

Workers International Press

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No to Bush- Blair War!

**No to racism!
Stop attacks
on civil rights!**



Thousands of Muslims resident in the UK joined 20,000 socialists, peace campaigners, trade unionists and many others who marched through London on 13 October to denounce military attacks on Afghanistan

'Workers International Press' statement

**No to Bush's War!
No to racism!
No to the attacks on
civil liberties!**

THE RISK of war, insecurity and poverty hangs over the entire world.

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the response of the governments of the US and her European allies show the truth about human society at the

beginning of the 21st century.

We live in an epoch of wars, civil wars, revolutions and struggles between capitalist powers, corporations and banks to control and exploit the wealth of the world.

The open outbreak of political and military conflict co-incides with the onset of the economic crisis which now looks likely to turn into a wholesale slump.

President George W. Bush proclaims: 'If you are not with us in the struggle against terrorism, you

are against us'. This is a formula to dragoon other nations into lining up with his reactionary 'anti-terrorist' front and to unleash it against any country he deems to be 'harbouring' terrorists.

At the same time it legitimises war on any group or regime which refuses to be bullied into joining up. Anyone in the anti-globalisation movement who stands up to Bush and the multinationals can expect to be criminalised as a 'terrorist'.

The 'socialist' European leaders, Blair, Schroeder and Jospin, rush to line up with Bush. Their armed forces are mobilised to back US military action against Afghanistan.

Meanwhile war hysteria in the US and Europe is fuelled by the media, racist sentiment against migrants and asylum seekers is stoked up and members of minority communities suffer violence and murder.

The leaders of France, Britain and Germany use the war-hysteria to avoid facing the consequences of their own attacks on the working class at home. Blair, for example, was able to escape criticism of his policies at the British Trades Union Congress. John Edmonds, leaders of the massive UK public service union GMBATU has shelved the union's campaign against government privatisation of public services.

The Russian army is publicly guilty of atrocities against the people of Chechnya: Russian president Putin assures Bush of his most heartfelt support for his 'crusade'.

Ex-president of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic sits in a prison cell accused of war crimes against Kossovian Albanians. His support for the terrorists Arkan, Mladic and Karadjic, the slaugh-

terers in chief of 8,000 men and boys of Srebrenica, is notorious. His Serbian Socialist party hypocritically condemns terrorism and offers Bush help to defeat it.

A united front of the most reactionary forces is assembling around George W. Bush.

All imperialists are using the events of 11 September to:

- explain away the economic crisis as the result of 'terrorism'. But the economy was on a downward slope well before September 2001.

- increase repressive laws and attacks on democratic rights across the world.

Throughout the 'advanced' countries new repressive legislation is to be introduced.

The working class will bear the main brunt of these attacks. As young workers are yet again called upon to act as cannon-fodder for imperialism, further laws will be proposed to limit trade union rights and intensify the exploitation and control by the employer in the workplace.

Some governments are consid-

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EDITORIAL BOARD:

Bob Archer, Nick Bailey, Hewat Beukes, Simon Burgess, Olivia Meerson, Radoslav Pavlovic, Charlie Pottins, Dot Gibson, Balazs Nagy, Bronwen Handyside,

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

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ering imposing a state of emergency which would severely limit all democratic rights and pave the way for a growing militarisation of society.

New restrictions on movement, new police powers to pry into people's private affairs, new attacks on individual protection against arbitrary state power will be added to already draconian legislation against groups and individuals alleged to be terrorists.

The present critical situation is itself born of intensifying imperialist parasitism and exploitation. The finance crisis of the late 1990s was only 'solved' in the most superficial ways which deepened the poverty and social conflicts in vast areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The turn to the 'New Economy' based on advances in computer science and communications technique, with the accompanying 'new media', turned out to be a complete and expensive fraud. The collapse of 'new economy' companies opened the way for the slow-down in world trade which predated the events of 11 September.

For several decades already the 'advanced' economies have sought to intensify the process of pumping wealth out of the rest of the world, looting natural resources, exploiting new and cheaper labour forces and refining the banking and financial instruments which conjure wealth for the few out of poverty for the many.

That is what many oppose as a new development — 'globalisa-

tion'. However this process has been the form of an increased tendency to parasitism on the part of imperialism for decades. 'Globalisation' is the extension and deepening of its rule — the removal of obstacles to its exploitation.

And within this, the US is itself the chief imperialist power which has established its domination over other imperialist interests in Europe and Japan.

That is why millions of people throughout the ex-colonial world feel that the US is now reaping what it has sown.

The contradictions of imperialism have not been overcome. Only the contrary, they have been concentrated within the role of the US and have now burst out more violently than ever.

Against the war hysteria whipped up by politicians and the media, a big movement against war and militarism has very quickly developed.

Workers International stands alongside all those who have come forward to say to Bush, Blair and the others: **'No to Bush's war! No to racism! No to the attacks on civil liberties!'**

This movement has brought together thousands who have not previously, or not for a long time, been involved in politics. It is a movement at an early stage and must develop beyond the (necessary) protest vigils, mass meetings and marches.

We warn: we are only at the start of the crisis. You have joined a political struggle which will develop as the crisis itself unfolds. The risk of war is real and it does not look as if it will recede quickly.

Any aggressive act by Bush could well unleash uncontrollable consequences.

To develop this fight means to recognise that the real aggressors are the imperialist masters of the US, Europe and Japan.

It means a turn to the working class in each country and internationally to evoke an anti-war movement with real muscle.

The crisis underlines the absence of a leadership of the world's working class, which leaves masses of people around the world virtually helpless victims of imperialism, forced to fight exploitation without the traditional working-class weapons of organisation and class solidarity.

This critical lack of a worldwide working-class leadership created a vacuum and as a result people have been misled into the tactics of terror on the part of conspiratorial cliques. These are not the methods of the revolutionary workers' movement and we condemn them send our sympathy and condolences to the families who lost their loved ones.

The Workers International to rebuild the Fourth International stands for the class organisation of the working class and the oppressed of the world to fight for their economic and political interests against imperialism.

This includes the struggle to win wages and elect political representatives and it includes the struggle to establish workers' states which abolish the rule of the bourgeoisie, inspired by the great example of the Russian working class in the October Revolution of 1917.

23 September 2001



A march against war approaches the Capitol building in Washington, DC

Imperialism in Afghanistan

THERE have been sharp debates among the opponents of Bush and Blair's war plans about the character of the regime in power in Afghanistan and the position socialists should take in the event of open hostilities there by the 'coalition'.

A better understanding of the relationships between the governments in colonial and semi-colonial countries can be gained by a study of Marxist classics. One such is a speech delivered to Asian communist students by Leon Trotsky.

(Trotsky: Perspectives and Tasks in the East [Speech on the third anniversary of the Communist University for toilers of the East,

April 21, 1924], New Park Publications 1973).

At the time this speech was delivered, the first Labour government headed by Ramsey MacDonald was at the helm in Britain.

Trotsky points out: '...The most conservative force in Europe is in fact MacDonaldisim. We can see how Turkey abolished the Caliphate and MacDonald resurrects it.

Is this not a shining example which sharply contrasts in deed the counter-revolutionary Menshevism of the West with the progressive national-bourgeois democracy of the East?

'Taking place in Afghanistan are truly dramatic events: MacDonald's Britain is toppling the left national-bourgeois wing which is striving to Europeanise independent Afghanistan and is attempting there to restore to power the darkest and most reactionary elements imbued with the worst prejudices of pan-Islamism, the Caliphate and so forth.

If you weigh up these two forces in their living conflict, it will at once become clear why the East will more and more gravitate towards us, the Soviet Union and the Third International' (Pages 10 and 11).

Appeals to West ignored

Moscow sabotages Chechen congress

Compiled from reports received from International Solidarity with Workers of Russia

Chechen human rights activists allege that Moscow gave orders to the Ingush authorities to prevent the Constituent National Congress of Chechen People from convening in the capital of Ingushetia, Nazran, in September.

Despite being detained and expelled from Chechnya's neighboring republic, the representatives of several national Chechen movements managed to discuss and adopt several key resolutions.

On the opening day the Chechen National Congress was prevented from convening in the House of Culture in the Ingush capital Nazran.

The delegates were rounded up and taken to the headquarters of the regional traffic police (GIBDD), from where they were shoved onto buses and driven back to Chechnya. Nevertheless, the delegates say they consider that the congress did take place for they managed to discuss and endorse several issues and pass resolutions while being held at the GIBDD HQ.

Among the organisations that attended the congress were Chechen

Solidarity, The Third Force for Peace in Chechnya, The Movement for Human Rights and The Committee for the National Salvation of Chechnya.

The organizers of the congress said they had negotiated the date and venue of the congress with the president of Ingushetia Ruslan Aushev personally, and say that the latter had given his verbal consent in August.

However, on the eve of the congress the Ingush authorities withdrew permission for the congress. The mayor of Nazran, Magomed Timourziyev vaguely explained the decision, saying that the House of

The National Civil Rights Movement

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Culture had been booked for some other "socio-cultural event."

The Congress adopted a Declaration on Peace and on the Principles of a Russian-Chechen Settlement, addressed to presidents Vladimir Putin and Aslan Maskhadov.

They also resolved to send the document to US president George W. Bush along with a telegram offering their sympathy and expressing solidarity with the US people in connection with the

vicious terror attacks that shook New York and Washington on 11 September.

Since these documents had been discussed and agreed in advance, all the delegates had to do was formally endorse them.

Previous appeals from Chechen peace and civil rights activists to leading politicians in Western Europe have fallen on deaf ears.

For more information contact ISWoR on:

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Debate

Don't just dismiss The Hague tribunal

by Charlie Pottins

I think the headline "War Crimes Tribunal Travesty of Justice" (WIP 32, July/August) was a mistake. I respect Rade Pavlovic's record as a fighter against Milosevic's Serb chauvinism. This comrade taught us about the Balkans, and fought for our movement to take up its international responsibilities (without him, Workers Aid to Bosnia would not have been born). I share his resentment at arrogant US imperialists imposing their will, and agree with much that he says.

The Hague tribunal is "victor's justice". But what other kind could there be? Comrades in the Bosnia Solidarity Campaign may recall me pointing out years ago, when they raised the issue of war crimes trials, that the Nazis could only be brought to trial at Nuremberg after Nazi Germany's military defeat. Of course, the Allies ensured that German industrialists got off lightly. Croatia's wartime Ustashe leaders, and other Nazis, were assisted to escape by the Vatican, the US and British.

Neither Italian generals nor the Japanese emperor were tried. Nobody was accused for bombing Dresden or Hiroshima, the Katyn massacre or the mass deportation of Chechens. We expose the shortcomings of Nuremberg to show the Allies did not eradicate fascism, or the causes of genocide. But we don't complain that Nazi leaders were prosecuted.

Likewise, we don't argue that because Ariel Sharon, Israeli prime minister, wages war on the Palestinian people, Milosevic should not face trial. "Slobodan Milosevic is as 'innocent' of the crime of Srebrenica as Sharon is of the crime of Sabra and Chatila," says Rade. Skip the irony. The master butcher of Sabra and Chatila must be tried for his crimes! Sharon is not as universally "respected" as Rade imagines.

Under Belgian law, which allows prosecution of foreign nationals for crimes committed abroad, relatives of the Sabra and Chatila victims are bringing a case against Sharon. The Israeli government has hired a lawyer to defend him, and commissioned a map for worried officials showing which countries to avoid to be safe from prosecution! With Belgium assuming the EU presidency some embarrassment could ensue — and problems for EU-Israeli trade. The Pinochet and Milosevic cases both influenced this scene. We don't entrust the struggle to the law courts, but that doesn't mean they should never be used.

The Hague tribunal can't bring back the men of Srebrenica, nor even return the women to their homes — that is a task for the Bosnian and international working class. But the tribunal has jailed General Radislav Krstic for the massacre, which some dubious "left-wing" characters deny took place.

Croatian and Bosnian senior officers have been sent for trial, contrary to the Guardian's Seumas Milne's



Eight thousand men and boys of Srebrenica were murdered by Bosnian Serb forces financed, armed and politically guided by Milosevic. (Left) Supporters of the Women of Srebrenica in the UK commemorate the massacre and support the women's demands for justice.

CHARLIE POTTINS here takes issue with an article by RADOSLAV PAVLOVIC in Workers International Press no. 32 ('War Crimes Tribunal a Travesty of Justice' July-August 2001). Workers International Press hopes these two articles will initiate a debate on the role and character of the War Crimes Tribunal and similar bodies.

assertion that nobody would be indicted for atrocities in Krajina. Despite ructions from the Croatian military and the Right (who brought nationalist Croats from Hercegovina to demonstrate in Split), opinion polls show half the people in Croatia favour co-operation with the Hague. "Such a big change is due to the arrest and extradition of Slobodan Milosevic", says lawyer Cedo Prodanovic. (Guardian 14 July).

Rade may be right that a trial in Belgrade would have been better than one at the Hague. We must insist the Hague tribunal does not narrow charges against Milosevic to the war in Kosova, but tackles his responsibility throughout, from sending the Army into Kosova in 1989, and especially for the Bosnian war.

Supporters of the Srebrenica women should mount a vigil outside the Hague court, and demand the women are invited to testify. Not only must Yugoslav files be opened, but those of the British and French governments. As Radi says, Lords Carrington, Owen and Hurd, who did business with Milosevic, must fear being called as witnesses for the accused! "What the final outcome will be, it is impossible for anyone to say at the moment". Surely, instead of denouncing the tribunal as a "travesty" before the star enters the dock, we must demand it does a thorough job? Justice, even bourgeois justice, must be seen to be done! (Rade says it will be difficult to keep the television cameras out of court.)

My misgiving, knowing British media, is that if anything embarrassing to our ruling class is raised, news editors will decide the public has seen

enough, and we must watch some mindless trivia instead).

The simplistic Stalinist-derived view dividing the world neatly into imperialism and its opponents was inadequate even during the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the race for chunks of eastern Europe and Russia unleashed all kind of capitalist rivalries and contradictions. British, German, US and French policies clashed in Bosnia. In the Macedonian conflict US weapons and 'advisers' have assisted both sides!

Ex-Foreign Office journalist Norah Beloff advised Chetnik lobbyists to rubbish the Bosnia war crimes judges. A French minister dismissed Hague "show trials". Now playwright Harold Pinter denies believing Milosevic innocent, but challenges the court's legality.

Trouble is, the "Free Milosevic" campaign began while Milosevic was held in Serbia, and has supported rallies of Milosevic's Socialist Party and fascist Serb Radical Party allies. Pinter's fellow committee members not only excuse Milosevic of war crimes, they claim there were no crimes, that men murdered at Srebrenica died in battle, and Muslims invented massacres to gain sympathy. Any resemblance to neo-Nazi Holocaust revisionism is no accident. Behind the pro-Milosevic campaign, a 'Red-Brown Alliance' links Russian Stalinists, Pan-Slavists and fascists, notably anti-American followers of the late Jean Thiriart, ex-Nazi collaborator and OAS backer, dreaming of a new European empire "from Galway to Vladivostock".

Such fantasies project real eco-

conomic and military ambitions. Having the 70-year old leftie son of a Hackney Jewish tailor up front gives reactionaries a good laugh, as well as soft liberal press coverage. The 'Left' has been disoriented by Stalinism and pacifism.

By all means warn against 'secret deals' and chicanery. But rather than assume defeat beforehand, let's raise demands which enable working people to judge whether justice is done, and deliver their own sentence on Milosevic and the system.

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“After their defeat in Vietnam, imperialism found it difficult to convince the population of the need for military interventions and lacked the right conditions for sending soldiers on land invasions—the ‘Vietnam syndrome’.”

Left: a National Liberation Front tank batters its way into Saigon

ON 11 September a series of attacks against the symbols of American capitalism shocked the world. Three hijacked aeroplanes were flown into the towers of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. Both towers collapsed. The Pentagon was partly destroyed.

Panic was unleashed in the most powerful country on this planet. Air traffic was suspended all over the country. The White house and other public buildings were evacuated. President Bush remained in hiding for the whole day, away from the events. The toll of the dead and wounded soared to several thousand.

The people of the world reacted in different ways to these facts.

In the metropolitan countries, the vast majority, amazed at the events, and following their governments and the mass media, expressed their solidarity with the USA.

In the countries of the so-called “Third World” the reaction was different. A good part of the Palestine population, having suffered everyday massacres by Israeli armed forces, USA’s gendarme in the Middle East, took to the streets to celebrate the attacks.

In other countries, thousands of people who with all justice identify American imperialism as the main culprit of all the great evils that befall on them watched with certain sympathy the crumbling down of the imperialist symbols. They saw the vulnerability of imperialism. This reaction which took many analysts by surprise, discloses the fact that in recent years there has been an awakening of a deeply anti-imperialist awareness among the toiling masses of colonial and semi-colonial countries.

In the USA reality was quite different. The afflicted toiling masses followed the news while thousands searched -and still keep on searching—in the hospitals and among the rubble to see if they can find their missing friends and relatives, most of them workers.

The real culprits are at home

The American population expects the FBI to find the culprits. It is a futile task. Perhaps the FBI may identify one or more terrorist groups, but they will never expose the real culprit responsible for the death of so many American workers: American imperialism itself. This terrorist exploit is impossible

Workers International is joined with the International Workers’ League – Fourth International (generally known by the organisation’s Spanish initials, LIT-CI) in the Co-ordinating Committee (Koorkom) to build an international workers’ party. We re-print here the statement produced by the LIT- CI following the events of 11 September

to understand out of the context of the policy of the leading power of the planet.

The government of the USA, with its dwindling band of allies, is the main source of unemployment, squalor and destruction. American capitalism, in a desperate attempt to keep their profit rates high, is trying to transform most countries into colonies. This generates resistance, struggles, revolutions, and confronted with this the response has mainly been violence and more violence.

Entire countries and populations have been wiped out, either through direct intervention (Vietnam, Iraq, Yugoslavia) or through paid agents. Sometimes these agents are states (Israel) and sometimes they are counter-revolutionary guerrillas (Afghanistan, Nicaragua...)

The activity of the different American Administrations has caused so much squalor and destruction and—consequently—so much hatred—and this is what has made this type of event possible.

But it may be that sectors of the American administration and/or of sectors of the American bourgeoisie have more than an indirect responsibility for this new attack. The ease with which the terrorists evaded all the security services of the leading power in the world leads to plenty of doubts and uncertainty. On the other hand, this would not be anything unheard of in the USA.

In 1995 a public building in the Oklahoma city was blown into the air. It was the biggest terrorist attack in the history of the USA: 169 people—among them many children—died in the explosion. From the start, the FBI and the government accused Bin Laden for the attack. Later on the author was identified. He was Timothy McVeigh, a former military man, decorated for his activity in the Gulf War, member of an ultra right wing organisation. Several people, among them a high ranking officer of the air force, reported evidence inducing the belief that elements in the security services may have

participated in the attack. The “powerful FBI”, however, did not follow a line of investigation into the matter. McVeigh was executed and so took the names of the others into his grave with him. This fact was exposed a week before the recent raids by the prominent American writer, Gore Vidal.

It is impossible to know whether sectors of the American bourgeoisie participated in the recent attacks. What does exist is a number of powerful political and economic interests that might justify such participation. An example of this is the project of the Bush administration (and of the powerful bourgeoisie linked to the military industry) to make great investments in the area of defence. This project, involving billions of dollars, was being challenged by those who argued that such an investment was no longer justified now that the “cold war” was over. Now, after the recent terrorist attacks, Bush’s arms project will hardly be challenged.

For the time being we cannot know if the lives of the thousands of workers who died in the WTC were sacrificed for the sake of the profit of American capitalism. What we do know is that capitalism has proved capable of sacrificing more human lives for fewer dollars than that.

The empire strikes back

No matter who may have been responsible for these attacks, we must understand that we are witnessing events of an historical nature, with deep repercussions in all spheres. Now, a few days after the attacks, we see American imperialism, in agreement with the leading European powers, getting ready to launch a counteroffensive. This is what they call “war on terrorism”. American undersecretary for war Paul Wolfowitz, was quite explicit about the meaning of this war. “It is not just to get hold of those who did it and make them pay for what they did, but also to eliminate the shrines,

the support, put an end to all the states that sponsor terrorism.”

It would be naïve, however, to believe that the counter-offensive that the imperialist governments want to launch would only be aimed at the terrorists and the governments who sponsor them. Terrorism challenges imperialist interests. From this point of view, it is a real problem that these governments have, but it is also an excuse. Terrorism, which incidentally exists in all continents, will be used to develop a global counter-offensive at all levels: ideological, political, economic and military.

The real targets of this war “against terrorism” are not the terrorists, who in comparative terms are very few, but those countries who are independent from imperialism or who are trying to maintain some degree of independence. That is why Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and any other who might hint at a similar course, run the risk of being massacred by the bombs of the imperial armies.

But the counter-offensive will not be limited to these countries either and the American government has been clear about that. It is all about defending American interests “wherever they may be menaced”. That is why an important official of the defence department declared for the CNN that American government was very concerned about terrorism in Latin America.

Terrorism is a menace for the imperial interests, but an even greater menace is the struggle of the toiling masses. It is the Intifada, it is the insurrections such as the one of Ecuador, it is the upsurge of struggles in Latin America; it is demonstrations in the USA itself, like the ones in Seattle or Washington; it is the struggles in Europe, such as the ones that have been taking place in France or the recent demonstration in Genoa, in Italy, when about 200 000 people protested against the meeting of the G-8. It was this event that made the President of France, Chirac, say that the leaders of the imperialist powers have been shocked.

In short, the real targets of this imperialist counter-offensive against “terrorism” will be the workers, the toiling masses, the peasants and the youth of the underdeveloped countries but also in the imperialist ones. Imperialism will try to attack all of them, albeit in different ways.

Ideologists of imperialism have

already begun a brutal ideological offensive summoning us all to line up behind them in defence of “freedom” and this campaign is beginning to penetrate into the workers movement. An example of this is the philosopher Habermas who is influential in left-wing circles and now calls on us to choose between “barbarism and western civilisation”. According to this “left-wing” philosopher imperialism stands for “civilisation”.

American imperialism and its European allies, by means of the IMF and other organisms, will try and reinforce the economic offensive against the dependent countries. For example, in Latin America the USA will try to rush through the American Free Trade Area (AFTA) to see if they can achieve another leap in the re-colonisation of the entire continent.

But the workers and the youth of the imperialist countries will also have to pay a price to the counter-offensive. For example, USA, affected not only by the terrorist attacks but also by economic recession, will try and use terrorism to overcome the recession by developing war industries, and this arms race will have to be paid for by the American taxpayer. The government has already declared that part of the war effort will come out of the funds reserved for education. Besides, the price to be paid by the American toiling masses, particularly the young ones, will be even more painful.

The American government knows that it will hardly be able to get rid of the governments of Afghanistan or Iraq by merely bombing from a height of 5000 metres. That is why they are studying the possibility of sending troops and so, once more, just as in the Vietnam war, American youth will become the cannon fodder in defence of imperialist interests. But it is not only that. The militarist policy of the USA will probably provoke reactions and new raids may take place in the USA and if this takes place, once more the casualties will almost certainly be workers.

The threat to Afghanistan

To initiate this global counter-offensive, American imperialism needs a response proportional to the blow received and that is why in these next weeks we shall probably witness a vicious offensive against a country or some countries that—in

Statement of: International Workers League – 4th International

Thousands of victims in the USA Imperialism is responsible

Now we must stop Bush's war against the peoples

the opinion of the American government—are protecting terrorists. Afghanistan seems to be the first target.

To begin with, Bush administration has called-up 35 000 reservists and American senators have released 40 000 million dollars for reconstruction tasks and for the military offensive and NATO has declared support. To justify the military attack on Afghanistan, the imperialists are making a systematic campaign to highlight the backwardness of the country, the oppression of women, the obscurantist and repressive nature of the Taliban, the bloodthirsty nature of the terrorist Bin Laden, etc.

We, revolutionary socialists, do not defend backwardness, we repudiate the oppression of women whether it is in Afghanistan or in any other part of the world—and we shall not give any kind of political support to either the Taliban or the multimillionaire Bin Laden.

Neither the Taliban nor Bin Laden deserve the least bit of confidence on the part of socialist workers' revolutionary organisations. And we do not say so simply because we do not have any programmatic agreement with them, or with him, but also because both the Taliban and Bin Laden himself were until quite recently paid and trained by the CIA. And this fact unveils the cynicism of Bush and his gang who accuse the Taliban of being repressive and oppressive and Bin Laden of being bloodthirsty. But were they any different when they were on the USA payroll to fight Russian hegemony over Afghanistan?

Imperialism does not wish to destroy the Taliban because it oppresses women or because it destroys historical monuments; nor does it wish to destroy Bin Laden because he is cruel. If that were so, it would be impossible to understand why they financed him for so many years. Imperialism wishes to destroy the Taliban for the only positive thing about it: because it refuses to comply with the orders from USA.

Individual terror

Many anti-imperialist fighters regard this type of terrorist action as an alternative to defeat imperialism. We consider this to be a serious mistake and not only because this action claimed the lives of several thousand workers, but also because actions of this sort, far from weakening imperialism, strengthen it

The toiling masses all over the world have started moving and acting, showing the way to defeat imperialism. This action has made some believe that there is another path: that it is enough for one group to perform one bold action and the enemy will be defeated. This is doubly wrong. Firstly because history has proved that imperialism can only be defeated by a revolution and that a revolution can only be accomplished by the toiling masses and secondly, because if the toiling masses were to be convinced that imperialism can be defeated by means of individual terrorism, they would lose the sense of their own efforts and activity.

But in the case of the recent attack, the result of such an action is much more negative for the masses than other similar attacks in recent years.

After their defeat in Vietnam, imperialism found it difficult to convince the population of the need to carry out military interventions and lacked the right conditions for sending soldiers on land invasions. This is what we call the "Vietnam syndrome".

Today, however, the terrorist attacks with a toll of thousands of dead workers have created a new situation.

Most of the population cry for revenge and are rallying around the American government. What is more: a recent survey shows that 90 per cent of the population is in favour of war and 69 per cent are in favour of war even if it costs the lives of many American soldiers.

If today imperialism has the possibility of launching a counter-offensive against the nations of the world, it is due to the fact that they have managed to recruit the majority of the toiling masses for this policy.

This is the ill-fated practical result of this terrorist action.

US workers and youth at the crossroads

As a result of the terrorist action, the workers of the USA, their students and the unemployed, in other words, all the exploited and oppressed of that country, feel that they have been attacked and are threatened. This cannot be avoided. When all is said and done, what for some may have been the downfall of a symbol of imperialism, for many American workers became tons of concrete grinding their families,

their fellow workers or friends to death. The American government, with the support of the media, is very craftily taking advantage of this feeling in order to encourage the craving for revenge and for the defence of the threatened "fatherland".

This patriotic campaign by the American government shows the imperialist counter-offensive. In this case it is a counter-offensive against the American toiling masses, who in the past forced the USA to withdraw from Vietnam and in the present, as we can see in Seattle, is once more beginning to confront the empire.

In this way, American workers and youth are now at the crossroads, because if, in order to save their lives threatened by terrorism, they rally round their government, they will actually be rallying round the leading terrorist, that is to say the USA itself, and many more lives, all over the world, will be threatened. Let us not forget Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Let us not forget Vietnam under the American napalm raids.

On the other hand the life of the workers, especially the young ones, will not be much more secure for they will be the cannon fodder in any invasion and because they will be the first victims of the new raids that the activity of the government will almost certainly provoke in the USA.

Confronted with the war-mongering campaign of imperialism, American toiling masses have no choice but to go back to the tradition of the mass demonstrations against the Vietnam war, something that has been partially taken up again in the Seattle and Washington demonstrations.

We know that it is a hard task due to the confusion created by the attack, but there is no choice and in the pursuit of this aim it is the unity with the workers of colonial and semi-colonial countries that is posed in order to halt the IMF and the AFTA and the march towards another world, with no empires, no exploitation, no oppression: a socialist world.

The toiling masses have the last word: the imperialist attack must be halted

Imperialism is preparing a vicious counter-offensive which is being called anti-terrorist but is really

against the peoples and against the toiling masses.

It would be a serious mistake not to notice this counter-offensive, but it would be equally serious to believe that its counter-revolutionary aims have become reality. As far as this is concerned, the last word belongs to the toiling masses.

Imperialism feels strong enough to launch this counter-offensive because the terrorist attacks have given them an excuse to put forward to their population and to the world, an excuse that they did not have before. We must take note of the fact, however, that this counter-offensive is being launched within a framework that is not all that favourable for imperialism. This counter-offensive is taking place against the background of an economic crisis further aggravated by the terrorist attacks.

This counter-offensive will have to confront the Palestinian Intifada, the upsurge of struggles in Latin America and in several other parts of the planet and, what is even more important, this counteroffensive will have to confront a

growing anti-imperialist feeling that the raids and all the activity of the media have been unable to avert, for it is a feeling deeply rooted in the hunger, in the unemployment, in the poverty, in the squalor that imperialism causes and can no longer mask.

This imperialist counter-offensive can and should be halted by the toiling masses, but in order for this to happen it is necessary for the most conscious sectors, the revolutionary, anti-imperialist, democratic workers and young people's organisations to find their place in the correct trench.

The imperialist proposal to form a front against the terror under the leadership of Bush must be opposed by the widest unity in action of the workers and the youth of all the countries of the world to confront imperialism and its new plans, beginning by halting this first escalation of this counteroffensive: the military invasion of Afghanistan.

If this invasion crystallises in that or any other country, the toiling masses will be faced with a challenge: to transform that country into a new Vietnam for the government of the USA.

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Build the International Network of Active Solidarity

IN AUGUST 2000, four trade unions in the left bloc of the Brazilian CUT organised an international trade union seminar which launched the International Network of Active Solidarity. They set up a co-ordinating committee in Latin America.

The Workers International To Rebuild the Fourth International supports this initiative, which responds to a powerful need in the world's working class for real international solidarity in action.

We believe this movement should be based on the following principles:

Trade union independence of the state and of the employers

Democracy within the trade unions

Workers' internationalism

A common international struggle against anti-trade union laws

A major recent development in the work for this network was the International Trade Union Conference held in Mexico City between 29 June and 2 July 2001.

The call arising from that conference is printed here, along with a number of other reports on workers' struggles around the world.

If you have any reports or comments on the struggle to establish an international movement of active workers, they can be sent to: wirfi@appleonline.net.

Statement of the International Trade Union Conference 29 June–2 July 2001 in Mexico City

Trade unions against AFTA and globalisation

Participants in the 29 June–2 July meeting adopted the following appeal to the workers of the continent of America:

The American Free Trade Area (AFTA) is the continuation and deepening of the neo-liberal project which has failed in its declared aims of furthering economic development, improving the quality of people's lives, advancing democracy and spreading social and political freedom.

Neo-liberalism and globalisation, adopted as a way out of the crisis of world capitalism in the 1980s, has generated obscene wealth in the hands of many industries at the cost of widespread poverty and unemployment and the disappearance of social benefits and human rights across the planet.

The AFTA is a tool to enable the multi-nationals to loot the wealth of nations on an even larger scale and increase the exploitation of workers particularly in the field of energy and natural and national resources. In its character, the AFTA is a continuation of the experience of the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) that has meant a loss of

jobs, increased flexibility and casualisation of employment and a weakening or destruction of workers' organisation.

The AFTA and globalisation constitute attacks against social rights through the commoditisation of workers' gains such as education and culture, health care and social security and their take-over by big transnational combines.

The participants in this international trade union conference declare our determination to unite our efforts to promote the widest social response to prevent the imposition of the AFTA and reject the current economic model.

We are determined to inspire, promote and invigorate working class organisation, broadening their forms, renewing their fighting methods and recovering the class consciousness of the trade unions, so that they are a genuine and authoritative voice in society, to develop working class action in defence of its historic rights and to build an economic model that assures the equitable distribution of wealth, the preservation of the environment and the sovereignty of the people over their own culture.

The International Union Conference (IUC) is committed to develop every effort to ensure that workers in their organisations play the role and assume the responsibility that falls to them in society in the fight against globalisation, recovering the tradition of international solidarity among workers, linking specific trade union demands with the fight for the necessary economic and social change to ensure our people worthy conditions of life and combating the corporate mechanisms and political bureaucracies that have sacrificed the working class in return for personal profit.

The IUC fights for the social, economic and political rights of the working class. We will only be able to make progress by preventing re-colonisation and the looting of our wealth and ensuring the independence of our organisation from governments and political parties.

The IUC is conscious that isolated efforts have historically been punished by defeat, and therefore calls on workers:

1. To promote discussion and the spread of information about the present conference so that dif-

ferent trade union and/or social organisations are involved in these activities and in order to achieve the unity of all those who fight for the rights of workers and the masses, developing contacts and concrete solidarity actions with all the people of the world who fight against neo-liberalism.

2. To organise a continent-wide day of action against the AFTA and for the cancellation of the foreign debt involving meetings, campaigns, conferences and various activities and insisting on the ratification and adoption of the various protocols, conventions and international agreements on human rights.

3. To co-ordinate actions and struggles in defence of public services such as health, education, culture and jobs.

4. To prepare local, regional and national trade union conferences to discuss our proposals to take to the second world social forum.

5. During the second world social forum to take place in Puerto Alegre, Brazil in February 2002, to initiate and participate in organising a world trade union

meeting and develop a workshop on working class trade unionism to advance our organisation and potential action against neo-liberal globalisation.

6. To establish various media, such as internet, radio, press, etc., to allow us to establish permanent daily communication in order effectively to carry out the decisions of this conference.

Signed: J. Gallic Vital Antonio, Alliance of Health Workers and Public Employees, Patricio Plates, David Varruel, Union of Workers of the Autonomous Metropolitan University, Celia Contreras, Section 32, Union of Public Health Workers, Luis Adolpho, Section 11, Union of Education Workers, Yolanda Inocencia Ramirez, National Union of High School Workers, Mariano, Association Services of Labour promotion, Bruce Allen, Canadian Auto Workers, Ze Maria de Almeida, Democratic Federation of Engineering Workers of Minas Gerais, Brazil, and member of the national executive of the CUT, Adilson de Saints, Engineering Union of Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil

Beijing supplies coolies for capitalism

by Charlie Pottins

A STRUGGLE by Chinese migrant workers in Israel has exposed state-owned companies from the "People's Republic" as racketeers, supplying cheap labour to capitalist interests and ripping the workers off into the bargain. After 170 workers employed by the Dori construction company went on strike in March over non-payment of wages, the Chinese embassy warned they could be deported back to China, and would be put on trial there for illegally withdrawing their labour.

Lin Huaice, a carpenter from a village near Shanghai, was promised at least \$350 a month, excellent food and conditions and light work. He was asked to pay a surety of \$2,500 which he scraped together from a variety of

sources, including his parents' burial fund.

Lin arrived in Israel in January 2000, and was sent with 169 compatriots to work at the Toyota site in central Tel Aviv. Dori Ltd. Contractors were his employers, but the Chinese company were responsible for his pay and accommodation. Lin the carpenter was employed as an unskilled labourer. He and his fellow-workers were expected to work 11 hours a day, and more, with few breaks.

They were accommodated in container-like huts whose thin walls did not keep out the constant roar of traffic on the nearby motorway.

For fifteen months Lin and his work-mates worked for next to nothing. Each month they received between 50 and 100 shekels (a shekel is roughly 24 US cents or 17 pence sterling). This barely covered

a phone call home to China. It was not enough to supplement the meagre diet of cooked vegetables provided by the Chinese company.

From time to time workers were sent to the market to gather left-over fruit and vegetables, and they bought scraps of meat.

On March 28, after discussing whether they would ever see their wages, the workers downed tools and went to the Tel Aviv offices of Kav LaOved, the Workers Hotline. Hanna Zohar, who runs the office, says:

"This was no better than slavery. In Tel Aviv, near us, with us, in our name. I felt ashamed."

Fu She explained the Chinese workers' position. "When we arrived in Israel, the Chinese company took away our passports. We tried to complain but the company

threatened us that we would be deported to China, and then we would lose not only our wages but the deposit as well. For us losing \$2,500 is almost like a death sentence. Many people in China are waiting for this money."

When they asked about wages, they were told they would be paid later in the year.

When the workers went on strike officials from the Chinese embassy came to try to browbeat them in returning to work. These officials tried physically to prevent Kay LaOved representatives from talking to the men.

Later, Embassy officials and representatives of the labour contracting company assured Kay LaOved that while the workers' conditions seemed like slavery to Israelis, they were employed strictly in accordance with Chinese government regulations.

Later the embassy official threatened strikers they would be deported back home if they did not resume work immediately.

On April 17 the strikers and their families in China received letters threatening that upon their return home they could be jailed for up to seven years.

The letter, signed by the Chinese Public Security Bureau said that if the strikers would denounce other strikers or "atone for their deeds," their punishment might be commuted. "Your conduct breaks not only the rules of the construction company to which you have subscribed, but also the criminal laws and contract laws of China," the letter said. "According to the labour laws of China, you are not subject to Israeli law but to Chinese law. Therefore those

workers who disrupt orderly production will be sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and to loss of their political rights."

As a result of the strike, the workers were paid more than they had been promised originally, although less than an Israeli minimum wage.

On May Day, the Chinese strikers were joined by Israeli Jewish and Arab trade unionists and Romanian migrant workers in a celebration at the Kav LaOved offices. A solidarity delegation of Palestinian workers from the West Bank was stopped by the Israeli military.

Reports from Israeli press and Kav LaOved/Workers Hotline supplied by Moshe Machover on Labournet UK—<http://www.labournet.net.uk>

The Workers Hotline has its own website, at: <http://www.kavlaoved.org.il/>

Local 1199 opposes launching new war

The President of Local 1199/SEIU, Dennis Rivera, with the support of the union's Delegate Assembly, announced the union's opposition to "launching a war against any nation because of the actions of a few", as well as the union's condemnation of terrorism and demand that the perpetrators of terrorist

acts be brought to justice.

Local 1199 represents 220,000 members in the New York metropolitan area. It was the first labour union to openly oppose the war in Vietnam. A union primarily of health care workers, many of its members worked to save lives following the attack on the World Trade Center.

Starvation wages in Siberian cannery

AT THE beginning of July, workers at a canning factory in Syzran (Samara region) were preparing a strike.

Women on the production line receive only 800 roubles a month (about \$27), and half of this is in the form of a premium which the boss may cut arbitrarily at any time.

One of the demands of Zashita union at the factory is the abolition of this system.

Airline refuses severance pay

American Airlines said in late September that it was invoking an emergency clause in its union contracts that will allow it to forgo pay-

ing severance to the 20,000 workers it plans to sack.

Union leaders said they are prepared to go to court to fight the decision.

The US's largest airline informed employees of its decision in an e-mail shortly after Congress approved a \$15-billion federal bailout of the airline industry. American is expected to receive about \$808 million in direct cash assistance as part of the package.

A spokeswoman for the airline said the company needed to withhold

severance payments in order to continue operating. She did not say how much it expects to save.

American and most U.S. carriers reduced their work forces and trimmed service by 20 per cent after the September 11 attacks that shut down the nation's air travel system for two days and made travellers nervous about flying.

The industry has been losing millions of dollars a day since then. American's severance pay decision was denounced by union leaders, who vigorously supported the federal

rescue plan but had urged that it include protections for laid-off workers, and a congressman who voted against the bailout because it did not include those provisions.

"We are strongly opposed, and we're going to do everything in our power to stop them," said Edward Wytkind, executive director of the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department, which is co-ordinating organized labor's response to the fallout from the attacks.

U.S. air carriers have announced 80,000 job cuts, and more are expected. Many of those affected are non-union employees with no contractual protections.

But unionized workers, from pilots to mechanics, had expected to

walk away with two to four weeks' severance pay, as stipulated in their contracts.

In a message to his 138,000 employees, American Airlines boss Don Carty underscored the severity of the company's financial difficulties. He pledged to forgo his compensation through the end of the year.

He said the layoffs and \$808-million cash infusion from the government "are not enough to save the company".

He asked other employees to follow his lead by taking voluntary cuts in pay. For every \$1 saved, Carty said, 20 cents will be put into a fund to help pay for the education of the children of American Airlines employees killed in the attacks.

Lipetsk women win right to pay

Workers at the Lipchanka enterprise in Lipetsk, a town about 300 km southeast of Moscow, threatened to take strike action early in September 2001 if the management continued to refuse to pay their wages still owing from June and July.

Since the re-introduction of the market system in Russia, the economic crisis has seen huge amounts of capital leave the country to be salted away in off-shore accounts, leaving no funds to pay the wages of workers. It is very common for wages to remain unpaid for up to a year, or for payment to be made in the form of goods for barter, which can be anything from condoms to coffins.

When part of the (mainly female) workforce at Lipchanka threatened to strike, the director paid their wages but simultaneously declared the proposed strike illegal. Meanwhile the staff in other shops at the enterprise declared their readiness to join the strike too.

Management responded by trying to prevent union representatives from visiting the shop floor. Igor Kuznetsov, co-chairman of Zashita union reports what happened when the workers found out that their fellow-workers, members of independent union Delo, had threatened strike action and been paid immediately:

"Today in the afternoon, September, 1, the chair of the local committee, Zinaida Shmeleva, was asked to come to Shop 2 so that the shop could join the trade union 'Delo'. Shmelova arrived with the forms to withdraw from the official union (FNPR) and join 'Delo'. At this point the assistant manager of the shop ran after Shmeleva and began to shout at her, trying to interfere with trade-union activity. "

Capitalist restoration kills miners

by Sergey Koltsov

A METHANE gas explosion on 19 August at the Zasiadko mine in the city of Donetsk, Ukraine, instantly killed 45 miners. Nine more died in hospital in the following weeks, while 34 workers were kept in hospital for varying periods, some of them with severe injuries.

Officials blamed the explosion on self-igniting coal and high methane levels.

This was the third explosion at the mine in 10 years. In May 1999 a methane blast at the mine killed 50 miners.

Capitalist restoration has not solved a single one of the problems which face the Ukrainian working class. Illusions in "good" capitalists who will take care of workers' conditions, jobs and lives have been shattered.

In 1989 workers started rising for the first time in a long time against the Stalinist bureaucracy. At that time the bureaucracy refused to satisfy their demands.

In 1990, workers had the illusion that capitalist restoration and the privatisation of the mines would help to improve the miners' position. But even as long as 1993, the Donbas

miners organised the famous march on Kiev which led to the defeat of president Leonid Kravchuk in the presidential elections the following year.

Now the government has produced so-called 'restructuring' plans for the industry. These will lead to the closure of hundreds of Donbas mines. It is thus absolutely clear that the bourgeois has no interest in investing in maintenance and modernisation of the mines.

This alone tells us who is responsible for the miners' deaths. The Industrial Union of Donbas looks especially cynical. The leader of this oligarchy of mine bosses is the former prime minister Yuhym Zvyagilskiy. They would not even support the families of dead miners.

At the same time as the accident the bourgeois government of the Ukraine is noisily celebrating the 10th anniversary of Ukrainian independence, spending huge sums of money on useless monuments.

This money alone was quite enough to assure the safety of Ukrainian miners, but the bourgeoisie did not think that was necessary.

Ukrainian miners have always been the vanguard of the Ukrainian working class

Russian workers fight gas monopoly

By Oleg Shein

On Sunday, July 15, 2001, at 8 a.m. in reaction to violation of an agreement by the management of the publicly-owned company Astrakhan-Gazprom, whereby residents of worker-settlements in the area dangerous to health [near the Gazprom plant] were to be relocated to non-polluted residential areas—the People's Committees of Astrakhan organized the people to form a picket line along the main highway used by Gazprom.

Early in the morning, the police began to engage in provocations. For example, they confiscated the driver's licenses of those who parked alongside the picket line on the pretext that parking within 350 meters of a crowd of people is prohibited. They also claimed the were taking anti-terrorist measures, etc.

Since by 2:00 in the afternoon no negotiations had begun, a group of around 100 persons, almost all of them women, attempted to block the roadway in order to stop only (!) those trucks that transport sulphur for Gazprom.

The blocking of the road did not last even five minutes. About 50 police and Gazprom security personnel formed a column and made a "flying wedge" charge into the row of people blocking the road.

Since the women had joined hands, the police used force. As a result one elderly woman suffered 3 broken ribs, another woman's fingers were broken, and one woman, Mariya Atagulova, whose pregnancy could not have gone unnoticed and who had a history of miscarriages, was beaten personally by Yarenkov, chief of the Krasnoyarsk police.

Yarenkov, prior to his appointment as police chief, had been the administrator of the Astrakhan Special Division for Quick Response and had completed six tours of duty in Chechnya.

The picket line was forced back to the side of the road and then into a field.

During the night from Sunday to Monday, July 15-16, and from Tuesday to Wednesday July 17-18, the police, while keeping close watch over the picket line, openly consumed alcoholic beverages. They threatened the pickets with the use of "special means of assault" against them (i.e., clubs, dogs, firearms).

The police even fired flares into the air. Police officials showed their high level of class consciousness when they explained to the pickets that workers are not permitted to criticise their bosses and that the police were prepared to kill the sisters and mothers of the pickets should the order come through. Rank-and-file police who had served in Chechnya displayed no less enthusiasm against the pickets.

The following Monday, a number of leaders of the People's Committees were arrested, detained at the police station for 7 hours (in violation of the legal limit of 3 hours) and finally arraigned.

The judge, however, declared that the arguments presented by the police were insufficient and the case was left open for further examination.

Meanwhile the picket line grew to about 400 people and eventually the authorities were forced to enter serious negotiations.

(Thanks to G. Shriver and C. Vaughan and ISWoR for the translation)

Imperialist crisis and the working class

by Bob Archer

WELL before 11 September, the world economy was 'probably already in recession' according to experts.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was already shrinking in a number of countries including Japan, Taiwan, Mexico and Brazil.

Industrial production around the world fell in the first half of 2001. Had the fall continued at the same rate, it would have totalled 6 per cent for the year as a whole.

The current downturn was already more comprehensive than the recessions of 1975, 1982 and 1991. The attacks of 11 September have merely underlined a slump that was already underway. Very few regions have been spared its effects.

The prices of shares on stock exchanges have been falling consistently since late 1999. On average, share prices had fallen by 28 per cent in the period up to late August 2001, wiping \$10 trillion off the values of shares. The collapse in share prices gathered pace dramatically after 11 September.

While some shares recovered slightly thereafter, the effects of the crisis are now spreading through the world economy like ripples in a pond. Sackings, factory closures and falling values of investments affect the lives of millions of working class and middle class people.

At the centre of the recession are the overwhelmingly rich and powerful banks and corporations of the United States and their weaker rivals in Western Europe and Japan. The result of more than a century of amalgamations, take-overs, buy-outs and the elimination of rivals through savage competition and outright war, these firms are enormously influential monopolies.

They are characteristic of capitalism in the period of imperialism. They represent huge blocks of capital which are free to roam the globe, looking for sources of profit and smashing down any obstacles to unfettered exploitation.

Increasingly it is a range of banking institutions which predominates, guiding and controlling the development and the destruction of industries to fit in with its own interests and allowing only these industries to continue where the exploitation of workers is most vicious.

These combines have become more and more parasitic. Rather than contributing to the development of the whole world, they lead to economic disruption. Rather than creating new wealth, they amass in their own hands the plunder of continents, while millions cannot find access to enough food or even clean drinking water.

Imperialism does not just impose poverty and disease upon these millions. Where they resist, they are beaten back and slaughtered. Where they try to organise democratic national governments, they face financial and political chicanery, the stirring up of ethnic and religious hatreds and the exacerbation of such conflicts into civil war.

Underlying all capitalist economy is a tendency of the rate of profit to fall, and it was to offset this tendency that monopolies were formed in the first place. However, the same tendency only re-asserts itself ever again

in a more concentrated form when the vast profits garnered by the monopolies cannot find a new field for investment.

(The tendency of the rate of profit to fall is explained in Part 3 of Book 3 of 'Capital' by Karl Marx)

Pointing to the long-term rise in share values in the world's stock exchanges, many capitalist apologists have talked about a 'new paradigm', an economy where the laws of value explained by Marx no longer operate.

Value is not, however, an arbitrary thing that arises through the clever management of the economy by capitalists. All value arises from the labour of the working class and others like petty proprietors and farmers.

Capitalists grow rich by taking over the unpaid labour time of workers. This is ultimately the source of all profits.

It is the tendency of the rate of profit to fall which has been at work in the economic crisis which first emerged in South East Asia during 1997 and which was merely palliated, never solved.

The 'solutions' to the crisis peddled by the US Treasury, the IMF and the World Bank mainly increased the ability of US monopolies to intervene in regions previously protected from them.

At the same time a huge fraud was practised in the form of the promised 'New Economy'. Capitalists boasted that new inventions in the field of information and communication technique and the 'new media' that went with them would usher in prosperity for all.

Billions were spent on installing glass-fibre communications networks. More billions were spent buying access to radio frequencies for ever more sophisticated mobile phones. More billions were invested in setting up internet websites that could sell any article that could imaginably be put up for sale.

Ailing electronics companies borrowed more billions to spend on building equipment for Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Billions were spent on creating pretty animated pictures to make websites attractive.

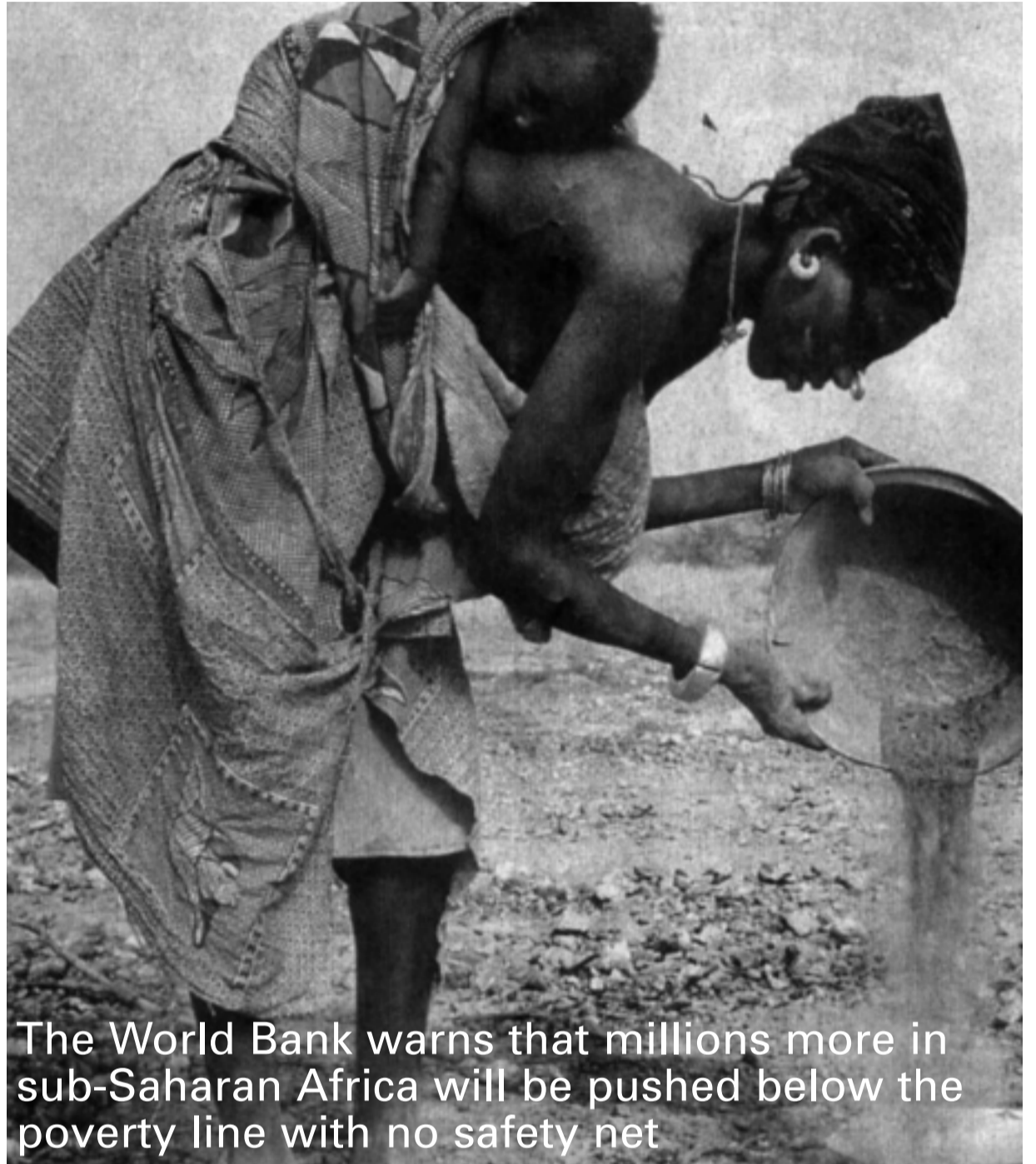
Unfortunately, society turned out to have little use for these toys. First the internet trading companies found they had 'burnt' all the cash they had been loaned. Then the ISPs started laying off unnecessary staff. Then the equipment manufacturers started to find they did not have enough customers.

And at each stage the share prices of the firms involved nose-dived, particularly affecting those stock markets like Nasdaq where shares are traded in companies which make technical developments.

But this was only the door through which the crisis entered.

A collapse in the profits of the great capitalist enterprises has brought huge losses in American stock markets. Consequently these monopolies are cancelling expansion plans, which means falling sales for the companies in the Far East, Central and South America and Europe who supply them with equipment and raw materials.

At the same time US, European and Japanese firms invest in and own other businesses and factories around the world. These are the first to be cut back and closed as the economy slows.



The World Bank warns that millions more in sub-Saharan Africa will be pushed below the poverty line with no safety net

Like the 1929 economic crash, this downturn is investment-led. Too much capital has been invested which cannot find a profitable return. Such recessions 'tend to be deeper and to last longer because it takes longer to purge financial excesses and overcapacity than it does to tame inflation' (The Economist, 25 August 2001).

Recoveries from recent crises have come comparatively quickly. However, authoritative commentators like the UK's 'Economist' magazine expect the process to be more long-drawn out this time.

Capitalists see one hope to resolve the crisis: since the mass of capital has grown far beyond any hope of showing a profitable return, big sectors of capital must be annihilated. Some large firms will have to go to the wall, and capitalists are already calling for a round of bankruptcies and company liquidations to clear the way for a recovery in stock exchanges.

Each group of capitalists will try to ensure that the capital to be destroyed belongs to other people. The enormous US concerns will undoubtedly use their overwhelming weight to achieve this at the expense of other regions and nations.

The implications for the poorest people in the world were spelled out by World Bank president James Wolfensohn early in October. He anticipated that as many as 3 million more people in Africa could fall below the poverty line. The reduc-

tion in expected growth is one factor. At the same time commodity prices are slumping, hitting farmers and rural labourers.

The World Bank warned that "The 300 million poor people in sub-Saharan Africa are particularly vulnerable because most countries have little or no safety nets".

Meanwhile the sister body, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is touring Latin America, Africa and Asia to strip away whatever "safety nets" remain there.

Individual savings will be wiped out and industrial plant demolished or left to rot.

Millions more will be thrown into unemployment and state benefits will suffer new cuts as governments' tax incomes fall and budgets start to move into deficit.

Social, ethnic, religious and national tensions will be exacerbated. Without a rapid development in working class organisation, many more crisis-stricken regions will undergo a collapse in social life and a slide into anarchy and dictatorship.

Imperialism is a system in which the productive forces are stifled, strangled and decay while still fettered by capitalist relations of production.

Imperialist economy will be able to "recover" from this current outbreak of crisis because the working class has been deprived of the leadership needed to defeat this system. But the cost will be unimaginable.

Until the working class can create a political leadership capable of rallying and leading a revolution, this system will spawn periodic destructive crises interspersed with periods of frenetic and wasteful growth.

This situation provides a challenge to everybody who boasts the name of Marxist. The organisation of working class political parties, trade unions and community movements will assume an enormous importance in the coming period.

This situation provides a ready field of work for all such who recognise that the leading role in such an organising drive belongs to the men, women and young people of the working class who see the need to put up a fight to defend the jobs, living conditions and political rights of their class against capitalism.

No longer is this working class confined to the 'industrialised' imperialist nations. There are millions of industrial workers in Latin America, Africa and various parts of Asia.

But such a movement can only be successful to the extent that it reaches out to and makes a place for the wider masses in those regions which have suffered the sharpest effects of capitalist crisis.

Above all Marxism cannot remain the property of middle-class intellectuals and white-collar workers in the imperialist nations. Socialist theory must devote itself to the task of re-building the international revolutionary party.