries, services and welfare systems.

They know they are more and

more helpless in the face of big business. They know that education is being more and more turned away from the creation of mature human beings into a sausage machine to turn out pliant servants of capital.

They know that in those countries that actually have hospitals, treatment will more and more be given only to those with money to pay for it.

They know that the politicians who are doing this to them, whatever political labels they wear, are in the pockets of the trans-national corporations and the banks.

They know that there are enormous problems of war, poverty, starvation and disease. They know that when well-intentioned people try to tackle these they come up against the social relations of capital, not to mention the direct opposition of capitalist vested interests.

They know that capitalist "development" destroys the

nature we rely on to provide our daily needs, poisoning the air and water we breathe and drink, wiping out an endless roll-call of species whose importance for life on earth we do not yet understand.

They know that scientific and technical "advances" are no longer pursued to further humanity's mastery of itself as a part of nature, but rush helter-skelter into unmeasured dangers just so this or that block of capital can stay in front of the competitors.

What is the way forward for this incipient movement?

The alternative to capitalist ruin is a world where the human race masters itself and its relationship with the environment of which it is a part (a relationship properly understood as human labour).

At the centre of the movement towards such a world is the working class. Because it is the opposite of capital (and at the same time it is the class

whose labour is the source of all capital), it has a unique role in history.

The working class is the focus of all the myriad forms of opposition to capital because of its role in production and because it is the only truly international class. In modern society it is the essence and centre of all opposition to capitalism.

Marxism crowns and completes the struggle of the working class because it recognises not just the need to oppose this or that aspect of oppression and exploitation (though it supports and stands by all who resist these), but it understands that the working class can and must destroy capital as a social relation, opening the way to a world society where human beings enjoy human relations.

Trampled underfoot by official "socialists" and Stalinists, Marxism nevertheless is the only trend to comprehend not only

the goal of the movement against capitalism developing today but also the material forces at work within it and the means to solve the difficult strategic and tactical problems the movement will face.

The Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International will do everything in its power to strengthen and sharpen the movement against capitalism. That will be the aim of our Third World Congress meeting Easter 2000 in Britain.

In "Workers International Press" we have opened a discussion on the crisis of imperialism and the work to build a new party of the working class.

We welcome all articles and letters contributing material to this discussion. Confident in the living force of the ideas we represent, we do not shrink from working and discussing with activists from other tendencies and representing other approaches.

A world-wide spectrum of protest

Mass opposition to talks!

A WIDE spectrum of protest paralysed Seattle, USA, at the beginning of December, forcing the cancellation of some sessions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Third Ministerial Conference.

The conference centre was closed by a bomb-alert on the first day, and for the rest of the meeting delegates had to pick their way to sessions between battling police and demonstrators.

Pepper sprays and tear gas were unleashed on protesters, while activists for pressure groups on the environment, poverty and other essential issues found a variety of ways to put their case to delegations.

This was a very powerful movement of protest which linked fresh young students with experienced campaigners for the environment and social justice.

It was an incipient coalition joining French farmers, British and US trade-unionists, subsistence farmers in the poor countries, indigenous peoples and socialist and anarchist groups.

It included a wide range of political positions from liberal reformist conceptions of pressuring the authorities through respectable "citizens action" to root-and-branch opponents of capitalism.

In the build-up to the meeting, thousands of farmers and environmentalists marched in France. They are above all horrified that they may be prevented from stopping US food imports containing genetically modified material. They are also afraid their own culture will be swamped by US cultural imports.

The US trade union movement, the AFL-CIO, mobilised for the protest because floods of cheap imports threaten jobs and livelihoods in American industries where workers have historically won wages and conditions and social benefits. Thousands of rank-and-file US trade unionists took time off work to join the protest and many eagerly participated in the teach-ins and discussions organised around the demonstrations.

They have forced the US delegation to make some platonic gestures in the direction of universal minimum social standards. In fact, global trade union rights and welfare systems will come from the struggles of workers organising internationally.

British workers who have campaigned for safety at work organised a supporting protest in London on the opening day (see their letter below).

US students who have been blooded in a variety of struggles for ethical investment of their colleges funds and for the protection of lower-paid workers have rallied in swelling number to the mobilisation.

In the week before the conference, thousands of them picketed the notorious "School of the Americas" where the US government trains right-wing death squads to murder Latin American revolutionaries.

This movement does embody an understanding (and hatred) of at least the symptoms of imperialism.

On 24 November, 300 Adivasis (representative of indigenous peoples) from the Indian state of Madya Pradesh stormed the World Bank building

in New Delhi. They brought with them a letter signed by twenty organisations representing indigenous peoples in Madya Pradesh and neighbouring states denouncing the destructive impact of world-bank funded investments in forestry and the liberalisation of timber products enshrined in the WTO system.

Not only is these people's environment destroyed by logging for profit, but they are driven off their lands and subjected to violence, rape and assassination.

Zapatista activists from Mexico are at the heart of the protest movement.

Prominent figures claim that the movement against the WTO was supported by millions worldwide, and specifically by 1 200 organisations in 85 countries demanding that no new areas of the world should be subjected to the jurisdiction of the WTO.

Summing up the experiences of the week in Seattle, Susan George, an author and leading campaigner against the power of corporations, warned that capitalists would wait for the movement to divide along the lines of class, gender, race, age or religion.

Experience shows there is every reason to agree with her. "Divide and rule" is the oldest maxim of the exploiter.

The movement will need not just one (or even many) heads of the stature of Susan George. It needs to achieve its "own" brain, a thinking and acting leadership which can parry the attacks of the ruling class and constantly re-establish in struggle the unity and initiative of the oppressed and exploited.

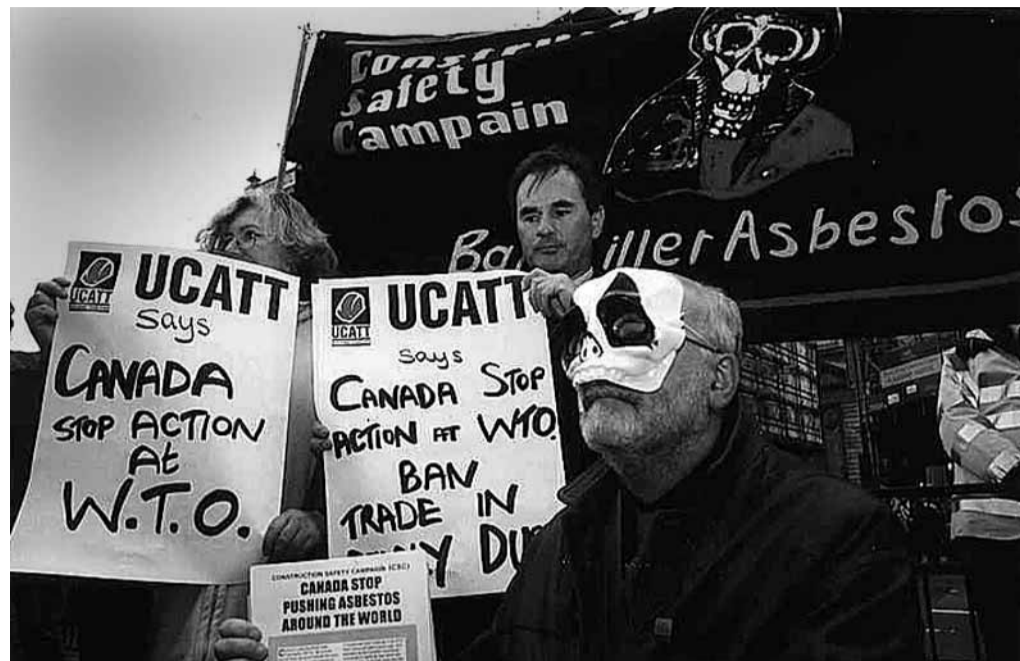


Photo: Molly Cooper

CSC in London protest

AT NOON on Tuesday 30 November the Construction Safety Campaign demonstrated outside Canada House in London to demand the Canadian government stop pushing its asbestos around the world. The protesters supported the recent UK government ban on asbestos.

In a press release the CSC explained:

"Canada is using the World Trade Organisation (WTO) — the industry-friendly body set up to lubricate free-and-easy world trade — to protect exports of deadly asbestos to countries that do not want it, including the UK.

Asbestos — the biggest environmental killer in history and predicted to kill hundreds of thousands of Europeans over the next 35 years — was banned in the UK on the 24th November 1999. The decision was made in an attempt to bring an end to a major public health disaster.

Canada's WTO case is to

challenge the French government's ban on asbestos imports, arguing that an asbestos ban is against free trade agreements and asbestos can be worked safely — a point which is proven to be untrue.

If Canada win their challenge in the WTO then France will either have to pay compensation to the Canadian businesses concerned or repeal its laws which ban asbestos. This would then leave any ban in any country open to challenge by Canada or anyone else — and be sure the asbestos producing countries will make

those challenges.

The case is about whether or not countries and industries have a right to push any toxin in the name of free trade. If Canada wins it would be a signal to the world's most hazardous industries that anything goes, opening the way for an unregulated, global toxic economy.

Governments must have the right to restrict, ban and control toxins. WTO could take this away. That is why Canada's WTO case must be defeated.

We will fight to defend our UK asbestos ban!

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY CAMPAIGN

PO BOX 23844, LONDON SE15 3WR.

Telephone: 0774 779 5954

e-mail:construction.safetycampaign@talk21.com

London Hazards Centre,Interchange Studios, Dalby Street, London NW5 3NQ, UK
Tel 44-(0)207-267-3387 Fax 44-(0)207-267-3397 e-mail@lhc.org.ukInformation for safety reps and activists on the web
<http://www.lhc.org.uk>

Readers guide: what is the WTO?

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) was established as a result of the Uruguay Round and the 1994 Marrakech accords and both contains and replaces the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

The WTO has enormous powers which it wields almost without control.

In the name of "harmonising" world trade, the WTO seeks to continue the process of removing tariff barriers and allowing the free movement of goods and services.

Given that workers and their unions have up to now learned to defend their living standards and wages on a national level, the move towards liberalising trade has been an important weapon in the wholesale attack on workers' rights and conditions.

British ex-miners, for example, remember bitterly how they were forced out of work by coal imports from countries where wages and social protection were far less. Under these conditions trade union rights have also been whittled away or directly attacked.

Trade liberalisation and easy mobility of capital have caught workers out

and placed them at an enormous disadvantage, enabling capitalists to intensify exploitation both in its old centres and in its new locations.

"Free trade" is always a slogan of the stronger capitalists seeking the means to smash up their weaker competitors.

There are major repercussions of the removal of customs barriers and protective subsidies to industry from national governments. For example, in Europe agriculture has until now been protected from cheaper foreign imports. Under WTO rules, state subsidies organised under the Common Agricultural Policy have to be removed to allow such imports in, and the smaller-scale and more expensive farmers of Europe face being squeezed by American and Australasian agri-business with its blithe contempt for the environmental impact of its activities as long as the bankers are kept happy.

This is one reason for the powerful alliance of French farmers and environmental activists who are whipping up a storm of protest over the Seattle conference.

But the WTO has other

weapons which are equally menacing. It can insist on the removal of Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs).

Of course it is not unknown for governments to use the small print in legislation to keep foreign capitalists from dumping products on their markets.

However, under WTO rules, vital national laws on safety and environmental protection can be swept aside as "restraints on trade". This is what is threatened over moves by European governments, spearheaded by France, to ban the use of white asbestos. The Canadian government has appealed to the WTO against the ban.

Such appeals are heard by WTO panels in private and with no redress. If they decide to uphold the appeal, they may impose trade sanctions on Britain.

More sinister yet is the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). This covers trade liberalisation in 160 sectors including health, education and the environment.

GATS on its own is a mighty weapon for levering open the public sector and letting in private service providers to suck up profits at the expense of workers

in those sectors and the masses who rely on them.

No wonder all the protesters accuse the WTO of being a tool of giant transnational corporations avaricious for profits at the expense of ordinary people.

Moreover, a central aspect of the parasitism of modern capitalism is that the major imperialist nations increasingly extract their bloated share of the world's wealth in the form of "services" such as insurance, financial services, and a myriad of other intangible activities where the rich get their cut.

The Trade-Related Intellectual Property Agreement (Trips) further buttresses trans-national corporations by seeking international recognition for their intellectual property rights. This sounds fair until you realise that it is only marginally about hard-working artists and inventors starving in garrets. A big corporation can send someone to "discover" a useful plant or animal species that local people have relied on for centuries.

They can patent the useful element in the species and pocket the profits, potentially gaining the right

to charge people a percentage for something which was theirs in the first place.

India, Malaysia, Zimbabwe and other Latin American countries have accused the US and Europe of "bio-piracy". India is especially worried because western corporations have started to patent their traditional herbal medicines.

Recognition of intellectual property is tantamount to a right to tax people every time they buy a useful piece of merchandise.

Most opposition to the WTO has fastened upon this or that aspect of its activities, with special reference to the nefarious activities of big monopolies (TNCs).

In that sense the movement bears strong traces of the small capitalists' resentment of the big capitalist, with echoes of previous anti-trust populist movements in the early part of this century.

If the movement is to broaden its scope to challenge the capitalist system as a whole, it will have to deepen its understanding of the enemy.

Big corporations are only one of what Marx called the "personifications" of capital. They

loom large because they really are very big and powerful.

In a contradictory way they enshrine the possibility of harmonious human development because they embody the world-wide division of labour and the possibility of the rational organisation of production.

There is a potential for the development of the productive forces in harmony with nature, but this involves smashing capital as a social relation.

Capital creates big business organisations and it breaks them up. Yesterday's TNC is today's scrapyard.

The increasingly rapacious, destructive and parasitic character of modern imperialism is bound up with the predominance of finance capital over all aspects of economy.

In a real sense the biggest enemy the movement faces is capitalist states backed by the banks, investment companies and stock markets.

But above all a complete social revolution is required which starts by destroying that state and installing a workers' state which organises and assists the transformation of all social relations.

Letters

Contribution to the discussion on a new workers party Beyond Sectarianism — to a new party!

JACKIE Vance's article (WIP 17, October 1999) on the building of a new workers' party is a valuable contribution but there appears to be little direction as to how we should proceed in our work in order to further the conditions under which such a party would possibly come into existence. In all essential, it does not go beyond the current pre-occupations of the groups who still remain obsessed with "party building" and cynically use the struggles of working people merely to augment their ever-dwindling membership. This is not to say that the Workers International adopts the same methods but the "party building" mentality remains. The question how is not really addressed. The self-proclaimed vanguards will not develop into mass revolutionary parties and the new workers' party that is necessary will not—at first—be born, fully formed, as a revolutionary organisation. The new party will not necessarily emerge at first as a "party" as such. It may emerge as a mass movement of some kind within which the need for a new party

asserts itself and then begins to be realised.

Would such a movement be subject at first to the centralised and disciplined organisation of a revolutionary party? I think not. Undoubtedly such a movement would be unable to be the leading influence in the organisation and prosecution of insurrection. However, it would be the duty of all revolutionaries to work within such a movement.

The new party will not be created by the various and disparate activities of the groups but by the self-organisation of the class itself in its struggle against capital, intrinsic to which struggle is the struggle for socialism. Is it not the responsibility of all Marxists to further and augment this struggle of the class to organise itself into a new party which may not initially take revolutionary form?

Unfortunately Jackie's article becomes pre-occupied with the MfS, which is just another small group with outlook to fit. None of these groups have a "public face" and all are not only completely "ineffective" but are generally treated with contempt by

working class people who see them for what they really are: sects and cults which are simply feathering their own political (an in some cases financial) nests. Jackie's somewhat abstract conception of being "unsuccessful" applies to all of them without exception.

On the assumption that a "movement" will emerge prior to any centralised party we will have to recognise that the "forces that come together" will, to some degree, maintain "independent structures" inside such a movement. To approach the task of building a new workers' party demands what Lenin called an "all-sided, universal flexibility of concepts, a flexibility reaching to the identity of opposites", i.e. what is required is a "flexibility applied objectively, i.e. reflecting the all-sidedness of the material process and its unity, is dialectics, is the correct reflection of the eternal development of the world." (Collected Works vol. 38 p.110). A non-sectarian, non-dogmatic praxis must be developed which incorporates within itself, and is guided by, such theoretical con-

ceptions in order to further the establishment of the necessary conditions within and through which the new workers' party is more likely to emerge. Implicitly, this means developing ways of working specifically towards that goal and turning away from the party-building activism of the groups which has become a barrier to the rebuilding of the class movement of the workers. It is this self-proclaimed vanguardism which is holding back the creation of these necessary conditions for reconstruction which are in themselves intrinsic to this reconstruction. The MfS has "failed" because it remains burdened down with the legacy of a sectarian pre-history in the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) and Socialist Labour League (SLL) which hit has not overcome in practice despite all the good intentions. Symposia, discussions and "networks" alone possess their own self-enclosing necessity and adequacy but are completely inadequate for the elaboration of forms of struggle necessary to build a

new mass workers' party. The MfS boast about how splendidly unsectarian and undogmatic it is, but it has made no real links with the everyday struggles and campaigns of workers and remains isolated in a world of "networks", virtual or otherwise.

Likewise another reflection of this living legacy is Jackie's postulation that "it would be impossible to build a new party and international if this party does not incorporate the struggles and theoretical gains of the fight for the Fourth International". I ask Jackie to take a close look at this proposition. Isn't this effectively making this "incorporation" a necessary pre-condition for the building (and therefore, in a certain sense, the actual establishment) of a new workers' party? In the course of its creation and development, the new party will be the cauldron of different trends and tendencies in which the struggle to win people to the need for revolution would necessarily involve the incorporation of the lessons of the history of the Fourth

International. Jackie appears to make the building of the Fourth International a pre-condition for the building of the new party. The cart is placed before the horse. We should not separate the building of a revolutionary party from the essential task of contributing to the establishment of a new workers' party.

The fundamental task of socialist in the present period is to work in such ways (**but how?**) which contribute to the preparation of the necessary conditions for the establishment of a new mass workers' party. Only by working with this fundamental purpose of establishing a new workers' party can the question of revolutionary organisation and leadership be addressed.

The new party will not emerge as a ready-made revolutionary party. This will have to be fought for in the course of fighting to build the new party as an intrinsic part of rebuilding the working-class movement as a whole.

Shaun May,
Hull

Not "working" but fighting in L.P.

Having had the privilege of attending John Archer's 90th birthday lecture, I was impressed by his vigour, steadfastness and political vision, when too many others half his age seem to have become worn-out sceptics. I am glad we recorded his meeting in our paper, although we should have made clear some of our differences. (see WIP 18) I don't know whether John actually referred to Trotskyists "pulling out" of Labour Party work "in the 1960s", or whether this fairly sums up his opinion, but it does not accurately present what happened. The Socialist Labour League (SLL) was proscribed by the Labour Party's national executive in 1959, its paper the *Newsletter* was banned, and several known supporters were expelled from the Labour Party. But they continued fighting, within or without the Party, and I, like many of my generation was recruited to the Labour Party largely through the efforts of SLL members, because they were the only people talking to youth at the time. Labour's full-time officials always seemed to regard the youth with distaste and suspicion. I'd heard of Trotsky, as a leader of the Russian revolution, but had no idea there was a Trotskyist movement in Britain, or that it had anything relevant to say, until I met SLL comrades selling their paper and the youth paper *Keep Left* outside a mass CND rally in Manchester. Had they obeyed Labour NEC and shut up shop just to remain in the Labour Party, with no paper or public expression, I'd probably have remained ignorant of their existence. Had they not engaged with the issues concerning ordinary Labour supporters and nuclear disarmers, I might have ignored what they had to say. As it was, they introduced me both to Marxist theory and to the fight against the right-wing Labour bureaucracy. I emphasise that word, "fight", not just "work" in the Labour Party, that could mean just plodding around collecting jumble, and canvassing for right-wing scoundrels, hoping that in return

for our patient donkey-work, they will tolerate our "funny ideas", letting us wait undisturbed until the day things change and the working class is "ready" for the truth. In 1960, Brian Behan argued that a slump was imminent, and the SLL should break with Labour and establish an open "Workers Party". We rejected his proposals. The SLL took up the fight against Gaitskill, for unilateralism (adopted by Labour's national conference that year) and in defence of Clause Four. Over the next few years, the youth around *Keep Left* gained leadership of the Young Socialists, in a struggle not only against the right-wing (which banned *Keep Left* after a plot hatched up, as John Archer said, at Lord Walston's flat in the Albany), but also against some "lefts", notably those who later would become the Socialist Workers Party (though one of their leading lights, Gus Macdonald, now has a peerage and his place in Tony Blair's government, while another, Roger Rosewell, became an aide to Dame Shirley Porter!)

In 1964, after campaigns against youth unemployment and the Tories, with wide recruitment, *Keep Left* supporters had a clear majority in most regions and on the YS national committee. But Labour, about to take office under Harold Wilson, was not going to tolerate its youth movement becoming a focus for workers' opposition to right-wing, imperialist and International Monetary Fund-determined policies. With leading YS members being expelled, branches closed, even an entire Constituency Labour Party (in South Paddington) suspended for refusing to disband its Young Socialist branch, we had a big choice to make. Did we make some mistakes? I don't doubt it. In Brent East, I even let myself get caught selling *Keep Left* in public! Bit of youthful adventurism, even a trace of sectarian impatience, if you like. But at the end of the day, what were we supposed to do, lie down and let right-wing Labour official-

dom walk over us, destroying everything we were trying to build, just so we might keep a seat on the general management committee? (where, incidentally, we gained four new comrades in the course of the expulsion battle!) We chose freedom, and the right to organise as Trotskyists. Had we somehow managed to cling on in the Labour Party, shorn of our papers, our youth movement, and our right to fight, what part could we have played in the struggles that blew up later — the pensions campaign, the apprentices' movement, the docks' struggle, the 1966 Seafarers' strike and the struggle against Labour's Prices and Incomes Policy? John Archer asked "what happened to the All Trades Union Alliance", our much-vaunted industrial arm. A reasonable question. But we should not forget how it came into being in the first place.

We never turned our back on the working class. The International Committee of the Fourth International, of which the SLL and Pierre Lambert's Organisation Communist Internationalist (OCI) were then twin pillars, resisted the recurring siren voices (Pablo, Mandel, Hansen, and a host of bourgeois sociologists) tending to demote the struggle of the working class in importance, while promoting the Stalinist bureaucracy, "Third World" leaders, "new student vanguards" and so forth. In 1968, the OCI played an honourable part in the May-June events in France. While would-be trendies here hailed Daniel Cohn-Bendit and the students at the Sorbonne, we were proud to have at the Young Socialists conference a young man who had proposed the first factory occupation, at Sud Aviation, Nantes.

We were thrilled, too, when the OCI brought a very large youth contingent to our summer camp. But it's a fair guess that Gerry Healy, seeing his own prestige in danger of being overshadowed within the movement, had mixed feelings at this. In 1970-1971, as John Archer recalled, on the eve of achieving an international youth move-

ment, the SLL leadership engineered a split, ostensibly by insisting on the importance of "Marxist theory" for the youth movement. Actually, I think the insistence on theory was right, in principle, especially in the period of confusion and phoney revolutionism after 1968; only it was misused, and hardly justified a split, and anyway, Healy's "dialectics" became the opposite of the revolutionary theory and practice developed by Marx.

It is a fact that the leadership of what became the Workers Revolutionary Party under Gerry Healy was unable in the end to maintain and develop either the youth movement or its industrial cadre. Indeed, as the leadership abandoned the methods of Trotsky's Transitional Programme in the mid-to-late 1970's, retreating from changing reality into idealism and fantasy, comrades who wanted to fight in the class found it easier if they could keep "the Party" at arms length. But this could not resolve the question of working class leadership. One problem that became apparent in the youth movement was that whereas we had previously been able to clarify theoretical issues in the fight against opposing tendencies, youth who

joined us subsequently were denied this experience. Our leaders preferred to keep them insulated, and indoctrinated. This was carried on later in the WRP, when the fierce theoretical polemic for which the SLL had been noted was replaced by Healy's "security" ploy. Once you convinced yourself that your opponents were agents, what need was there to bother with answering their arguments? And since we knew we were not agents, how could we possibly become "revisionists" ourselves?

John Archer mentioned Healy's campaign accusing Trotsky's one-time secretary Joseph Hansen, of the US Socialist Workers Party of being both a GPU and FBI agent. I was surprised he forgot the earlier use of an "agent" smear against former members of the SLL, Robin Blick and Mark Jenkins, who like John Archer himself, sided with the OCI in France against Healy, and advocated a return to entry work in the Labour Party. Young WRP comrades were told this was all part of a CIA conspiracy! Less surprised, mind you, that he neglected to mention how the Lambertists themselves resorted to such methods, for instance in their slander campaign against our comrade

Balasz Nagy. Like Healy, too, the OCI did not shrink from using violence against its critics. John Archer said that he had not vilified anyone, and had not slandered anyone. Fair enough — his hands may be clean, but can he vouch the same for his friends?

"Security and the Fourth International" was the cover behind which Healy ditched the theoretical struggle against Pabloism (the tendency which claimed the bureaucracy or "Third World" national-bourgeoisie could replace the historic role of the working class), and in so doing, effectively abandoned the struggle for the Fourth International itself. Sadly, some of those former WRP members who most loudly proclaimed their "break with Healyism", while neglecting to study their own history properly, have ended up reaching the same liquidationist conclusion, only by a different path. Whatever our differences with John Archer, we must express our gratitude to him and other old comrades, not only for their past battles, but for their willingness to share their reflections with us, and impart confidence for the struggle ahead.

Charlie Pottins
West London

Your letters and articles are welcome.

Send them to the editor:

Workers International Press

PO Box 735

London

SW8 4ZS

Tel: +(0) 171 8666

Email: sbphoto@eurobell.co.uk

Supporters of US death-row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal demonstrated in London outside a publisher's office. A magazine published by the company had carried lies about Mumia, a longstanding black activist. The material, inspired by Philadelphia police, is intended to incriminate Mumia and justify his execution as soon as legal proceedings are exhausted.



The forces of the United Nations are the forces of imperialism

THE British section of the United Secretariat publish in the November 1999 of Socialist Outlook a "Statement of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International" on East Timor, issued in Amsterdam in September.

The statement describes the sending of United Nations troops to East Timor, but does not call for their withdrawal.

It calls on the United Nations forces, whose presence it tacitly accepts, to "guarantee the safe return of the thousands of refugees", to "guarantee the immediate disarmament of the civil militias created and backed by the Indonesian army ... and the arrest of all its leaders".

However it does not shrink from shaking a stern finger: "The Fourth International cannot accept any eventual position of the UN-mandated forces on the ground that means the disarmament of the FALANTIL" and "the Fourth International equally cannot accept the idea that the forces under UN mandate should be used as a force to guarantee the maintenance of capitalist interests in East Timor as, for example, with regard to

the oil of the Timorese sea ...".

Unfortunately, regardless of what the Executive Committee of the "Fourth International" can or cannot accept, regardless of what this or that individual UN soldier thinks, the forces of the United Nations ARE the forces of imperialism.

Like the NATO occupation troops stationed in Kosova, the primary aim of their presence is to physically disarm the people of East Timor, in order to destroy any possibility of their independence — and precisely in order to maintain the interests of capitalism in East Timor. They are not there to guarantee the safe return of refugees, nor to disarm the Indonesian backed militias.

The international "Peace-keeping force" is Australian-led — because Australian capital has a very deep interest in ensuring that the East Timorese people do not control their own country's resources. If they did, they might undo the lucrative deals already sealed between the Indonesian and Australian governments over oil in the Timor Gap (the sea that lies between East Timor and Australia).

The Executive Committee statement refers, with approval, to the East Timorese struggle for self-determination, though it stops short of calling for it.

But to express support of a struggle for self-determination is the dearest of abstractions if a people is denied the only concrete way in which they can achieve a real independence — through an armed struggle against the forces of the class enemy. You cannot say you start with the right of a people to self-determination, if you do not do everything in your power to ensure the best possible conditions for the waging of an armed struggle against imperialism.

The role of the United Nations forces in East Timor is to disarm the FALANTIL. In the same way, NATO forces in Kosova and Bosnia have as their first aim the disarming of the KLA and the Bosnian army.

In the period in which the workers movement internationally has not yet been able to overcome its long betrayal by Stalinism and Social Democracy, and is confused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, enormous pressure bears

down to accept imperialism's lies about its "humanitarian" interventions throughout the globe. To many it appears to be the only force which can prevent these orgies of butchery. That is why many Kosovars, Bosnians, and East Timorese have welcomed the imperialist forces into their countries with open arms — as the Irish Catholic community welcomed the British army in 1968.

But those of us who identify ourselves as Marxists lay claim to a theoretical heritage about the identity of the working class and its enemy, the bourgeoisie, and the necessity for the complete organisational, political, and ideological independence of the working class in its struggle for liberation.

That is why it is a truly criminal act of betrayal for any group on the left not to contradict with the utmost force all the propaganda tools of the bourgeoisie — as part of the struggle to reconstruct the consciousness of the workers movement.

The reconstruction of consciousness, of course, requires more than preaching from the sidelines about these fundamen-

tal principles (and what could be more fundamental than the identity of the class enemy?). It requires the organisation of the workers' movement to give practical support, internationally, to all its sections in struggle against imperialism.

The "Fourth International" EC statement goes on to hail the "mobilisation of public opinion" as the "strength through which the course of events can be changed". (And in so doing they hail the UN troops as the positive force through which "the course of events can be changed".)

Here they have forgotten again one of the founding principles of Marxism — that it is only the organised strength of the working class, conscious of its own position in society, and conscious that it must overthrow the class enemy and its state, that can win the "global struggle against injustice".

Imperialism stationed its troops in Bosnia, Kosova, and East Timor for its own purposes — to ensure a "new world order" of unlimited exploitation of workers. It prefers not to have the savagery of its exploitation interrupted by peo-

ples demanding a share in the wealth of their own countries.

Seventy years of destruction of working class consciousness has hidden from workers their international role and strength — to the great advantage of imperialism. But the task of Marxists is to overcome this lack of consciousness — not to succumb to its effects.

The Workers' International would like very much to discuss with members of the United Secretariat what they think of this statement of their Executive Committee. We are sure many do not agree with it, as evidenced by a previous statement on East Timor in the October issue of Socialist Outlook.

The position of the USEC leadership on United Nations troops in East Timor is the same as that they took on the presence of UN troops in Bosnia — which led to a split in the original Workers Aid for Bosnia. This split is now being referred to by many as a mistake.

We in the Workers International maintain that the "mistake" is to collude with imperialism to obscure its true nature from the workers' movement.

East Timor: imperialist manoeuvres behind war crimes delay!

By Charlie Pottins

THOUSANDS of East Timor refugees are still being held as hostages by the Indonesian army's terror gangs, months after the UN intervention which was supposed to establish peace and open the way to Timorese freedom. Concern has been expressed that a promised UN investigation into atrocities is being delayed, allowing time for a cover-up, so that Western imperialism can shield its partners in the Indonesian military. "There is overwhelming evidence that East Timor has seen a deliberate, vicious and systematic campaign of gross violations of human rights...", UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson said on 17 September.

"To end the century and the millennium tolerating impunity for those guilty of these shocking violations would be a betrayal of everything the United Nations stands for regarding the universal promotion and protection of human rights". But in a statement issued on November 11, the eighth

anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre, when Indonesian special forces gunned down mourners at a funeral, the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign Tapol voiced concern that more than six weeks after the UN decided to set up an inquiry into human rights abuses in East Timor, the inquiry team had not yet started work. "With every day that passes, more evidence is lost, damaged or destroyed, its reliability compromised, and the likely impact of the final report weakened. Behind-the-scenes political manoeuvres and the nightmare bureaucracy of the UN have shamefully conspired to cause a critical delay. It beggars belief that the East Timorese people are being treated in this way after all they have suffered."

Indonesian troops invaded East Timor in 1975 to prevent democratic, possibly left-wing, forces taking over with the collapse of Portuguese colonialism. The UN officially frowned, but US and British imperialism continued arming the

Indonesian dictatorship, while thousands of Timorese died resisting the occupation. More recently, the Australian government signed up as partner with the Indonesians to exploit Timorese oil resources. But after the fall of Indonesia's dictator, Suharto, and amid continued social unrest in Indonesia, president Habibie announced in January that the people of East Timor could vote on self-rule. Under the UN's gaze they voted overwhelmingly for independence.

The Indonesian army unleashed its murder gangs, many led by regular officers, mercilessly destroying homes and slaughtering civilians. The UN intervened, after agreement with the Indonesian government, effectively recognising its sovereignty over East Timor. UN troops have disarmed Timorese freedom fighters. Timorese leaders such as Bishop Belo and Xanana Gusmao are welcome to negotiate, so long as they agree to look after Western interests.

The International Force for East Timor (Interfet) has officially recovered 108 bodies, but does not have the forensic experts and post mortem facilities necessary to carry out proper investigations. The final death toll will be considerably higher. Australian intelligence is now saying that thousands have died in recent months, including large numbers killed and dumped at sea. The East Timor Human Rights Commission says that in the three weeks to October 22 it found evidence of 364 recent killings in Dili and the nearby towns of Hera and Tabar (Sydney Morning Herald, 12 Nov.).

On September 30, following a resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told High Commissioner Mary Robinson to establish a commission of inquiry into violations of human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law committed in East Timor since January. On the basis of its report, Annan

will decide whether to recommend that the UN Security Council should set up an international criminal tribunal. The commission must report by December 31. But members are not being allowed to question members of the Indonesian armed forces, nor to visit Timorese in refugee camps in west Timor.

Of the 220,000 refugees believed to have left East Timor during the fighting, only about 28,000 have been repatriated, and another 17,000 crossed the border on their own. Many returning refugees say they were forced to go to west Timor against their will, and that Indonesian-backed militias are still stopping people going home, either by force or disincentive. They say the militias are being rearmed by the Indonesian officers, and trying to press-gang new recruits.

After lobbying against the human rights commission, and trying to curb its scope, the Indonesian government announced it would not recog-

nise it anyway. Indonesia now has a new government under President Wahid and former oppositionist Megawati

. "Unfortunately," Tapol says, "there are ominous signs that leading members of the UN, notably the US, are adopting a strategy aimed at letting the Indonesian military and government off the hook. The future stability of Indonesia and military ties ... are considered to be more important than justice for East Timor. It is likely that East Timorese leaders are being given the message that their right to international financial assistance will be jeopardised if they push too hard."

In Indonesia's rebel Aceh province, there are fears that the Indonesian military will feel free to carry out further atrocities like those in East Timor. In "Irian Jaya", Indonesian-occupied West Papua, where huge Western mining corporations are ripping out the wealth, resistance leaders believe the UN will do even less for their people than it did for the Timorese.

Fight Privatisation!

RAILWAY and underground railway workers marched through central London to protest against the danger to safety caused by the privatisation of British Rail, tragically highlighted by the Ladbroke Grove crash earlier in the autumn.

They were joined by groups campaigning against the planned privatisation of the London Underground.

The New Labour government of Blair is deeply committed to the privatisation of nationalised industries, which provides tempting prospects of easy profits for financiers.

However, it also means speed up, sackings and cutting corners on the railways themselves. The strain on the remaining workers and the safety risks for passen-

gers have been all to starkly underlined.

Prospective mayoral candidate Ken Livingstone warned the Trafalgar Square rally that the government intended to grant a major role in the privatised underground system to Railtrack, the firm which maintains the tracks in the privatised railway system.

Livingstone pledged that if elected he would fight Railtrack tooth and nail. Subsequently the New Labour government was forced to drop Railtrack as a major bidder for the underground.

Popular opposition to privatisation is growing, especially as it has been shown to be more costly than raising bonds to finance the much needed modernisation.



Third Congress in spring

Our Third Congress is now set for London in the Spring of 2000. This is at least three years later than planned, but the delay was unavoidable. From November 1996 we were battling against a group led by Cliff Slaughter whose aim was (and is) the destruction of the Fourth International.

Every possible means was used by this group to sabotage party democracy. They proclaimed themselves to be "the majority". They refused to answer letters, to respond to resolutions or to call meetings. They closed down the party paper. They refused to call the party's Third Congress.

Against this sustained attack, in 1997 half of the executive committee formed a Fourth Internationalist Faction. Throughout the following year we campaigned for the Third Congress so that the differences could be discussed and decided upon. Finally, we called the executive committee meeting in January 1999. Cliff Slaughter and his allies refused to attend — they had already decided that the Workers' International did not exist! The main question for that meeting was the necessity to organise the Third Congress.

However, this congress cannot be organised simply on the basis of necessity!

The last three years' struggle has taken its toll of our human and financial resources. Many long-time party fighters have become disoriented, and may be lost to the movement for ever. We make no secret of the fact that the Workers' International and our paper are held together by a very small band of comrades.

But during the last few weeks we have seen a turning point — a new interest in our paper, which we are sure will increase when our website is established in the next week or so. What's more, we have received some heartening financial donations. Old friends and comrades in the USA, in London, in the midlands and in the south of England have sent us a total of £1,000. We have written to them individually, but we want here to express our sincere thanks.

This renewed interest and these donations have given us the confidence to believe that there are other friends and comrades who see the three-year battle against liquidationism as part of their own stand to uphold the banner of Marxism. We ask you to assist us to raise the necessary finance to organise the congress, and we hope that you will not only read the draft resolution but also participate in the discussion.

Workers International Draft Congress Resolution

Available now £2.50 including p&p

Name:

Address:

I enclose £..... for copies (cheques payable to Workers International) plus a donation of £.....

To the manager,
..... Bank.

Address

Please pay from my account the sum of £..... on theth of each month to:

Workers International:
Unity Trust Bank, Sort Code: 08-60-01 Account No:20059400

My account no:Sort Code

Signed:

Please return to: Workers International, PO Box 735, London, SW8 5ZS

News in Brief

Blair government attack hits asylum seekers Britain:

Since coming to power New Labour government in Britain have deported 90,000 people, not content with this they have brought into law the most horrendous immigration rules for 400 years.

The real attack on asylum seekers has begun with interim arrangements coming into force to bus asylum seekers away from the areas where they have been residing.

Local authorities have set up their own system for dispersing asylum seekers throughout Britain even before the draconian new Asylum and Immigration Act comes into effect.

Instead of social security payments, asylum seekers will receive vouchers redeemable at specific supermarkets.

Contact:
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC)
110 Hamstead Road
Birmingham B20 2QS
Phone: 0121-554-6947
Fax: 0870-055-4570
E-mail: ncadc@ncadc.demon.co.uk
Web site:
<http://www.ncadc.demon.co.uk/>

Mobilisation for Zoora Shah

West London: Southall Black Sisters (SBS) are calling for a demonstration outside the: Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT, on Wednesday 15 December 1999 from 12.30 p.m. - 2 p.m.. They urgently need support as they prepare to make representations to the Home Secretary to reduce Zoora Shah's excessive tariff of 20 years. She is in prison for killing a man who had financially, sexually and physically abused her for 12 years.

SBS will be presenting a petition of approximately 5,000 signatures to Jack Straw urging him

to reduce Zoora Shah's excessive 20 year tariff resulting in her immediate release.

Zoora Shah is currently in her eighth year of imprisonment and is desperate to be reunited with her children. SBS hope to have the presence of the Bradford MPs who are currently supporting her case as well as a number of celebrities. They promise to make the demonstration loud, irreverent and exciting but can only do it with your help.

Please attend, tell your friends, family, everyone and help mobilise to make this demonstration effective. Zoora and her children have suffered enough. Contact:

SBS for further information: 0181-571-9595, e-mail sbs@leonet.co.uk

Civil Rights Conference

Britain: The National Civil Rights Movement (NCRM) is to hold a conference in Sheffield, Yorkshire, on Saturday 22 January 2000. The aim is to adopt a constitution, elect a National Executive Committee and discuss and adopt policy resolutions. Organisers report new branches and contacts in Yorkshire and Wales during November. International contacts and solidarity are also developing. Contact:

NCRM, 14 Featherstone Road,
Southall Middlesex, UB2 5AA, tel: 0181 574 0818, email info@ncrm.org.uk

Inquest setback for Metropolitan Police

Fulham, London: The Metropolitan police tried and failed to turn the inquest into the death of Lakhvinder (Ricky) Reel into a trial of the family and local anti-racist activists. Ricky's mother is convinced he was the victim of a racist attack. Police systematically tried to portray her as delusional, but completely failed to convince the jury.

**Send your stories to:
Workers International Press
PO Box 735, London SW8 4ZS**

Tel: + (0) 171 627 8666

Fax: + (0) 171 627 4914

Email: sbphoto@eurobell.co.uk