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Say no to the 'war on terror'



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Down with the 'war on terror' – down with New Labour

THE MOVEMENT FOR A SOCIALIST FUTURE DENOUNCES THE MILITARY ATTACKS BY THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN ON AFGHANISTAN. IN PURSUIT OF THEIR "WAR ON TERROR", PRESIDENT BUSH AND "PRESIDENT" BLAIR HAVE RESPONDED WITH THEIR OWN STATE-ORGANISED TERROR.

RAINING DOWN MISSILES from submarines and aircraft carriers on the poorest nation on the planet is the action of governments desperate to reassert their weakened authority in the midst of an acute economic and political crisis.

Bush and Blair have arrogantly assumed the right to overthrow the Taliban government of Afghanistan, as if that would solve any of the issues behind the horrific terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11.

They are now judge, jury and executioner as they seek to impose a new imperialist world order. In doing so, Bush and Blair have opened a period of conflict that will engulf many states, intensify the global economic crisis and produce social upheaval in their own countries.

Behind their so-called "war on terror" Bush and Blair are irresistibly drawn into an agenda that goes far beyond the crude aim of killing those deemed responsible for organising the suicide plane attacks on America.

The United States and Britain have seized the events of September 11 to justify the introduction of increasingly authoritarian rule at home and a global alliance with a range of despotic regimes abroad.

The media endlessly repeats the phrase "war on terror", as if by doing so often enough we will all come to accept it is as reality. An atmosphere that sometimes borders on a national hysteria, converts the mounting pressure on people, especially

those organised in trade unions or protest groups, to abandon or tone down their own justified interests, causes and actions.

Make no mistake, these political changes, which have Blair ruling as an unelected and uncontrolled president, are not just for a few weeks or months. They accompany a "war" which is – conveniently – said to have no boundaries and no time limit. The conflict can last as long as "civilisation" is under threat from an unseen and undefined enemy.

As terrorists are obviously not deterred by the passing of draconian new laws, we are obliged to ask ourselves why Bush and Blair have proceeded along this road. The answers lie in the economic and political crisis that was under way long before the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon.

The real threat to the major powers comes not from random external terrorist attacks but results from raging economic and political contradictions **internal** to the capitalist system itself.

As a result of the interaction between globalisation and the nation state, existing political bodies and processes have lost much of their authority. Major economic decisions are now taken by bodies like the World Trade Organisation, themselves mouthpieces for the interests of the transnational corporations.

These developments have contributed to the fact that political participation has fallen to record low levels in both the United States and Britain.



Tube workers demonstrate at the High Court against privatisation

...Blair has tied his political fortunes to the coat-tails of an American president who represents the US military and industrial complex...

Bush essentially bought the White House for the energy corporations while Blair managed to gain the support of only one in four electors in a 59% turn-out.

Add to this the low regard many people have for the police, the judicial system and – in Britain – the monarchy and it is not difficult to see why a “war on terror” has presented itself at a politically opportune moment.

Bound up with and driving these political developments is the evident crisis of the global economy. The promise of

endless expansion and riches for all from globalisation was always more hype than reality.

For the last year, the global capitalist system has witnessed the collapse of the dot.com speculative bonanza, the saturation of markets, falling prices and growing closures and redundancies. Airlines were already sustaining great losses well before September 11. Finally, the mounting evidence of environmental degradation proved to many that a profit-driven economic system was not sustainable.

Throughout its history, capitalism has reacted to economic turmoil by destroying production and jobs, forcing those in work to accept lower wages and worse conditions and, ultimately, resorting to military action to protect markets or create new ones out of the inevitable destruction. That is what we are witnessing today.

Unable to exert influence on a social system lurching out of control, Bush and Blair resort to the one set of resources they do manage: the forces of political and military repression that will be deployed against domestic resistance to the slump and the threat to the environment as well as perceived external threats.

In other words, their “war on terror” is essentially a capitalist war, fought on behalf of the corporations to preserve a discredited and unstable status quo. As it is inseparably connected with the future and fortunes of capitalism, we can only oppose their war plans by challenging their right to power.

At the centre of the new world disorder is Blair, whose view of his own self-importance is truly staggering to behold. He has tied his political fortunes to the coat-tails of an American president who is a direct representative of the US military-industrial complex.

Where Bush cannot string more than a few disconnected thoughts together, in steps a would-be president of Britain. Blair has removed himself from any semblance of parliamentary or Cabinet control and appointed himself a virtual head of state. As *The Guardian* remarked on September 29: “He is single-handedly taking Britain to war.”

The report added: “A senior Liberal Democrat this week complained: ‘He’s torn up the constitution and become far more presidential than any Western leader. We don’t even have the checks and balances they have in the US. We should recognise this and have direct presidential elections ourselves.’”



Pakistan: a demonstration against the bombing

This is the logical outcome of the transformation of Old Labour into New Labour. The Blairites see their role as a senior management team, ruthlessly “modernising” an old company, Britain plc. At their head is a Chief Executive Officer who fixes everything behind the scenes so that the “board” meeting is a rubber-stamp exercise. In fact, the Cabinet meets for no more than 30 minutes and Chancellor Brown spends the time doing his own paperwork, reports suggest.

Blair’s preposterous aim of remaking the entire world along the lines of some ambiguous moral code, which formed the content of his speech at the New Labour conference, is someone daydreaming of a world long gone when Britannia ruled the waves.

Blair told the assembled and uncritical New Labour faithful: “The kaleidoscope has been shaken. The pieces are in flux, soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us reorder the world around us.” One commentator rightly described the speech as “intellectual colonialism”.

These delusions of grandeur are typical of the arrogant New Labour regime. Home Secretary David Blunkett and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw are Blair’s chief apostles. Straw accuses the BBC of undermining moves to thwart terrorism and tells a Radio 4 presenter: “You are often a mouthpiece for prevailing non-government organisations”.

Blunkett, whose moral injunctions are almost as absurd as Blair’s, warns human rights lawyers and the courts not to obstruct new anti-terror laws which attack basic democratic rights.

Meanwhile, it is business as usual for New

Labour and the corporations. In the weeks after September 11, the government decided to press on with cuts in disability benefit provision, the privatisation of the London Underground and an expansion of the nuclear reprocessing industry. Meanwhile, the spook agencies MI5 and MI6 are getting extra cash and an influx of new recruits following their recent “successes”.

There are absolutely no concessions to the feeble trade union leaders when it comes to giving business a direct entry into public services. The unions, who shamefully abandoned their annual Congress in the wake of the plane attacks, were easily fooled into thinking that New Labour’s plans would be put aside in deference to the “war on terror”.

Iain Duncan Smith, the new right-wing Tory leader, stands “shoulder to shoulder” with Blair, who in turn stands “shoulder to shoulder” with Bush. There are few dissenting voices in British establishment or political circles. A synthetic unity embraces the entire media, trade union leaders, 99% of Labour MPs and religious leaders.

From their point of view, there is definitely a war to be won – and it’s not primarily against terrorism. The ideological, political and military campaign is directed towards re-establishing the tarnished authority of a capitalist system in crisis. Behind this manufactured war, the full burden of the economic slump is to be carried by working people.

It does not take a genius to work out that the “war against terror” is not winnable, no matter how many would-be hijackers are killed as the US and Britain take the law into their own hands, as judge, jury and executioner. Decade upon decade of imperialist oppression and exploitation from the Middle East to Africa, to Latin America and Asia created the conditions for terrorism.

Deaths at the hands of Western bombs and guns will without doubt lead to more volunteers. And more terror attacks will further justify the emergence of dictatorial rule in the US and Britain.

There are those who appeal to Blair to “find another way”, and to redistribute the wealth of the major economies to the poorer nations. This is a

...In the weeks after the terror attacks, the government pressed on with cuts in disability benefit, tube privatisation and an expansion of nuclear reprocessing...

classic case of self-delusion and a failure to understand what is happening here.

The apparatus of authoritarian rule is, as we have shown, the expression of underlying and insoluble problems within capitalist society. Far from being a "defence of democracy", the new world order under construction brings with it the final nails in the coffin of liberal democracy. That's what Blair's "presidency" is all about.

There is no going back in history. Old Labour has gone, turned into a party that sponsors and is sponsored by big business. The globalisation process has reduced national governments to relative insignificance. Emerging dictatorial rule is, therefore, an expression of deep historical processes which show that capitalism in its old forms is unsustainable.

Military action is certain to add to political and social instability around the world. The vast majority of people in the developing countries are inevitably hostile to the new form of imperialism; in the developed states, many see that the real threat to their lives is not from a terror attack but from a system that throws them out of work, destroys the value of their pensions and degrades the environment. Our responsibility is to turn this anger back against the governments and corporations responsible for bringing the planet to this grave point. Our objective is to stop them and their war plans by taking political and economic power out of their hands and transferring it to the majority in society.

The Movement for a Socialist Future totally opposes all military action taken by Bush and Blair's war machines, either to kill alleged terrorists or overthrow governments. We stand for the self-determination of the Afghan people and any military actions they take to defend themselves or their country.

At the same time, we condemn terrorist actions like those in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. The slaughter of thousands of working people was deeply reactionary and played straight into the hands of the White House and racists everywhere. Terrorism only offers mindless destruction and has no view of progress or a future.

We reject the Blair government as a stooge of the transnational corporations. We should link the growing opposition to the "war on terror" to the mounting economic and political crisis and make it a movement that can defeat and bring down this capitalist government.

To those who say that would let the Tories in, we answer: make the opposition to New Labour a struggle for power itself. Show that the alternative to Blair is not another round of parliamentary elections but a transfer of power that is entirely possible and necessary.

The MSF has launched a Charter for Basic Democratic Rights that we can use to rally those who in their different ways oppose New Labour and the "war on terror". It declares:

"We believe that the existing system of government at European, national and local level does not represent the interests of the vast majority in terms of public services, health, transport, education, housing and the environment. The system is democratic in name only. Parliament and the New Labour government act simply as rubber stamps for the powerful business and financial interests which impose their will through the World Trade Organisation.

*Therefore, the time has come to defend our right to vote by **extending** it to every area of society. We call for new, truly democratic bodies to represent the views and interests of the majority. These will guarantee basic rights to assembly, to organise and strike, to justice and to asylum. These bodies will:*

- *Put people directly in charge of decision-making through local, regional and national Peoples' Councils. Delegates to be elected on an annual basis to represent different sections and groups in society, from workplaces and communities*
- *Democratise ownership and control of major corporations to put their resources at the disposal of society. Place the NHS, public transport, education and other key services under the control of those who work in and use them*
- *Make the protection of the environment a top priority to save the planet from destruction. End the abuse of science, technology and agriculture."*

We are confident that such a movement can and must succeed. A peoples' government of this kind will easily find a solution to terrorism. It would hold out a genuine hand of friendship and economic assistance to poor nations and support the self-determination demands of the Palestinian and other peoples. Support our charter and make the struggle for power top of the agenda. ■

Globalisation of the economic slump

THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11 BROUGHT THE FRAGILITY AND WEAKNESS OF THE WORLD FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM INTO SHARP RELIEF. A MELTDOWN OF THE US STOCK EXCHANGE WAS ONLY NARROWLY AVERTED DUE TO THE RAPID RESPONSE OF THE FEDERAL RESERVE AND THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK, BOTH OF WHOM CUT INTEREST RATES AND GUARANTEED LIQUIDITY. CORINNA LOTZ ASSESSES THE DEPTH OF THE GLOBAL SLUMP.

IN THE WEEK after September 11, the Dow Jones industrial average fell more points than ever before in its history, with \$1.2 trillion worth of market value wiped out. The index of blue-chip US stocks suffered its biggest decline since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Although the dramatic falls on the global markets were temporarily reversed by early October, the damage to confidence was permanent. A sustained recession is now forecast by a host of economic and financial experts.

Respected New York bankers J.P. Morgan are now predicting 0.5 per cent growth for the last quarter of 2001 and minus 1.7 per cent for Japan. "The current downturn is notable for its breadth as well as its width. Virtually all economies are weakening simultaneously, whereas past global slowdowns tended to accentuate rather than diminish the differences between them," the bank commented.

At the same time the International Monetary Fund issued a stern warning about the prospects for the global economy. Chief economist Kenneth Rogoff said that recession in America was "a done deal". His laconic words spooked politicians trying to reassure their countries about the "robust" nature of the world economy.

And just before the G7 finance ministers meeting in Washington on October 7, IMF managing director, Horst Kohler warned that "a more-pronounced-than-expected economic slowdown is under way across much of the IMF's membership".

The suicide attacks on the WTO and the Pentagon triggered an immediate and disastrous slump in trade for the air transport business, and they have accelerated a process which was long in the making. Profit margins were already so narrow that a short period of cancelled flights and loss of bookings was enough to bring virtually every major carrier to its knees.

At the beginning of 2001, a third of the world's workforce of 3 billion people were already unemployed or underemployed, according to the International Labour Office, the UN agency. The number of "openly unemployed" increased by 20 million over the three years since 1997. In the US 199,000 jobs were lost in the month preceding September 11.

J.P.Morgan's chief economist, John P Lipsky, said that the US economy was already headed into a recession before September 11. In the weeks before, more jobs were lost in the US than at any time in the last decade. Layoffs and job cuts spread from the manufacturing sector into the service sector, which now accounts for 80 per cent of jobs. The decline in wages was twice as large as expected.

Fund managers Morgan Stanley Dean Witter's chief economist described the run-up to September 11 as "two months of sickening declines in a row". Thus, the current jobs massacre is a sharp downward twist in a spiral of a long-term economic decline over the past year and a half. The world's stock markets fell by just over 40% in real

Jobs massacre as slump deepens

Transport

Swissair – £190m aid package from Swiss government to resuscitate the collapsed carrier

Delta Airlines – 13,000 job cuts

Northwest Airlines – 10,000 job cuts and 20% cut in services

US Airways – 11,000 job cuts

Air Canada – 9,000 job cuts

British Airways – at least 6,700 job losses

Sabena – £78m rescue package from Belgian government

Aer Lingus – 25% cut in flights 1,700 permanent & 600 part-time jobs to go

Iberia – capacity cuts, job losses and \$7 charge for all passengers

KLM – 1,200 workers will not have contracts renewed and 12,000 on short-time working

Alitalia – 2,500 job cuts proposed

Scandinavian Airlines System – Up to 1,100 job cuts

Continental Airlines – 12,000 staff sent on unpaid leave

Air New Zealand – renationalised with government cash injection of £280m

British Midland – 600 jobs cut, capacity cut by 20% and 8 aircraft grounded

General Electric – world's largest aircraft engine maker cutting 4,000 jobs (13% of its workforce)

First Choice Holidays – 1,100 jobs axed

Boeing – 30,000 workers lose jobs

American Airlines – 20,000 jobs cut

Air France – winter schedule of flights to US cut by 20%

Virgin Atlantic – 5 aircraft grounded and 1,200 staff laid off

Lufthansa – delays orders for 15 Airbus superjumbo jets and four Boeing 747s.

Media & Communications

12,000 jobs are being culled at **TDK** and **Sun Microsystems**, which makes large-scale servers for big companies. Sun's chief executive Scott McNealy said: "The events of September 11 have impacted on us all. Things were tough with the economy before, but now we are facing increasing uncertainties – both in the US and globally."

Nortel Networks Corp of Canada is cutting 10,000 jobs and reducing its workforce by another 10,000

In Japan, **Hitachi**, its biggest electronic group announced 10,000 job cuts at home. The announcement by the company came only days after **Toshiba**, the country's biggest chip manufacturer, said it would axe 19,000 jobs, close six out of 21 domestic plants and announce a record loss this year of 19.5 billion yen.

In Britain, **BT Wireless** is planning 1,500 sackings in Ireland and the Netherlands. **Consigna**, the new name for Royal Mail, plans 20,000 job cuts.

More than half of **Atlantic Telecom's** UK workers were sacked after the Aberdeen-based company was placed in administration. The redundancies come on top of the 650 job cuts already made by Atlantic in the UK this year.

United Business Media is shedding 700 staff, around 9% of its worldwide workforce. Latest figures showed that advertising across the Group's titles had fallen by 32% over the last year.

terms in the last 18 months, “a decline of historic proportions”, in the words of the *Independent's*, Jonathan Davis. Nasdaq, the technology market dropped by more than 70%.

Davis discovered a silver lining in the events of September 11, seeing them as a catalyst that will restore market valuations to “sustainable levels”. In reality stocks and shares were pushed to the “bubble” levels seen in the last years of the 20th century by vast amounts of speculative and fictitious capital desperately seeking a lucrative home.

The vast loss of jobs sweeping the world's biggest economy, the United States, will have devastating effects on all other countries. The notion that the global capitalist system is the only viable economic and social system, and that we had arrived at “the end of history”, appears more threadbare than ever.

Instead of globalisation bringing a “trickle-down” equalisation of wealth, the differences between poor and developing countries and the major capitalist powers are greater than ever, especially to the millions losing their jobs. Extreme economic inequality and political repression have led to millions of people moving around the planet in search of a better future.

This grim reality is the background to the attacks on the symbols of capitalist globalisation, regardless of who was actually responsible. What is new is that the political and psychological aftermath of September 11 triggered a loss of

confidence in the system itself.

For an economic order that is based on untold amounts of personal consumer debt, any loss of confidence is disastrous. This is why interest rates have been lowered again and again over the last six months both in the United States and Britain in a desperate ploy to keep their economies afloat.

Currently at 4.5%, home loans are now at their lowest level in Britain since the 1950s.

John Gray of the London School of Economics remarked: “The effect of the attack on the World Trade Centre may be to do what none of the crises of the past few years – the Asian crisis, the Russian default of 1998 and the collapse of Long Term Capital Management, an over-leveraged hedge fund – was able to do. It may shatter the markets' own faith in globalisation. (“The End of Globalisation”, *New Statesman* September 24)

“The name of the game has changed for ever,” Gray writes. The entire view of the world that supported the markets' view of globalisation has melted down.”

It is clear that the “go-go years of globalisation” are gone, never to return, and that we have entered a period of extreme instability, where governments have very little control either over the economy or over the process of conflict or war itself.

But globalisation as an economic and political process continues unabated, not least in the weakening of all economies. But now it is the globalisation of slump and recession and the drive to war that predominates. ■

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Blunkett targets civil liberties

IN THE WAKE OF THE TERROR ATTACKS ON U.S. TARGETS, NEW LABOUR IS PREPARING A RAFT OF MEASURES THAT AMOUNT TO AN UNPRECEDENTED ATTACK ON THE CIVIL LIBERTIES OF EVERYONE IN BRITAIN. DYLAN EYDAL REPORTS



Armed police guard the New Labour conference in Brighton

MEASURES TO BE introduced by the government will include undemocratic, unaccountable and repressive powers allowing police, the security forces and other government agencies to monitor the activities of anyone they choose.

David Blunkett, the Home Secretary, claims that the emergency legislation introducing “anti-terrorism” measures is made necessary by the terror attacks on America. But a closer analysis shows that they amount to a wish-list from reactionary forces. The new laws will target asylum seekers, ethnic minorities, anyone showing the slightest dissent to the Bush-Blair world view and those supporting the growing anti-globalisation movement.

There is also a reactionary plan to make verbal attacks on specific religions a crime. It will lump together particular religions with particular ethnic groups – racial stereotyping of the worst kind. Those who criticise religion from a humanist or atheist standpoint could also fall foul of the law.

The proposed new legislation, supported so enthusiastically at the New Labour conference, would include such measures as the introduction of compulsory ID cards, the tracking and freezing of

bank accounts and the increased tapping of e-mail communications and telephone conversations.

The repressive nature of what is proposed is clear from an examination of each of the proposals.

ID Cards

The introduction of compulsory ID cards is advocated by Blunkett as part of the Bush-Blair “war against terrorism”. He says that the card will “entitle rather than restrict”. However, the reality is that the card will be used as a tool of repression against the most vulnerable sections of society.

Eminent civil rights lawyer Tim Owen of the Matrix Chambers has said that there is much evidence from EU countries which have ID cards that the police disproportionately target citizens from ethnic minorities. In the current climate there is no doubt that the Islamic community in particular would be targeted.

As well as a means of encouraging an institutionally racist police force to target ethnic and religious minorities, the ID card system could be extended to contain all types of personal information not connected in any way to terrorism.

One member of the government has already said that "if you go to hospital they will ask you for your identity card. If you go to school they will ask you for your identity card. If you claim benefits they will ask you for your identity card".

Modern technology is so advanced that it would be possible for the magnetic strip on these cards to be programmed to monitor the exact location of anyone holding a card much in the same way as satellite technology can determine within a few yards the position of anyone using a mobile phone by using the SIM card as a reference point.

Bill Morris, the leader of the Transport and General Workers Union, has said that the present atmosphere will lead to draconian curbs on asylum seekers and the use of ID cards to target innocent people. Even the right-wing Police Federation of England and Wales has said that "the benefits are unclear, the practical obstacles daunting... and the threat to privacy and community relations all too apparent".

Rights of refugees and asylum seekers

Another of the insidious measures which the New Labour government wants to railroad through on the back of the terror attacks is to place severe restrictions on the rights of asylum seekers fleeing persecution who wish to apply for UK residence.

Blunkett has made it quite clear that the government will exclude what it calls "suspected terrorists" from any rights of asylum. The definition of "terrorists" is to be based entirely on information provided by British security services and there will be no rights of appeal or judicial review over Home Office judgements as to who is a suspected terrorist.

The new measures will include immediate extradition without the right of appeal. Blunkett has gone even further by warning human rights lawyers and judges not to stand in the way of the proposed legislation. In a blatant attack on what he sees as a "liberal" legal system he said: "It is justice we seek, not the primacy of jurisprudence."

The entirely subjective nature of this system will give powers to the government to exclude anyone they wish from rights of asylum without being answerable to anyone for their actions. No-one will have a right of appeal or even a right to be told why they are being excluded other than that the decision is on "security grounds".

Tracking bank accounts

The G7 group of leading industrial nations plus Russia is about to meet to approve what is called a "global crackdown on the financing of terrorist groups". They have an agenda which includes powers to track and freeze bank accounts of suspected terrorists without the need for hard evidence of a link between the account holder and a terrorist organisation.

The proposals include powers to introduce laws to allow the freezing of funds when there is a "suspicion" that they are used for terrorism and monitoring of accounts without proof of a link to terrorism. Again, the evidence of a terrorist link will be entirely on the basis of evidence produced by the national security forces.

Monitoring e-mail and telephone calls

Most people believe that e-mail messages sent from their PC, telephone calls and faxes are secure and not subject to bugging. They should think again, particularly after the new security measures being introduced after the events of September 11.

A sinister US-based organisation called Echelon is considered to be the most powerful intelligence gathering organisation in the world. It has close links to America's National Security Agency who in turn have close links to Britain's GCHQ.

The NSA's biggest base for electronic spying is at Menwith Hill on the Yorkshire Moors where 25 giant golf ball like structures are tuned in to intercept all types of electronic communications.

In a chilling message on the Echelon web-site the organisation issued the following message: "We at Echelon are deeply saddened by the terrible events of September 11...history shows that times of national crisis are often accompanied by enormous pressure to expand surveillance. We expect that in the coming months the redoubled effort to prevent terrorism will lead to an expansion of Echelon and the related communications surveillance systems... This is why Congress and the democratic institutions of other nations must take their oversight responsibilities more seriously."

All of the proposed measures are based on the Bush doctrine that "you are either for us or against us". The Blair and Bush governments are using the terror attacks as an excuse for the most severe restrictions on civil liberties ever carried out with no place for dissent of any kind.■

"The people of Afghanistan have nothing to do with Osama and his accomplices"

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT HAS BEEN ISSUED BY THE REVOLUTIONARY ASSOCIATION OF THE WOMEN OF AFGHANISTAN (RAWA)

ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 the world was stunned with the horrific terrorist attacks on the United States. RAWA stands with the rest of the world in expressing our sorrow and condemnation for this barbaric act of violence and terror. RAWA had already warned that the United States should not support the most treacherous, most criminal, most anti-democracy and anti-women Islamic fundamentalist parties because after both the Jehadi and the Taliban have committed every possible type of heinous crimes against our people, they would feel no shame in committing such crimes against the American people whom they consider "infidel". In order to gain and maintain their power, these barbaric criminals are ready to turn easily to any criminal force.

But unfortunately we must say that it was the government of the United States who supported Pakistani dictator General Zia-ul Haq in creating thousands of religious schools from which the germs of Taliban emerged. In the similar way, as is clear to all, Osama Bin Laden has been the blue-eyed boy of CIA. But what is more painful is that American politicians have not drawn a lesson from their pro-fundamentalist policies in our country and are still supporting this or that fundamentalist band or leader. In our opinion any kind of support to the fundamentalist Taliban and Jehadies is actually trampling democratic, women's rights and human rights values.

If it is established that the suspects of the terrorist attacks are outside the US, our constant claim that fundamentalist terrorists would devour their creators, is proved once more.

The US government should consider the root

cause of this terrible event, which has not been the first and will not be the last one too. The US should stop supporting Afghan terrorists and their supporters once and for all.

Now that the Taliban and Osama are the prime suspects by the US officials after the criminal attacks, will the US subject Afghanistan to a military attack similar to the one in 1998 and kill thousands of innocent Afghans for the crimes committed by the Taliban and Osama? Does the US think that through such attacks, with thousands of deprived, poor and innocent people of Afghanistan as its victims, it will be able to wipe out the root-cause of terrorism, or will it spread terrorism even to a larger scale?

From our point of view a vast and indiscriminate military attack on a country that has been facing permanent disasters for more than two decades will not be a matter of pride. We don't think such an attack would be the expression of the will of the American people.

The US government and people should know that there is a vast difference between the poor and devastated people of Afghanistan and the terrorist Jehadi and Taliban criminals.

While we once again announce our solidarity and deep sorrow with the people of the US, we also believe that attacking Afghanistan and killing its most ruined and destitute people will not in any way decrease the grief of the American people. We sincerely hope that the great American people could DIFFERENTIATE between the people of Afghanistan and a handful of fundamentalist terrorists. Our hearts go out to the people of the United States of America. ■

Key dates in Afghan history

1220 Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan seizes control; at the end of 14th century, Mongol invader Tamerlane seizes northern Afghanistan

1504 Babur, founder of Mughal dynasty, conquers Kabul

1747 Afghan chiefs select Ahmad Shah as their ruler. Becomes known as Durri-i-Dauran (Pearl of the Age). Shah enlarges realm, to include eastern Iran, Baluchistan, Kashmir and part of Punjab

1838 Anglo-Indian army invades Afghanistan starting First Afghan War

1841 Akbar Khan leads successful revolt against Anglo-Indian forces and their puppet, Shah Shuja, decimating Anglo-Indian Kabul garrison

1842 British forced to leave

1878 Shere Ali Khan angers British because of his friendship towards Russia. Anglo-Indians invade again in Second Afghan War

1879 Kabul occupied by Anglo-Indians

1880 New ruler confirms cession of Khyber Pass and other Afghan territories

1907 British and Russians pledge respect for Afghanistan's territorial integrity

1919 Amanullah Khan declares war on Britain. Peace treaty is negotiated. Britain recognises Afghanistan as a sovereign and independent nation

1926 Khan institutes political, social and religious reforms, including women's education

1947 Strained relations with newly-independent Pakistan. Frontier clashes

1960 King Zahir takes over. Severe drought years – 80,000 people die of starvation

1973 Muhammad Daud seizes power, deposes King and proclaims republic, but is killed in coup in 1978

1979 Soviet-backed coup and occupation by Soviet troops. Throughout the 1980s, 118,000 Soviet troops unable to dislodge rebel mujahedin, supplied with arms by the US and Islamic countries.

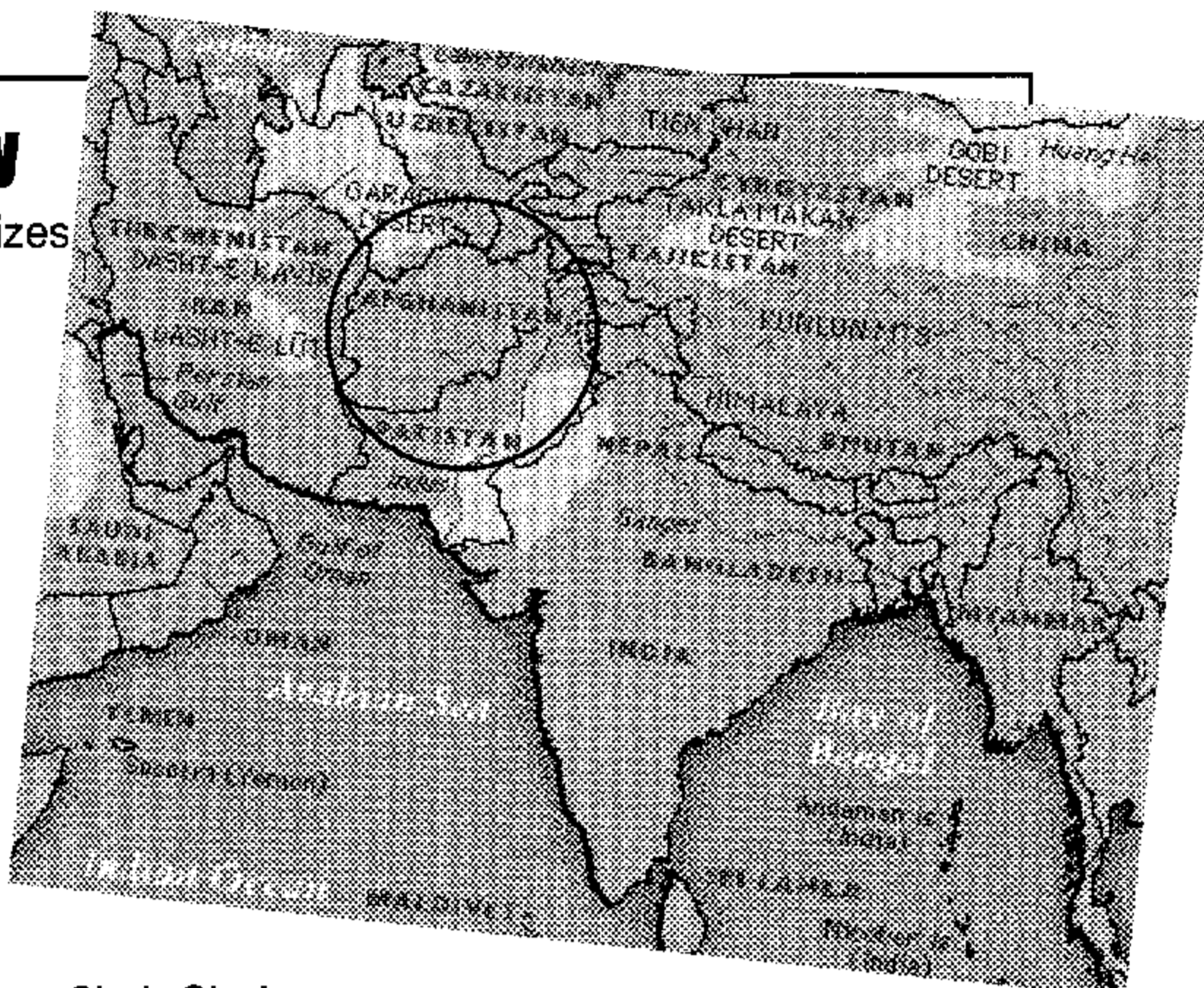
1989 USSR withdraws combat troops, but civil war continues

1992 Rebels take over Kabul and depose Muhammad Najibullah

1994 Fighting between guerrilla factions

1996 The Taliban, an Islamic student militia, takes Kabul, executes Najibullah and establishes strict Islamic regime. Women banned from work outside home, education and must be fully veiled

1997 Taliban government recognised by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Anti-Taliban forces form alliance under Ahmed Shah Masud.



A Soviet soldier during the disastrous occupation of Afghanistan by the Red Army

Behind Afghan poverty

JOHN EDEN LOOKS AT SOME OF THE CAUSES OF POLITICAL TURMOIL IN AFGHANISTAN

THE UNITED NATIONS claims imminent famine in Afghanistan is the result of three years of severe drought. But the real reason is that food production has given way to opium production, under the control of local warlords allied to either the Northern Alliance or the Taliban movement.

Ninety per cent of heroin in Europe comes from Afghanistan via Russia and Pakistan. The Afghan peasants see nothing of the billions of dollars made from heroin. Most ends up in the coffers of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist group, local warlords, Taliban officials, the Russian Mafia and the Pakistani intelligence agencies.

What are small farmers and workers of Afghanistan to make of this situation? The warlords and sections of the Taliban force them to grow opium; these enforcers get rich, while they starve to death; then they see bags of donated wheat, their only means of avoiding death, stamped "USA" in huge letters.

This enormous calamity that has engulfed Afghanistan, the prospect of mass starvation, is just part of the background to the barbarity in New York and Washington. But it was not the Afghan people that were responsible, but ultimately those who helped train and sponsor the terrorists. That includes not only the Pakistan regime and Saudi Arabia, but the US and British governments.

The US is quite aware of the situation that exists in Afghanistan. A week after the attacks in America, Donald Rumsfeld, the defence secretary, spoke about the fact that "there was now a split between the people and the Taliban, within the Taliban itself, and between the Taliban and Bin Laden's al-Qaeda".

But this split in the Taliban is not a result of American pressure but the dire conditions within Afghanistan. The Taliban were once welcomed as liberators by the Afghan masses, from the ruthless previous government, which now comprises most of the opposition Northern Alliance. Many now see the Taliban for what it is, an arm of Pakistani expansionism. Many of the Muslim clerics in Afghanistan only embraced the Taliban because

they brought order to the country on the promise of a pure Islamic state.

The twin crises of the Taliban regime and the al-Qaeda movement led by Bin Laden were undoubtedly factors in the decision to attack America. Sections of the Taliban turned against Bin Laden, threatening not only him but thousands of his al-Qaeda members.

Their only chance of survival was to provoke the United States to bomb Afghanistan, as they did in 1998 after the terrorist bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. This, they reasoned, would unite the Taliban regime again behind Bin Laden's group.

But Bin Laden has not always been a terrorist in the eyes of the Americans and the British. Once he was a "freedom fighter" when he did their work in Afghanistan, helping to drive the Soviet army out of the country. For this he received equipment, finance and training.

Coming from a rich Saudi capitalist family of Yemeni origin, his anti-communism and his fundamentalism made him a perfect partner for Washington and London.

The former Pakistani head of state Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, told the then US President Ronald Reagan, who was arming and training Bin Laden: "You are creating a Frankenstein." The "monster", disenchanted with US Middle East policy and its huge military presence near holy sites in Saudi Arabia, has since turned on his paymasters with a vengeance.

No longer needed by the American imperialists and their allies after the defeat and withdrawal of Soviet forces in Afghanistan the Taliban became instruments of the Pakistan government's attempts to control Afghanistan. This suited American policy, because it contained Iranian and Soviet influence in the area. Later Bin Laden turned from being a willing activist of American policy to their implacable enemy because the US was allowed to build an enormous military base in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf war, which they still occupy and have recently modernised and enlarged. ■

CHECHNYA

Putin's dirty war



Chechen refugees

THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT OF EX-KGB BOSS, NOW PRESIDENT, VLADIMIR PUTIN – A CLOSE FRIEND OF BLAIR – IS WAGING ITS OWN VERSION OF THE SO-CALLED “WAR ON TERRORISM” IN THE REPUBLIC OF CHECHNYA. PART OF THE SECRET DEAL FOR SUPPORTING THE UNITED STATES IN AFGHANISTAN IS A GREEN LIGHT FOR PUTIN TO STEP UP A WAR WHICH, SAYS A LEADING RUSSIAN JOURNALIST, HAS TURNED THE COUNTRY INTO A ‘LIVING HELL’. KATE MCCABE REPORTS.

THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT is in daily breach of every single international law and treaty on the conduct of war and the treatment of refugees. It has caused untold suffering and destruction and the deaths of tens of thousands of Chechens.

This is Putin's very own war. He has built his meteoric rise from obscure head of the Federal Security Bureau (the old KGB) to Russian President, on the rubble of Chechen towns and villages.

The first Chechen war began in 1994 when Russian troops were sent to the republic to repress the independence movement, which had declared a separate state and set up a provisional government. The pro-capitalist, IMF-backed Russian government of Boris Yeltsin was determined not to lose control of this oil rich state which is part of the route of the main oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea.

In spite of superior numbers and firepower, the Russians faced a series of humiliating defeats at the hands of the Chechen independence fighters. There was consistent opposition to the war inside Russia itself, not least from the mothers of the young conscripts sent to perform national service in a country where they were a hated occupying power. These troops were untrained, badly led and facing death for reasons they neither understood nor supported.

The Russian army succeeded in inflicting terrible damage on the Chechen people, reducing the capital Grozny to rubble and leaving many of its civilian population heaped into mass graves or eking out a miserable existence in the ruins or in refugee camps. Civil society was destroyed.

By 1996 the Russians had had enough, but the Chechens had been unable to win an outright victory. Finally in August an agreement was



Living in the ruins – Grozny today

reached whereby Russian federal troops withdrew and a five-year moratorium was imposed on any discussion of independence.

The journalist Anna Politkovskaya began writing for the news magazine *Novaya Gazeta* in 1999 as Putin and his predecessor Boris Yeltsin were plotting the second Russian adventure in Chechnya. In that year there was an outbreak of fighting in Daghestan, the republic adjoining Chechnya. A group of Chechen rebels crossed the border declaring Daghestan and Chechnya one independent state, a declaration that had little support in Daghestan.

These events were accompanied by a series of terrorist bombings of housing estates in Russian cities. Some said these sinister events, which seemed to come out of the blue, were carried out by Chechen rebels. Others believed that the Federal Security Service or their agents operating within the Chechen movement, were responsible, the aim being to whip up Russian public opinion in favour of a new assault on Chechnya. Indeed there were suggestions that the whole Daghestan adventure

was orchestrated by the Kremlin to justify the subsequent military response.

A recently published collection of Anna Politkovskaya's articles* exposes the brutality of Russia's second intervention in Chechnya, where war is being made almost exclusively on the civilian population.

Politkovskaya shows great courage in continuing to expose the horrors behind the bland statements of Putin's ministers. Journalists in Russia who expose corruption of the state or its friends in industry and finance (also known as the Russian Mafia) are frequently threatened and sometimes killed. In July 2000 Igor Domnikov, her colleague on *Novaya Gazeta*, died from injuries sustained in a beating which was probably ordered by someone he had exposed or offended.

As the second Chechen war began, thousands of civilians fled to refugee camps over the border in Ingushetia and Politkovskaya reports on their fate, shivering and starving through the winter of 1999. She describes the Putin government's decision to place the notorious State Directorate for

Penitentiaries in control of the borders and refugee camps. As the department responsible for containing one million prisoners in the appalling conditions of Russia's jails, the main qualities it instils in its employees are racist hatred and the ability to brutally suppress outbreaks of dissent or rioting. Chechen women and children must now negotiate their escape and their lives in the camps with these monsters.

The role of the private sector in newly-capitalist Russia is explored with an article about Military Commemoration Ltd, an Orwellian business venture set up to identify the bodies of soldiers and civilians killed in the Chechen wars. Formed in 1997, it has received almost \$4m to carry out this work on behalf of the armed forces ministry. Whilst it spends wholesale on up-to-date equipment, much of it unrelated to the task, every operation is dragged out for months – not surprising when the very corpses of the dead have been turned into commodities.

Politkovskaya also reports on the fate of the Russian soldiers, brutalised by their experiences and by the terrible conditions in which they live. She met doped up soldiers who spoke of rape and murder with sadistic pleasure. They paid for the dope and alcohol that fuel their psychosis with boxes of ammunition, which are then sold on to the enemy to use against them.

She also reports on the rich oil and gas industries of Chechnya, all now illegally owned and operated by various criminal gangs protected by both the Chechen police force and the federal army. The Russian official who is the head of the state oil company has never actually visited Chechnya and the company controls nothing.

She explains there are two types of oil wells – those that work and those that burn. Those that work belong to wealthy gangs who can afford their own security forces. Those that burn are set on fire by their owners, who are unable to keep hold of them by force but want to deter others from moving on to their patch.

When a fire is put out – a costly and difficult enterprise – local people know the weak baron has succumbed and one of the big boys has moved in and taken over. The environment, the waste, the poisonous fumes destroying the health of those living nearby do not feature in this war of primitive accumulation of capital.

All economic activity, from market stall to billion-dollar gas business, functions only through

the payment of substantial bribes to members of various branches of the federal and local government who are using the occupation to enrich themselves.

In December 2000, Politkovskaya wrote from the capital: "As the second winter siege sets in, Grozny today is a living hell. It is another world, some dreadful Hades... there are no signs of civilisation among the ruins apart from the people themselves." Children starve and lose limbs from landmines buried amongst the rubble. Old people in rags live in dark basements.

In January 2001, President Putin took control of the occupation out of the hands of the Defence Ministry and put it directly in the hands of the FSB. The decisive military victory has been won, he claims, and what remains now is a war against "international terrorism" which is more appropriately carried out by FSB officers and troops.

The Council of Europe, which had removed Russia's voting rights over its actions in Chechnya, cynically took this as a promising sign and brought them back into the fold.

But Politkovskaya found out what it really means when in February 2001 she travelled to the southern area of Chechnya in response to a cry for help from 90 families in Vedeno district who had demanded to be resettled outside their home republic. They were so desperate to escape the torture, murder and repression being carried out against them in an area controlled by the FSB they were prepared to leave their homes forever. When she arrived, she too was arrested and faced abuse and threats of rape or worse. She told a television station after her release: "After seeing how they treated me, a journalist, I am convinced that all the complaints of local residents are true."

Some Western leaders have been critical of Russia's actions in Chechnya, but not so British Prime Minister Blair, who has made a close ally of President Putin. On his recent visit to Russia to strengthen the "war on terrorism", Blair ate a hearty stew with Putin at his country dacha and the two talked through the night and into the early hours of the morning, it was reported. It is not likely that the daily terror faced by the families of Vedeno was high on the agenda, however, or the fate of hundreds of thousands of Chechens now suffering as a result of Putin's dirty war. ■

* *A Dirty War, a Russian reporter in Chechnya* by Anna Politkovskaya, The Harvill Press, £12.00.

A matter of survival

ADRIAN EDGAR REVIEWS A NEW EXPOSÉ OF THE POWER AND PLUNDER
OF THE GLOBAL CORPORATIONS

“THE RULES SET by the secretive WTO (World Trade Organisation) violate the principles of human rights and ecological survival. They violate rules of justice and sustainability. They are rules of warfare against the people and the planet. Changing these rules is the most important democratic and human rights struggle of our times. It is a matter of survival.”

Vandana Shiva, Indian activist.

This is how Dr David Cromwell, of the Southampton Oceanography Centre, begins the introduction to his book *Private Planet – Corporate Plunder and The Fight Back**. He proceeds to argue as to what can, what could and, moreover, what must be done to confront and defeat the global corporate control of the world.

Dr Cromwell identifies all the areas of concern affected by the global corporations and their instruments such as the IMF, the World Bank and others. Arguably, the WTO, which was set up in 1995 is the most powerful. He demonstrates the real reasons for its existence.

For example, despite a ruling by the EU banning American beef because it was produced using artificial growth hormone and was found to be carcinogenic in humans, the WTO authorised the US Government to impose punitive trade sanctions on European goods. Further, it compelled the UN to abandon an attempt to set up a code of conduct for transnational corporations.

Dr Cromwell quotes a revealing warning by David Korten, author of *When Corporations Rule the World*: “UN Secretary General, Kofi Anan, is firmly committed to using UN and other public funds to subsidise the corporate buy-out of Third World economies.” A dire warning, especially to those naïve enough to have any faith in the UN!

The book is a timely compendium of relevant facts and figures, quotes and sources all of which are more than ample evidence against the barbarism of global capitalism. There is no doubting the author’s sincerity and passion for justice and change but, unfortunately, his suggestions for changing the world betray a belief in reformism and gradualism.

For instance, in the chapter “Spotlight on the Media”, after a savage exposure, he recommends: “As well as maintaining pressure on the

mainstream media, we should be developing alternative frameworks to raise and maintain awareness of the truth that so often goes unreported” (Incidentally, what is this abstract “truth”?) And, in a few paragraphs later, he asks himself a rhetorical question: “But to whom should one be addressing one’s message?”

He then goes on to enlist Naom Chomsky’s suggestion that we should try to engage with “an audience that matters – and furthermore, it should not be seen as an audience but as a community of common concern in which one hopes to participate constructively. We should not be speaking to but with.” Dr Cromwell ends this chapter with the emphasis that “throughout this book are examples of how this process of constructive participation is taking place around the world – in a benign form of globalisation”.

Faced with a system that has ravaged the planet and its inhabitants and is now hellbent on destroying it in the interest of greed and profit, “benign” alternatives are sheer quixotic fantasies.

In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx emphasised that though philosophers have interpreted the world, the task was to change it. But how and to what end? These are the crucial questions and as Vandana Shiva, the Indian activist, quoted by Dr Cromwell says: “It is a matter of survival.”

In spite of his valiant exposure of the consequences of globalised capitalism, Dr Cromwell merely wishes to assist in making it more humane by persistent pressure and mass protest, though he concedes that, for example, “it will mean not just opposing the WTO but dismantling all the large centralised state and corporate entities that are currently wreaking havoc on people and the planet”.

He also acknowledges that he has no blueprint and that what is imperative is collaboration and cooperation both nationally and internationally, so as to formulate coherent and agreed policies against global capitalism now. Its strength is a plastic facade. As Dr Cromwell perceptively concludes: “The globalisation of economic and political power, with its attendant globalisation of technological forces, contains the seeds of its own destruction.” It is a Paper Tiger! ■

* *Private Planet - Corporate Plunder and the Fight Back* by Dr David Cromwell, Published by Jon Carpenter, Oxfordshire, at £12.99.

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