Russia in chaos: Asian “tiger” economies crash: Latin America under pressure ...

Who’s next for ‘free market’ treatment?

Reportage of the catastrophic crises which have swept through the economies of Indonesia, Korea, Thailand, Japan and now Russia is eerily reminiscent of the classic headline “Thousands killed – no Britons involved”.

Smug journalists view these huge man-made disasters, with their appalling consequences for tens of millions, from the narrow and short-sighted perspective of the British economy and the safety of their stocks and shares.

Labour politicians try to persuade us that there are no dangers or lessons in these disasters for the British working class.

The fact is none of them predicted these tumultuous events in Asia. None predicted the pace of the Russian collapse. And nobody knows yet which economy will be the next to be laid low by the crisis of a sick and exploitative system.

Socialists will view the issue differently. We extend our solidarity with the workers of Indonesia, Korea and with the Russian working class. Their fight, and ours, must be to sweep away the wreckage of this wretched capitalist system, take the power from the bankers, the bosses and their generals, and build a socialist society to meet the needs of the oppressed, not line the pockets of the rich.
2 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Civil service vote Socialist Caucus!

George Thompson, Public Commercial Services SEC candidate (personal contact)

JOBCENTRE workers are facing increasing attacks from the New Labour government, with diminishing resistance from union leaders in the newly-merged Public Commercial Services union (PCS).

The rightward shift of the Socialist Party-supported PCS Section Executive has led to it recommending a disciplinary pay offer, supporting the New Deal, and agreeing to the introduction of youth trainees into the Employment Service (ES) on strike wages.

Such policies have led to a break-up of ES Left Unity: now the Socialist Caucus, a principled part of the former bloc, has decided to mount an electoral challenge to the Socialist Party and its allies for the SEC. Although this split in the left vote risks allowing the Blairite “Moderates” to gain control of the Socialist Commercial Services (SBC), many members are asking if they could be any worse than the current leaders.

The pay deal accepted by the present SEC was one of the poorest in the Civil Service, amounting to an embarrassment to other Left Unity PCS Section Executives. The Socialist Commercial Services, controlled by Left Unity, rejected a similar management offer.

The deal did not come close to a set of minimum demands previously promoted by the SEC as the least members should accept. They claimed they supported it because there was no good amongst members for a fight, but this was not reflected at workplace meetings.

In organisational terms the PCS has seen a massive membership decline in the SEC in recent years. The London region, dominated by Socialist Caucus, has been one of the few areas to retain its strength.

However the “left led” SEC ran a “slave to the campaign against the Jobseekers Allowance, and has supported New Deal.

By contrast Socialist Caucus has always argued it was opposed in principle to a scheme which is compulsory to the unemployed and allows the private sector to poach ES jobs.

Another major difference between Socialist Caucus and the SEC has been over National Trade Union (New Labour’s replacement for the Trades Union Congress) membership. Since 1998, the SEC has signed an agreement with management to allow 400 National Trainees to work ES for £75 per week for between six months and two years.

The Socialist Party itself carried a front page article in their newspaper (Socialist No. 75) unswervingly showing their own leaders in the SEC for endorsing a youth traineeship scheme that the party has earlier disowned.

Later they retracted this article and tried to defend the indefensible.

The positions adopted by Socialist Party supporters and their allies in the SEC in relation to New Deal and youth trainees are in contradiction to Left Unity policy, and it is believed that they may stand as Left Unity candidates in new elections.

The SEC failed to meet every intention of trying to win the elections and building a real fightback to the government’s onslaught. Such a victory would not only benefit the sectional interests of Government contractors, but the unemployed and the working class as a whole.

Vote Socialist Caucus!

The positions adopted by Socialist Party supporters and their allies in the SEC in relation to New Deal contract Left Unity policy.

Rail engineers’ dispute sharpenes

A Shovelhand THE RAILWAY maintenance engineers dispute is a struggle for control of the hodge podge of rip off merchants who have divided railways from the railway since 1996.

The dispute in some areas has become so bitter that shareholders and GTRM maintains the West coast mainline from London Euston to Carlisle and other areas in the Midlands.

Steve Hedley, a very good rep, has been sacked by the company for writing to the editor and claiming that he was a Protestant and he has a strong Northern Irish accent.

CCTV showed his clothing to be consistent with a description from a paramedic that his possible victim was seen, together with a pick up line at Steve’s London depot.

Accusations that Steve crossed a running railway track with no high visibility safety vest on were contradicted by one manager. This charge is especially nasty as Steve has built a deserved reputation as a stalwart on health and safety issues, yet our brother remains dismissed despite police withdrawal of any charges.

Steve and others’ victimisation in the private companies are of growing importance not only to the RMT but and local campaign groups in Waz- ford and in Hemel Hempstead are strongly resuming a plan to axe ser- vices and rebuild the district to just one general hospital.

And in leafy Northwood in north west London Socialists have been headings chief executive of Hillingdon Health Authority has been hurriedly redeployed. He had to resort to the use of bouncers and bodyguards to protect him against the anger of local medics opposing HA plans to axe most in-patient services at Mount Vernon Hospital.

Among the services at risk is Mount Vernon’s specialist plastic surgery unit whose closure would leave just one unit - based at the traffic-clogged Chelsea and Westminster hospital on the Fulham Road, with no helicopter access – to cover a population of 5 million people in and around west London.

So strong is the local feeling against the cuts that crowds of up to 2,000 turned out to one of the organised rallies; from within police adopting riot control tactics to contain the pensioners and local residents.

Despite Frank Dobson’s recent claim to have halted the run-down Hospital of St Cross in Reading and other cuts are being pushed through by health bosses across the country.

The Nottinghamshire Derby county has lost its 33 year-423-year-old Eton Brown’s tight-fisted 3-year settlement for the NHS.

With health workers lowered by an indefinite limit to their pay, and huge shortages affecting all kinds of medical and professional staff, there is every chance that the level of activity will continue to increase.

In other companies it has been agreed to restart action in the form of a ban on voluntary night work. The mem-

Stop Press

In the infrastructure dispute action was very similar whilst meetings of the company have been decided to continue. It is a new contract that the Nationalists and the unions have rejected, which has arisen from the dispute.

RAILROAD, which aims to save £389 million in maintenance costs (already spent) in the future, has had to be decided to continue. It is not contract.

The government has been overridden by a flippant response from the head office. An overwhelming majority have voted to continue with the company for the duration of the contract.

The Staff had been called a flip this week the contract was annulled at Euston. An overwhelming majority have decided to continue with the company for the duration of the contract.
Apologists for US terror

The bombing in Omagh as a reason to rush through legislation which will have drastic effects on civil liberties, without even the semblance of a debate. Even the Tories did not feel it necessary to introduce such brutal measures – or to keep in step with the laws in the rest of the world which have for a long time been harsher than those on this side of the Irish Sea. A Blair government would claim that it was necessary to stay in step with Bertie Ahern’s parallel moves in the Dail for the sake of the Good Friday agreement, this draconian Act is intended to police dissent in the same way that Channon seeks to police the IRA.

But those who respond by demanding the full implementation of the peace agreement miss the point – measures like these are the logical consequence of that Accord. The Orange State cannot be reformed.

The Black and Muslim communities however are also targets under this iniquitous legislation, which allows people to be arrested in Britain for acts that would be unlawful abroad. But the plea that this would have resulted in the arrest of Nelson Mandela for example fell on deaf ears in Westminster. In the six counties the fact that the word of a senior police officer will used to convict someone of membership of a banned organisation hardly gives confidence to the nationalist community, well used to the sectarianism of the RUC. No one has any illusions that – Good Friday agreement or not – this prop of the Orange establishment remains untouched and unformed. Black and Irish people in Britain have bitter experiences of police racism.

The Stephen Lawrence inquiry has demonstrated this to a wider audience than before, as have the shameful list of deaths of Irish and Black people in police custody. This vicious law must not be allowed to go the same way as the FTA, ritually rubber stamped after years. A massive tide of opposition must be built, not only in the communities which are the most obvious target, but up and down the labour movement.

Labour whistles in the dark

“NOTHING has collapsed,” insisted Welsh Secretary Ron Davies, questioned by Radio 4 over the implications for the Welsh economy of the decisions by Siemens and Fujitsu to close British factories in the pharmer of the Asian economic melt-down. The Siemens site makes 1,000 jobs, and Fujitsu 600, in the north east of England. Such high-tech manufacturing jobs were once could London hundreds of millions invested or pull out of production. These decisions, arising from a major disruption of the global market for computer technology place a massive question mark over the Tory/Labour strategy of using inward investment of international capital to compensate for the loss of labour in Wales, Scotland and other areas devastated by the years of Thatcherite rationalisation.

Naive

Davies went on to berate mainly about New Labour’s strategy of “partnership” with Japanese, Korean and other corporations, apparently oblivious to the costly in market in Asia and the new open trade pressures upon these companies. Any idea of “partnership” has collapsed in Korea, where car workers at Hyundai fought coloures but lost a battle to prevent redundancies and other hostile pressures companies has now ended job protection and opened the door to mas-slay-offs. It has vanished, too, if ever existed, in Indonesia, where the now open market economy has been followed by widespread bankruptcy and closures, leaving behind in the wake of 20 million workers unemployed.

Nor is there much prospect of “partnership” in the floundering Russian economy, where the middle classes have lost three quarters of its value in just two weeks. Leaving workers unpaid or facing hyper-inflation. The international bankers are taking it in turn to con-gratulate themselves on escaping relatively unscathed from the wreckage of Boris Yeltsin’s plans for capitalist restoration, leaving the roule in free fall and the country without a government. The IMF – whose austerity plans have spread poverty and helped trigger the down-fall of the Indonesian regime – arrogantly lays down instructions for the Russian government to “stop printing money and put the budget in order”. Whatever the cost for Russian workers. Indeed the costs of these economic and social disasters are falling on the working poor, especially the elderly and the poor, while west-ern bankers and investors ride their share advance any new loans under stringent condi-tions or buying up devalued assets at a massive profit. There will be little “partnership” on offer for the masters of Latin America, widely predicted to be the next domino to fall to the current speculative bubble, where govern-ments are already slashing public expenditure. Some of the more far-sighted analysts – though of course not the cock-eyed optimists of New Labour – are wondering just how many more areas of capitalist expansion can face collapse without- out it having a severe impact on the imperialist centres of Europe and the USA, creating a global slump.

The stakes there are higher: bankers are less optimistic about the implications if Brazil or Mexico with their huge debts were to go down prices for the same sake or Russia or Spain. Some US banks could be put in difficulty, and the US Treasury, carrying most of the weight of the optimists, could face a seri-ous setback. By way of a new war on jobs, pay, and conditions, and by step-ping up the pressure for tax cuts and cuts in public spending.

Already British business chiefs have begun to express concern at Gordon Brown’s step to scale down his modest increases in public spending. Manufacturing bosses, in recession even before the summer crisis, are looking for further rationalisa-tion.

Whatever else the ruling rich may sacrifice in order to ride out the current world-wide storms, they will not sacrifice their profits. For the bankers and industrial bosses, the rule of “women and children first” has always meant that they and the whole working class were the first to be thrown overboard at times of crisis. They hide behind the police and army of each capitalist state, and band together when their interests are threatened.

In response, in Korea and Indonesia, trade unions are begin-ning to break free of the political strangle-hold of the ruling oligarchs and corporate-dominated confederations, and wage a bitter fight to defend jobs and living standards against the “market forces” of capitalism.

Instead of culminating up to the bosses in the “result of an impossi-ble “partnership”, the TUC and Labour Party should be freeing the trade unions of the legal shackles that prevent them fighting to defend their members’ jobs and wages in this country.
Neil Murray

I

in the run-up to Labour Party conference, with the government in office for the first time, it was natural to assess not only what Blair has done in government and the labour movement's response, but more fundamental issues about Blair's politics. It should be understood that the Labour Party has never been a social democratic party. Despite being based on the organised working class, Labour's programme has always sought to offer reforms to the working class within the parameters laid down by capitalism. Nowhere has this been more challenging than in the election of MPs, it was also to rationalise these into a viable public policy and provide a viable social democratic party. Other reforms, like the introduction of the welfare state, were not simply gifts by a Labour government. More far-sighted sections of the ruling class wanted to avoid the pre-war situation of open poverty and unemployment. The new Labour Party is unwilling to accept the return of pre-war conditions. Consciousness, as seen as necessary to head off greater post-war regressions.

The NHS was established, free at point of use, funded from taxation. But private practice was allowed. Nor were the drug companies, which make huge profits out of the NHS, nationalised. The foreign policy of Labour governments continued to be based on support for British imperialism. The first Labour Foreign Minister made clear that he had no intention of changing colonial policy.

This does not mean that this "New" Labour government is no different. While Labour has previously introduced significant reforms in the interests of the working class, Blair is reluctant to introduce any at all.

Such reforms as the referenda for Scotland and Wales, were consultative processes that could not be avoided, and he has interpreted them in the most pro-administration manner. On the "industrial front", Blair has introduced the minimum wage that he thought he could get away with, without any real pressure from the unions. The commitment to a national minimum wage was fulfilled at an appallingly low level, well below the modest policy of many unions of half male median earnings.

"Fairness At Work" is an atrocious document based on the reactionary US model of union recognition, introduced under pressure to fill the vacuum left by the Tories.

Blair rejects any idea that he should act in the interests of the working class. The promotion of business leaders to the Cabinet and Lords, as Blair surrounds himself with such people to the exclusion of the labour movement, underlines the election of MPs was its prime purpose. The impetus for this came from the passing of anti-union laws by parliament at the turn of the century. Despite the fact that at one stage the party was made up of 100% affiliates (unions and socialist organisations, with no individual links), the unions were explicit that the party should only deal with the "political" (ie parliamentary) questions, leaving the furthering of the industrial struggle to the unions.

The political programme consisted of reforms within capitalism, just as, for the union lead-

Capitalist repressions and crises undercut the basis of reformism and class collaboration. Ramsey Macdonald's talks in unemployment benefit in 1929 were a response to the crisis of capitalism in the late 20s and 30s, just as Dennis Healey's cuts packages were a response to the recession of the 70s. British capitalism has to be much more competitive now, and is much less able to grant reforms.

The British Labour Party has been a social democratic party throughout its existence, albeit one with different structures from those of many others - primarily the direct union link and input into policy making.

The British Labour Party has been a social democratic party throughout its existence, albeit one with different structures from those of many others - primarily the direct union link and input into policy making.

Any measure Blair is a Tony or a Liberal because of his government's pro-

 programme and his attitude to the labour move-

 ment. Blair firmly holds on to the "golden age" of socialism in the Labour Party. Blair's declaration that the split between Labour and the Lib Dems at the turn of the century was a "mistake" has backed in the fact that many union leaders had to be forced into the break with the Liberals in the first place.

The most significant factor determining the right wing character of government policies is the low level of class struggle, meaning that there is very little pressure to do anything. This factor is both effective and has a long-term effect on the political ideology of the current leadership of the labour movement (the Blair cabinet). Who is to say Blair's (or Brown's) policies would not be different if the level of class struggle were not higher?

It is possible that Blair could pull back under the pressure of the class struggle, or that other members of the leadership could force him out (the Tony Party has always managed to replace its leaders at opportune moments without wider democracy).

However, the changes Blair has brought about reduce the inter-

"Labour Party" pressure the Labour leadership can be subjected to. Blair is ruthless in terms of ideology. The dominant ideology of the British Labour movements, though, has been pragmatism, a statement that "socialism is what a Labour government does".

There are limited differences between Blair and his predecessors as a Labour leader.

He admires the US Democratic Party and harbours ambitions to form some sort of Labour Party or something similar. Yet Labour leaders have identified with the Democrats for a long time. However, Blair may actually go so far as to carry this through.

Blair and his closest allies would clearly like to see the union link, at least in its traditional form. Whether he will be satisfied with the extent to which the unions have (with their own support) already been stripped of much of their power in the party - or whether he will insist on going further, is a moot point.

If the Labour Party's nature has not fundamentally changed, this does not mean that it is business as usual. The fact that the government's programme is the very thing that most previous Labour governments has led to an increased level of dis-entrenchment among activists and wider layers of the working class.

This provides socialists with the opportunity to explain the real nature of the Labour Party, and to move beyond reformism as a point.

What conclusions should socialists draw from Blair Labour Party today? Firstly, and most fundamentally, socialists have always wanted to transcend the Labour Party and establish a mass party which sees the class struggle as the core of politics for change rather than elections and parliament.

On the contrary, the current situation demands that socialists are present raising their criticism and alternatives to the government's programme.

If that wider reformation is to take place on the most advanta-

geous ground, socialists have to play a role in leading the oppo-

sition to the government, not just in the class struggle and unions, but also within the Labour Party. Blair cannot bear opposition within the party. His supporters are said to have spent nearly a quarter of a million pounds financing the 'Members First' slate for the national execu-

tive elections against the Grass-

roots Alliance, despite the fact that even if 6 left wing candi-

dates got elected they would have very little effect on policy.

Blair has admitted that he left apart from the fact that Blair sees them as such a threat, and stepped up the repressive and organisational assault.
New Labour gets tough – on refugees and asylum seekers

Sheila Malone
ISLINGTON Anti-Deportation Campaign are celebrating!

After months of legal batting, pestering, lobbying, pickets, meetings and the support of our local MP Jeremy Corbyn, the Home Office has at last granted Nigerian born Gillian Achi "exceptional leave to remain in Britain."

Now she and her children can begin to live normally again in their community, from where they were suddenly picked up and detained last year.

Gillian has lived in this country for eight years, after fleeing Nigeria, as she was afraid of those hoping for an amnesty folowing the government's recently published white paper on immigration.

But what do these new proposals really mean for refugees and asylum seekers in the future?

Headed "Fairer, Faster, Firmer", the white paper announced a "modernising and streamlining" of immigration policy in the interest of greater efficiency and fairness.

Yet it has already been condemned by refugee organisations and has done little to do with fairness. It will lead instead to greater exclusions, restrictions, interference in family reunion and enforcement.

Looking at the list of new forms of control and policing proposed, we see immigrants and asylum seekers yet again presented as "abusers of the system" and as criminals rather than as people with legitimate rights.

New pre-entry and on-entry restriction rules will involve extend immigration via requirements, increasing the number of Airline Liaison officers overseas (both aimed at developing countries) and strengthening the powers of the 1987 Carriers Liability Act.

The last point has meant that airlines are subject to £2,000 fine if they allow passengers whose travel documents are not in order.

As was said when the Act was first introduced, people fleeing from wars and dictatorships often do not have all their papers in order, if they have them at all.

Increasing these powers will only result in a further denial of asylum to the most desperate, desperate and vulnerable refugees of the world. This is a violation of Britain's obligations under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees.

Asylum seekers who are actually allowed entry into the country will face harsher changes in applications and appeals procedures. After the initial interview with an immigration officer, it is proposed to allow only five days instead of the present month for any applicant to prepare documentation before awaiting a decision on their case.

This is an inadequate time to examine and present often lengthy histories of persecution, and to obtain all the necessary documents, including from the country of origin.

If their application is refused, they will be allowed only one appeal, if this is lost they can then be detained and deported.

The whole process of application and appeal will be "fast-tracked" to last no more than 6 months.

As to material support available, asylum seekers will be excluded in future from the Social Security benefits and will deal with the Home Office. In fact the white paper proposes that they initially be expected to feed themselves with the help of relatives, friends and community groups.

Only if these fails will a basic safety net of centrally designated housing and benefits in kind be available.

Apart from cruelly mis-assessing the situation and needs of people arriving traumatised and often destitute after fleeing persecution, such systems socially isolate and leave refugees to racist discrimination and harassment. The horrific arson attack on refugees in Germany are an example.

The new proposals on enforcement and deportation are based on a view that links immigration and asylum to criminality. Despite recent damning criticism from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and from the Inspector of Prisons, use of detention will actually increase once a claim has been refused.

Immigration officers will also be given new powers of search, entry and arrest, making them into a sort of special immigration police – without even the limited controls on them that exist with the Police Complaints Authority.

Particularly unpleasant is that whilst asylum seekers are to be starved of assistance, no expense will be spared in the employment of new technology to increase surveillance and control of refugees and their communities.

The collaboration of benefits agencies, marriage registrars, the National Criminal Intelligence Service and its new wing the Organised Immigration Crime Section, as well as Europol will all be secured in combating "immigration related crime." The Home Office has made a few concessions, such as abolition of the "White List" of countries from which asylum claims will not be accepted, and the right of appeal against refusal of entry to family visitors. People who have been waiting longer than five years for their cases to be heard are also likely to stay, although the government insists there will be no amnesty.

But despite this, and despite the lip-service paid to human rights and improving race relations, its proposals will do just the opposite. New Labour has presented us with a package of measures against immigration and asylum rights even more extreme, nastier and more repugnant than the Tories.

Stop deportation of Abdul Kadir

ABDUL KADIR arrived in Britain in 1982, having fled from Bangladesh. Following a wrong decision given to him, he did not apply for asylum until 1994.

In 1993 Abdul suffered a horrific accident at the restaurant he was working in, where he had his leg amputated. He has suffered from epileptic fits ever since.

His asylum claim has been refused and Abdul is now appealing to Mike O'Brien to allow him to stay on compassionate and practical grounds – there being no chance of Abdul receiving the medical support he needs in Bangladesh.

Abdul and his campaign need all the support they can get. Please write in support of Abdul's case.

Mike O'Brien, Minister for Immigration and Nationality, The Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9BU. Quote HO reference K468921.

Please send donations to: The Abdul Kadir Campaign, c/o NECFAR, 308 Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, TS1 4QX. Tel 01642 - 211117

Whilst asylum seekers will be starved of assistance, no expense will be spared to increase surveillance of refugees

Pete Firmin

Over 100 people attended the conference of Socialist Alliances in England in Rugby on Saturday 5 September, the largest to date. This was an indication that Alliances are spreading to new areas.

Ken Coates, MEP, brought greetings from the Independent Labour Network, which is beginning to set up local groups. This was however not followed by a much-needed discussion on the relationship between different parts of the fragmented Left.

The main discussion was on what national structure the Alliances need. Until now there has been a small liaison group to organise the conference, which produce an occasional national bulletin.

With the spreading of alliances there was a need to expand the democratic structure to one which can take national campaigning initiatives as well as coordinate better.

Unfortunately, the discussion was marred by two factors. Late circulation of draft proposals from the liaison group meant that many alternative proposals were only available on the morning.

The other problem was that the CPGP (Weekly Worker) mobilised in large numbers to argue for proposals for a very tight structure for the "United Kingdom" (!) reflecting their view that alliances should be about permanent political debate.

This discussion on the discussion which needed to be had between those committed to bulkheads and those prepared to thinking bodies into debate about the most appropriate structure.

Especially, the conference voted to adopt the liaison group's proposals of a 15 person committee, with safeguards to prevent domination by any particular tendency, as interim proposals, with a further ballot on the issue in 6 months which can amend them.

The afternoon was devoted to discussion of the key issues of next year's Euro-elections and the references in the single currency.

The discussion on Low Pay, introduced by UNISON Executive member Jean Thorpe, brought out the point that the government's proposals on the minimum wage all benefit the poverty trap.

Despite having adopted proposals which could provide for nationally coordinated campaigning, the conference did not actually agree on any campaign.

As many speakers emphasised, the prime task at the moment is to build up the local alliances through work around relevant issues... but this could be considerably strengthened with some well organised national initiatives.

Overall, the conference was a step forward, but also reflected the problems in turning the socialist alliances into a force which can make a difference.
6 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Ill-judged tactics of SWP sectarians snatch

Defeat from the jaws of victory

The SWP’s leadership of the recent strike by Islington UNISON housing needs workers has played into the hands of management. Andrew Berry, activist from Campaign for a Fighting, Democratic UNISON (CFDU) and Islington Branch Committee looks at some of the lessons of the dispute – which sadly the SWP themselves are stubbornly refusing to draw.

On May 15 a decisive 70 per cent of the Islington Housing Needs Section voted in a ballot in favour of strike action against job losses. On May 24 meetings between management, Housing Needs workers were told they had been unsuccessful in re-applying for their own jobs an average of more than 11 years service.

They were under threat of redundancy, despite vacancies in Housing Needs and other branches. The workplace was understandable, if unwise. The letters sent were highly provocative. So was the way in which they were distributed – one worker was called out of a meeting with her own family to be given hers. Management were set on confrontation with the workers.

On May 18, 16 of the Housing Needs workers walked out, illegally under the anti-trade union laws, as the council had not been given seven days notice. The walkout was understandable, if unwise. The letters sent were highly provocative. So was the way in which they were distributed – one worker was called out of a meeting with her own family to be given hers. Management were set on confrontation with the workers.

On Monday, rumours were circulating that the council were planning to close the Housing Branch on the same day. Four housing needs workers returned to work on Tuesday morning. A regional official confirmed the rumours to a strikers’ meeting later on Tuesday.

The Council sacked the strikers on Wednesday afternoon, by couriered letter to their homes.

There has been a history of unofficial action by housing needs workers in Housing and Social Services in Islington, and many of the strikers had a written warning on their file from a half-day walkout in July 1996.

In the 1998 local government elections, Labour had only held the 21 council seats. The Labour Group sought to show its intransigence with the help of the Liberal Democrats. They were handpicking the committee to attack the council workforce.

This is not to excuse the Council’s interference with the housing workers, but to say that experi-
enced trade unionists should have been less surprised. Rank and file council workers were well aware of the political situation and the tactical errors of the SWP, and voiced their anger to stewards.

As well as the elected councilors being hostile, the workforce are also hated by senior management, who are seeking to further their own careers by “turning the borough around”. The Chief Executive is reported to have said when she started the job that she would sack more people than she had had dinners.

Against this background, the decision to continue the unofficial action can only be seen as a pointless adventure. The SWP seemed more interested in adopting a heavy-militant posture than in defending union members.

More than 3 months later, the SWP has made no self-criticism of its actions.

A Branch meeting took place following the sackings and voted to ballot for an all-out indefinite strike to reassert those sacked. National UNISON modified the question to “are you prepared to take action in the form of strike action to reassert the sacked housing needs workers?”. Despite this change, the ballot, six weeks later, was lost by nearly 2-1, on a 28 per cent turnout.

The SWP made a massive error of judgement by arguing to continue the unofficial strike, shown by the Council’s confidence in

sacking the strikers. Management correctly assessed the weakness of the branch and the divisions within it.

These effects of the SWP’s action go well beyond the 12 strikers who are now jobless and unable to claim benefit. The effect of a victory in an industrial dispute is to strengthen workers’ confidence, leading to an increased chance of winning further disputes. Conversely, the effect of defeat is demoralisation. The branch has a healthy industrial action fund, and could have kept members on official strike for a long time. The original dispute – against redundancies of housing needs workers – was winnable, as the 70 per cent support for strike action attests.

There were also a number of other struggles brewing across the Council at this time.

The Housing Benefit Section had voted to be balloted for strike action against privatisation of the service. An ongoing dispute – or better still, a victory – on Housing Needs redundancies would have been a powerful spur to action and a successful strike against privatisation benefits.

This could have shown the way forward to Building Services which is threatened with 296 redundancies, as many of its contracts have gone to the private sector. Even though UNISON has little input, a victory would have had an important impact.

In the original dispute, a 70 per cent vote for action against redundancies was frictered away because it was necessary to respond immediately to the sackings. We had to make a big retreat.

Our original action was against redundancies while the housing needs workers were still employed. The method of making people who did their own jobs was being used throughout the department, and successful resistance to this could have given a lead elsewhere.

Balloting for action

The next step was to build for a single and final fifteen day strike. However, the SWP rejected the strike-building options of starting with small actions, such as one-day strikes in the most militiant areas, and gradually escalating the action across the workforce if management should prove recalcitrant. They argued immediately for all out indefinite strike action of the whole workforce.

The branch needed to ballot for reinstatement action very quickly after the sackings, while members were still angry. This proved impossible because the membership records of the branch were in a very poor state. Over 600 members (from the former NUBF) are registered at the old UNISON branch office, in a building which has now been demolished.

Not surprisingly, national UNISON refused to run a ballot where 25% of the branch would be disenfranchised, and returned the address list for updating. A single council worker was unable to vote would have meant suspension of action until the question was resolved. The branch would find against the union immediately once they saw our address list.

CFDU members in the branch fought hard against this decision, despite our concerns. We successfully argued to send out a UNISON letter on the ballot papers, and to organise an address list by two National Executive members.

Who did the SWP allow the strike to become?

Those who went back were committed to the lowest form of strike action over possible redundancies. Islington Branch Secretary and leading SWP member Rob Murthwaite’s answer was that “the housing needs stewards (also in the SWP) discussed the return to work and decided it was small and could be ignored.”

Yet one sacked housing needs worker in the SWP said that if four had not returned to work she believed the council would not have sacked any of the strikers.

The return of a quarter of a small group of workers suggest

a major problem with a strike.

In short, the SWP refuses to admit any mistakes. They are an extremely sectarian organisation – seeing their own interests as the most important thing. Defence of the working class is secondary – something they view as necessary, but not in itself.

Leading a strike with uncompromising militancy, whatever the outcome, attracts activists – though there are only external observers of the strike. Those involved, who suffer from the actions of the SWP, had to take a more hostile view.

CFDU is not against unofficial strikes, and has been vocal and supported and been in Islington in the past. But the branch has been weakened over the last few years. And many of those remaining who have been through strike action have lost the hope of a change. The change in council leadership of 1992, are no longer sure where it all leads.

In short, in Islington is weak partly due to the effects of the merger between NAULO and NUBE, which has been hard going. Our industrial action tactics need to be considered carefully – in terms of our chances of winning and moving struggles forward. Our members, nor for how they build the political parties.

Democracy was a problem. Paul was invited to a small and unrepresentative meeting where 3 or 4 days notice had been given. Paul was asked if the sackings, Rob Murthwaite, Branch Secretary and SWP member, was against building a branch campaign and discussions to consider the best way forward. In meetings, he put his own line rather than a collective one, and insisted on speaking after each contribution.

SWP have defended their tactics in Islington as “militant”, as being utterly correct. There will be a re-election of the branch secretary on October 8.

Rob Murthwaite says he will stand on the SWP’s record.

CFDU thinks that the SWP tactics have been an unmilitant disaster for the branch. We will challenge them on the platform of building the union and launching a recruitment campaign.

The council needs to prepare to fight the 1991 general election proposed over the next 4 years: this has now been made much harder. Islington UNISON is in a weak but crucial stage. The future political move makes it a real force to be reckoned with in Islington.
Central to the Congress are the issues of "Fairspeak" and the national minimum wage. On both issues the TUC's desperate attempts at compromise, consistent with the CBI's has disarmed them in negotiations and has allowed the government to present paeans of praise as if they were major steps forward. The "Fairspeak" at Work Whistle Paper will do little or nothing to aid the fight for recognition, if and when it becomes law. Riddled through and through with escape clauses for employers as, Tony Blair points out it will still leave Britain the most lightly regulated of all the European economies - that is to say the most unfair. In the discussions prior to publication John Monks was hoplessly out-manoeuvred by the CBI which stood firm on its central demand. TUC concern over the compromise was rejected, giving the government the green light to back track on all settled commitments. The end result, with 40 per cent thresholds, opt-outs for small companies and a complex process for recognition will be almost unworkable. Whilst unions can talk of a change in the climate of industrial relations this is clearly a major loss.
A strategy for a queer planet

DURING the first week of August, Amsterdam made good its claim to be the gay capital of Europe by hosting the Olympic-style international Gay Games (previously held in 1982 and 1986 in San Francisco, 1990 in Vancouver and 1994 in New York). "Given that lesbians and gay men are so visibly emancipated nowadays," asked the Dutch media, "is there any need for a liberation movement?" Peter Drucker reports.

The LGBT Games are not the only landmark event in recent months. In Melbourne a congress for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights was held earlier this year with the support of newly elected PRD mayor Cruickshank Carden and of Petra Jiminez, Latin America's first openly lesbian member of parliament.

In France 300,000 people showed up in Paris in 1997 for Europride and 150,000 this year for Gay Pride, above all to demand registered civil unions for lesbian and gay partners. In Brussels "Pink Saturday" has been growing every year, above all because of big turnouts from Flanders, the Dutch-speaking northern region.

Lesbian and gay movements are increasingly internationally coordinated, particularly through ILGA (the International Lesbian and Gay Association) or ILGA Europe. But ILGA's mission is mainly lobbying the UN, the European Union and national governments. Activists who see extraprovincial mobilizations as a condition, including for parliamentary reforms, are less well coordinated internationally.

The August '98 Les- bian/Gay/Bisexual Strategy Seminar at the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam was one of the first opportunities ever for activists from the left to meet for a whole weekend to discuss theory and strategy. The two-day participants - eight women, twelve men - came from Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka. The atmosphere was one of excitement and personal warmth.

Differences of opinion were expressed without difficulty and people found out that disagreements were rarer than they had expected. While most of the participants were members of far left organizations, many participants jumped on an equal footing in the discussions.

Women may have been a minority - but they gave half the reports, participated fully in the discussion and ensured that the women's dimension was not lost from sight. The strong tradition of feminist discussion in many of the participants' organizations as well as the major importance of feminist and other debates for gay liberation as a whole was reflected in this weekend's seminar.

In July however under pressure from reactions to other issues took precedence. On the one hand there was determination to see the rest of the '98's go through unscathed. On the other hand there was an unwillingness to challenge homophobia either in the Commonwealth or the Lords. On this altar so far at least the New Labour Prime Minister has been prepared to sacrifice his "wet" image. The role of the Church of England in defeating these changes was so successful just weeks later, the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, agreed to meet the Lambeth Conference to a decision which was incompatible with the Scriptures.

"I see no room in the holy Scriptures for any sexual activity outside holy marriage of a husband and wife." This was the first time that homophobia has been debated by the Lambeth Conference, which meets every ten years. Critical to the panelists was political manoeuvring which sought to make opposition to Third World Debt from western churches with opposition to homosexuality. Attempts to portray homosexuality as a "white disease" have been a weapon increasingly used by the Republi- can right in the United States as well.

The fear that independent Evangelical communions are winning the battle for souls against the more traditional Anglican, and Catholic and Lutheran Churches has been an important part in the Lambeth Conference debate. Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition has been at the forefront of the battle against gay marriage in the United States.

Against such determined ideologues, it is not just Blair who has to take the fight to the Anglican and gay community who believe that a few more of our kind coming on board will mean that of Commons will automatically lead to significant changes have been sadly disillusions.

Whether or not the legal changes go through in the next months, it is vital to return to mass action.

The roots of sexual oppression lie far deeper than many can see

Community or individualization?

The role of sexual oppresion lies in the psyche of the individual. There is no interaction between sexual orientations of the separate subcultures to continue to exist for the foreseeable future.

Even where conscious discrimination and prejudices are less widespread, as in the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries, they do not mean that lesbians, gay men and bisexuals can integrate themselves as equals in a larger liberal society. Far-reaching social transformations are necessary in order to reverse the process of heterosexualization and heterosexuality. There were lively discussions on other issues as well. Are we really for gay marriage? How much room is there for lesbian/gay/bisexual activists in the straight world? What is room for the book bigger?

What sort of relationship existed early in this century - before fascism, Stalinism and Cold War witchhunts - between the left and 'sex reform' movements? When and how can we make it? What sort of movements (on both sides of the Atlantic) can be seen as the transexuals in the Third World countries? Could a new gay movement - a gay movement led by lesbian/gay/bisexual and gay rights in South Africa be repeated in the United States, even in the midst of neo-liberal austerity?

Participants plan to publish a report on these and other topics in the year to come.

Only a beginning

Publication plans were only a small part of the prospects for the future discussed at the seminar's end. Perhaps the most important decision was that this seminar will only be the first in a series. The second one will take place in the summer of the year 2000, once more in Amsterdam. It will be longer, a whole week, because the schedule this time was far too tight.

Other topics will come up: among the possibilities are youth, trade-union work, the organisation of a convention in several countries, and some controversial aspects of sexuality. The seminar is very much a working group genuinely international than the first, with more people from outside Europe.

That means that the participants must spend the next two years raising funds to bring the meetings to poor countries. This is why people will have to wait two years for the next seminar - which they will do with great impatience.
Social services strike back

As the strike by care workers in Tameside goes into its fifth month, other sections of care workers and social service staff have also been resorting to strike action as they attempt to defend pay, jobs and the quality of services against increasingly desperate and ruthless council bosses.

In Leicester, 300 council care home staff staged a one-day walkout in August as part of a joint UNISON and GMB battle to rescind the council’s move to cut its care staff to below 6,000. Three more strikes are planned for September, after 81% voted for strike action.

In South Tyneside, care workers are refusing to sign new contracts and balloting over strike action. A council worker wants to slice £500 from the pay by cutting sleeping-in allowances.

In Tameside, a social work staff in UNISON joined a week-long unofficial walk-out at the beginning of August to protest management’s suspension of three workers who had resisted the transfer of home helps to social work. A preliminary hearing is set for a meeting on 13 October.

In Birmingham, the UNISON has issued its first council notice and is balloting over a possible strike or six-months’ notice period to avoid any further attacks on pay.

In Hull, care workers are balloting over a pay claim, and in Hampshire, social service workers are due to walk out on Thursday.

Justice for the Tameside strikers!

200 sacked Care Workers are continuing their fight for reinstatement. Tameside Council and Tameside Care are trying to bring what is happening from the public.

Caring for the elderly and disabled needs a skilled and experienced workforce. Tameside is part of the process of running down vital services in Tameside. By sacking the care workers, they were also getting rid of those who cared for and would speak up for the elderly residents in their care.

The strikers have shown their support for other sections of workers in struggle. But they, too, need support from the wider workers’ movement.

March and Rally: Bring your banners! Saturday September 12

Depart 1.00pm Astley Rd, Stalybridge (near Saddleworth Road) 3.30pm Ashton Under Lyne town centre Rally 2.30pm in Henry Square, Ashton

Set up a Support Group. Send a donation. Send a message of support. Contact the strikers at Tameside UNISON, 29, Booth St, Ashton Under Lyne, Lancs OL6 7LB. 0161-308-2452.

New wave of cuts slash social services

John Lister

SOCIAL Services departments across the country are pressing through yet another round of cuts in services to some of the most vulnerable local residents as Labour sticks to Tory levels of spending.

In many cases councils are flouting the law, and ignoring their statutory obligations as they struggle to stick within impossibly low cash limits.

In Birmingham, the High Court has ruled that council officers broke the law by taking council finances into account when deciding whether to award a disabled facilities grant to a resident. The council now says the facility was not needed.

In Reading, the council is using a local authority grant to cover the cost of providing meals for the elderly.

Help the Aged has claimed that over 2,000 elderly people have contacted them complaining that they are being forced to pay for “community care” services in residential or nursing homes by councils which are ignoring the law and government guidelines.

Last year the Appeal Court ruled that Selston council was obliged to meet the costs of community care fees for clients with savings of less than £8,000, and to contribute to the costs of those with less than £16,000.

But Help the Aged now claims that councils are defying the law by resorting to techniques such as the use of waiting lists, designed to delay any financial contribution and pressure elderly people into using their own money to pay for care. One client in Dorset was told that he would have to sell his house to £1,000 or less.

The Association of Directors of Social Services more or less admitted that cash-strapped authorities were breaking the law, and allocating support on the basis of cash pressures rather than the assessed needs of clients when he told Community Care magazine “After assessments, we have to prioritise.”

He went on: “We would like to provide a whole range of community-based services. But the fact is that we haven’t got enough resources and we are having to provide services for people in the most desperate situations.”

Meanwhile cut are still being made. Social service staff in Cambridgeshire are warning that another draconian round of cuts including the closure of two children’s homes, cuts in day care for older people, unfilled vacancies and cuts in support costs could lead to a crisis.

In the north west, Redcar and Cleveland council agreed a £2m cuts package including the closure of Mount Pleasant home for the elderly, cuts in respite care, children’s homes and increases in charges.

Camden social services face a £4m cut next year, while Worcestershire County Council faces stiff opposition from carers to its plans to slash £5.1 million including service cuts and increased charges.

In Wolverhampton, one of the handful of councils still providing free home help services to elderly and vulnerable clients, seems certain to impose charges next year as it wrestles with a cash shortfall.

Wandsworth’s Tory-led council is looking to close a quarter of its children and family services in a bid to keep its council tax bills the lowest in England.

Gordon Brown’s announcement of a £3 billion increase in social service spending over the next three years – £1.2 billion short of the “minimum requirement” calculated by the Local Government Association – means that there is no light at the end of the tunnel. Indeed as the NHS abdicates from its previous role in continuing care, ever more frail elderly people are dependent upon council-funded services.

Staff, carers and relatives of the vulnerable people now being short-changed by social services, and all those who believe these services should be provided free of charge and properly funded from taxation, must unite to fight for more.

Council boss baulks at bill to bury dead

THE BODIES of deceased elderly residents of a care home in Northumberland have been described as “waste products” by a caring, sharing council chief executive.

Peter Wilson, boss of Morpeth Council, was called to account by the local government ombudsman after the council refused to pay for the funeral of an elderly woman who died at a local residential home, quoting just £450 to her name.

Wilson’s line was simple enough: “Without wishing to appear insensitive, one could argue that from a commercial viewpoint, the home is its income producing raw material. Ergo, from a purely commercial view, deceased residents may then be regarded as being the waste that is produced by their presence.”

After losing the case, Wilson appeared equally incapable of understanding the popular revulsion at what he had said, and complained that the focus had been on “emotive words” rather than “principles”.

Skinflint bosses in panic

PROFIT-hungry bosses in private nursing and residential homes are warning of dire consequences from the implementation of the minimum wage of £3.60 an hour.

A recent survey showed that 40% of the heads of nurses in nursing homes (ranging from £2.50 an hour to £4.35) was lower than that in residential homes (£3.10)

Many homes are dependent upon the funding of patients by the NHS, local authorities, with fees subject to a rigorous “bunching-mark” limit, so the government binge on NHS and local government funding means there is little scope to raise charges for these patients.

The wage bill represents about 50% of the costs of running care homes, so the cash squeeze has been described by the National Rock-bottom wages – to the sector as a “near-fatal blow”.

The impact is heaviest upon the small-scale homes, while the large national and hospital chains, with thousands of beds, are insulated from the rock-bottom wages – to the extent that a £3.60 minimum could be paid without any impact on profits.

Many other homes have already been hit hard by increased costs of running care homes, so the cash squeeze has been described by the National Rock-bottom wages – to the extent that a £3.60 minimum could be paid without any impact on profits.

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As currencies, companies and markets collapse

It’s a crisis alright but is it global?

We are told that we live in a fully globalised economy. In a sense we do, but what exactly does it mean? Has the world not been globalised for a long time? How much is new?

If there has been a change, what role does this play in the current world economic and financial crisis? What about the role of nation states within this global economy? Do the increasing size and power of multinational corporations make the nation state almost irrelevant?

Here ALAN THORNITT suggests some answers to these questions.

A world facing possible economic and financial meltdown

Only a year ago rosy expectations were held by many. Today few would dispute that capitalism is heading for world recession. Just read the capitalist papers.

Stock markets around the world have collapsed in wild fluctuations after three and half years of unrealistically inflated levels. The East and South East Asian Tiger economies (and aspirant ones) collapsed last year into financial and political turmoil, following devaluation of Thailand’s currency.

The implications are enormous. This region had been the most dynamic part of the world capitalist economy by far. Political repercussions so far have included the demise of Suharto in Indonesia at the hands of a mass popular movement – and as we go to press food riots have broken out again.

The trade unions in South Korea have mounted huge battles in defence of jobs. Car workers have been occupying the country’s biggest car plant and fighting off police with iron bars.

Russia is collapsing into chaos. Its currency has collapsed, its government has collapsed, its banking system is collapsing. It has defaulted on its debts to the western banks – possibly the most serious default in the history of the banking system. The Russian teachers join a protest march of workers demanding to be paid.

They are but the restoration of a conventional capitalist economy. Increasingly it is accepted that the global economy could be facing its sharpest downturn since the 1930s. It is an existential situation. It is the most globalised crisis the world has seen.

Anthony Brown argued in The Observer on August 22: “Economists are drawing parallels with the depression of the 30s and the aftermath of the oil crisis of the 70s. This is the world’s first genuinely global crisis’’ says Alison Costrell, chief international economist at Paine Webber. ‘’In the 30s, where was Asia? At other times, the problems have just been bouncing between the US and Europe. But this is genuinely global. In absolute terms it is worse than the 30s because far more people are involved. We have been ignoring it because Europe and America aren’t really affected yet.’’

The figures are huge, and the span truly global: in Indonesia, six alone, economic growth has been put back a generation and unemployment is heading towards 20 million, more than in all of Europe. In Japan 130 million people face the end of the economic miracle... China is fighting off pressures to devalue, as its billion people face the prospect of deflation. Millions more in Russia face a total collapse, whilst tens of millions in South Africa have seen post-Apartheid optimism turn sour.

A Latin American crisis, with its likely consequences, should be added to this scenario.

The roots of the “Asian” crisis

The Southeast Asian crisis broke in mid-1997 - the most significant event in world politics since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. The term “Asian crisis” is not really accurate. This is a crisis of the global capitalist system, which started in this region and is spreading world-wide.

It came as a shock to those who had assumed that Asian Pacific capitalism would continue as the engine of the world economy well into the 21st century. It is more than just a financial crisis: it has structural and economic roots.

The origin of the rise of the Tiger economies is clear. They benefited from massive direct investment following the 1985 Plaza Accord. Under this the USA forced the Japanese government to sharply raise the value of the yen against the dollar to alleviate the huge US trade deficit with Japan. The value of the yen rose against the US dollar by over 40% as a result. This did not do much for the US trade deficit, but, by making production in Japan far more expensive, it did do wonders for East and South East Asia, whose currencies were tied to the dollar. $30 billion of Japanese direct investment had flowed into the region by the end of the decade.

In the early 1990s further massive inflows of investment from western banks followed, as the advantages of dictatorial regimes and low levels of exploitation, as well as currency advantage, became clear.

The result was massive overcapacity in the manufacturing and building sectors. An enormous building boom created the infamous property speculation “bubbling”, which was soon ready to burst.

Last year the value of the yen was again at the centre of developments - this time because of its devaluation. The crisis of the Japanese economy itself now forced down the value of the yen, and capital flowed out of the Tiger economies even faster than it had flowed in. There was also pressure from China and the devaluation of its currency a year earlier.

The result was massive speculative attacks on the East and SE Asian currencies, forcing a major round of competitive devaluations on an enormous scale: Indonesia 89%, South Korea 75%, Malaysia 73%, Thailand 71%, Philippines 57% and Hong Kong 4%.

Stock markets collapsed by similar percentages. According to the Institute of International Finance, the net private capital flows in and out of Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines swung from $92.8 billion inward investment in 1996 to $12 billion outflow in 1997 – at the onset of the crisis.

The result was a series of bank closures and debt defaults across the region.

The onset of crisis saw the rapid intervention of the IMF into the region. It had two objectives. First, to ensure that debt repayments continued to western banks via austerity programmes (which in practice made the debt crisis worse). And, secondly, to pursue the US neoliberal agenda of deregulation, flexibility, and free-market reform so that newly competitive US capital could achieve a greater penetration in the region.

In the IMF’s view, the Tiger economies have always been far too protectionistic. “Structural adjustment” was the order of the day. Rates of exploitation had to be raised and deregulation introduced into economies like South Korea and Japan itself, where the “job for life” concept still existed.
to a great extent. These neoliberal reforms sought to recreate the international economy in the image of the US, so that the free market-minimal state model would enjoy an unparalleled competitive advantage.

The global framework of the crisis

There are global dynamics behind this crisis which shape its progress.

The first is the long recessionary phase which has dominated the world economy since the mid 1970s, despite fluctuations within.

The second is the existence of economic and political power blocks on a world scale – the EU, the USA/NAFTA and Japan and the Asia Pacific region – which are in competition with each other, and which increasingly polarize international economic relations.

Within this framework there has developed the international Japanese model of state regulation and intervention – so successful during the Second World War and one of the features of the rise of the East and South East Asian economies – and the American free-market, deregulated, neoliberal model which has now essentially won out.

Asia is under assault from it, and the EU is already implementing its US policy of deregulation to complete the neoliberalisation of the world through its principal agencies, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB).

This would concentrate wealth into fewer and fewer hands and lead to a further loss of democratic control, greater levels of exploitation, more unemployment and job insecurity and social polarisation.

The gap between rich and poor will increase as will the disparity between rich North and South, as experienced especially by the debtor crisis.

The people of the Eastern bloc face third world conditions.

This has given the United States in an advantage in the current crisis, but not immortality. In fact this American “success” is at the root of the current crisis through the dominating the Japanese economy (the second largest in the world) into stagnation and recession.

So when did “globalisation” take place?

Of course there have been many “globalisations” of the world economy over the past five or six hundred-years. The internationalisation of world economic activity goes back a lot further.

In the Middle Ages there was extensive trading between states and the development of empires.

In Europe during the fourteenth century British-produced wool and cloth was exported to Holland, Belgium and elsewhere. Many Italian city states and banking houses occupied a key position in the internationalisation of business activity at that time. By the end of the fourteenth century it is estimated that there were as many as 1500 banks already operating internationally.

The conquistadores conquered and colonised both America and Britain and expanded its empire around the world.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries colonial trading companies such as the Dutch and British East India Companies traded globally. Fifteen million people were transported from Africa to America as slaves. The industrial revolution developed the precursor to the modern-day multi-national corporations.

Initially North and South America presented the most favourable investment opportunities, as increasingly were seen by Africa and Australia.

Multinationals were well established before World War One. World War Two helped them. World War Two, with the emergence of much stronger USA, and the Bretton Woods agreement on currencies.

Since then, factors such as the collapse of the USSR and rapid advances in new technology have become a part of the current phase of globalisation.

Do we now live in a “globalised” world?

“Globalisation”, in its radical sense, has become a fashion term, a catch phrase and is often used with a heavy content.

There are a wide range of views on what it means.

So to say we live in a globalised world does not take us very far.

It is widely argued, for example, that in today’s global economy national economic management, and politics at the national level, are irrelevant. The world economy is dominated, the argument goes, by uncontrollable market forces, and huge transnational corporations, that owe allegiance to no state but simply locate wherever the global market dictates.

“Reckless Streets” for example tend to rage against the world market, the international neoliberalism, but were soon followed by national governments. They tend to see multi-national corporations as the leading the world economy, not national governments.

The IMF, the WB, and the Multilateral Development Banks are seen as responsible for the problems of the world.

It is the role of national governments is relegated, as is the role of imperialism, which as such hardly comes into the analysis. It adds up to one a sided view of the world.

These ideas were prevalent in the discourse around the counter movements opposing the EU in Amsterdam and Cardiff. They have been a cover for another set of ideas, advanced in Amsterdam and Cardiff by people like Colin Hinchey, relationship to the modern-day multi-national corporations.

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The collapse of the USSR and Yeltsin’s rush for capitalism means its economy, whilst not yet capitalist, has been far more integrated into this crisis.

But the world has changed!

There have been major changes in the world economy in the last 25 years. It is more global.

The current world crisis shows this clearly enough. The crisis embraces more of the world economy, far quicker.

The collapse of the USSR and Yeltsin’s rush for capitalism, along with that in China, means these economies, whilst not yet capitalist, have been far more integrated into this crisis. They have a different relationship to the world capitalist economy than at any time since the Russian and Chinese revolutions.

Far larger sums of money move around the world at even greater speed, and this is increasing all the time. New technology is an important element in the current globalisation, introducing the cyber dollar and the ability to move vast sums of money instantaneously.

Multi-national corporations (MNCs) have increased dramatically in size and influence. It is easier to relocate production facilities than in the past although such relocations have always taken place.

The closure of Siemens Tyne-side microchip plant a year after it opened is a case in point - a direct result of the current Asian crisis.

The cost of producing chips in SE Asia, given the collapse of both the currencies and wage rates (and massive rises in unemployment), has fallen dramatically.

The power of the MNCs has increased in relation to the nation state. In the last few weeks we have had the biggest merger in his story of BT and the rise in the world’s largest joint capital of $60 billion (with a loss of 20,000 jobs).

MNCs now scour the planet for the cheapest production facilities, labour costs and most favourable political conditions.

There has been a huge deregulation of markets, particularly the removal of restrictions on the movement of capital. This means that the second World War Bretton Woods arrangements, linking the dollar to the price of gold and an agreed rate, was too moderate the rapid escalation of crisis, were ended in 1971.

Since then there have been floating exchange rates (exemplified by the break-up of the ERM). Massive pressure has been put on third world countries to deregulate capital movements.

The international agencies of capital

There are three principal international agencies of (wester) capital: the IMF, the World Bank (WB), which were both set up at Bretton Woods in 1947, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The latter was set up in 1994 as a result of the 1986 “Uruguay Round” of negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

The arrival of the WTO, and the results of the Uruguay Round, have had a fundamental effect on the organisation of world trade. At the end of the eight year Uruguay process it represented 128 countries including most of the East European block countries.

Talking with GATT the WTO has become a powerful device for restructuring the world market to the benefit of the leading powers, particularly the USA.

Their purpose is to restrict the world along the lines of the American model, and to bring into that model non-aligned countries, including former eastern block countries as they struggle create market economies.

They have established a world market which was disrupted by the Russian and Chinese revolutions.

All this represents a big development, compared to the weak organisations set up at the time of Bretton Woods, and extends the global control particularly of the United States.

Conclusion

There have been big changes, even greater than in previous periods. But is this a qualitative change or change within the same overall framework?

Globalisation in its radical sense would imply a new economic structure, and not just greater international trade and investment within an existing set of economic relations.

Multi-national corporations are getting bigger, but genuinely transnational companies are relatively rare. Most corporations are nationally based and trade multi-nationally on the strength of a major national location of production and sales.

Those who argue there has been a radical globalisation have failed to specify what structural changes have taken place to make this particular globalisation qualitatively different to any other.

Increasing dominance of the US model, the fall of the Berlin wall, the greater impact of China on the world market or the more rapid flows of capital are not by themselves evidence of a completely new phenomenon.

If the components of globalisation have not made the nation state irrelevant. Far from it, they have changed the international framework in which the nation state operates.

Socialists would ignore that at their peril. The need is to internationalise the struggle, but by countering it to the struggle at national level. We have to be involved in both.
There is always an alternative

Liam Mac Aoidr reviews "The Real Irish peace process" (Craig/McAnulty/Flanigan) published by Socialist Democracy.

The Omagh bomb has virtually silenced all those voices critical of the new imperialist settlement in Ireland, particularly those for whom leaving bombs in shopping centres was, until recently, a perfectly justifiable tactic.

However there are still small pockets of dissent and "The Real Irish peace process" is its most articulate expression, offering a choice other than blowing people up and embracing Blair, Trimble and Clinton as the heroes of Irish politics.

This book is important for many reasons. It is an account of a 30 year struggle against imperialism which has ended with the new imperialist agreements of that struggle making their peace with imperialism. It is an attempt to understand and explain that history from a Marxist point of view and, in conclusion, to see what possibilities for resistance to imperialism in Ireland are still available.

But there is more to be said about the events at Omagh that sympathy for the victims or criticism of those who carried out the bombing. What it shows is that the peace process will not be enough. Because it does not actually offer a democratic solution it will time and again, as so often before in Irish history, produce desperate acts from those marginised and left without hope.

Аdams: drawn to right by ideological weakness

It is also a group of socialists, formerly known as Peoples Democracy, examining their own history and trying to learn from it.

The first big question the authors seek to answer is why Britain has spent around £25 billion to defend the democratic rights of 900,000 loyalists.

Charitably disregarding the innate nobility of Britain's rulers they seek clues in economics and politics. Britain is still a big player in the world financial markets, large chunks of the Irish economy are owned by British or other imperialist powers, an attack on Britain in Ireland, such as a forced withdrawal of its army, would be a major threat to Britain's own political stability.

The authors maintain that Britain remains in Ireland because it still does have imperial interests there, a view which is no longer even mentioned in polite society in Britain or Ireland.

The evolution of ideas is also discussed in well deserved detail. The links between John Hume and Gerry Adams resulted in what the authors judge to be a big ideological success for Hume. Those who doubt this need only listen to both men speak.

There is often now perceptible difference in what they say. This is not surprising.

Without a commitment to armed struggle Republicanism is very reliant on ideas from other sources and, in a period of retreat, these will as often be drawn from the right as from the left.

As well as reviewing history, the authors offer an alternative of their own.

They summarise it as "the creation of a mass political movement in the whole of the territory capable of removing partition and British rule by destroying both reactionary states on the island."

They are confident that it is possible, not just because we saw the embryo of one in the late 1960s and early 70s, but also because the peace process offers dreaming of change and the return to Sornment at the same time.

History hasn't finished yet!

Rubber stamp for more repression

Paul Hubert looks at the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Act, rushed through both Houses of Parliament and given the Royal Assent in just two days.

It IS CLEAR that the new Act will be used to police the Irish, Black and Muslim communities at least, and beyond this any form of political or civil disobedience. Misuses of justice, similar to those already suffered under the PTA will inevitably follow.

As a result of this hastily debated law there will be a shift of the burden of proof. Suspected people will have to show that they are innocent - if they don't, that will be used as evidence of guilt and may be sufficient to convict.

The most notorious innovation is that a police officer "of or above the rank of superintendent" can say in court in his opinion the accused belonged or belonged at a particular time to a "specified" organisation. The court can treat this as evidence, although they cannot convict without other evidence, except in a case in Scotland.

The right to silence is further weakened for people charged with belonging to "specified" illegal organisations. A court or jury can draw inferences from the failure of a suspect to mention a "material" fact which "he could reasonably be expected to mention", provided "he was permitted to consult a solicitor" before questioning.

Currently there are four specified organisations, including the Real IRA. Any other can be added if the Home Secretary thinks it is "connected in terrorism connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland, or in promoting or encouraging it", and "has not established or is not maintaining a complete and unequivocal ceasefire".

Courts will be able to order the confiscation of property of people convicted of belonging to specified organisations if it "has been used ... in connection with the activities of the specified organisation, or ... may be so used unless forfeited".

Anyone else who claims to have an interest in the property will have to argue in the High Court. For good measure the Act makes it a crime to agree to commit offences anywhere in the world outside the United Kingdom. An act or omission as part of a conspiracy could include sending or receiving a message by any means. The government stressed the intention to catch "terrorist" conspiracies. However, if it chooses, agreement to block a road or railway line in an act of passive resistance could equally be caught.

In addition to amending Prevention of Terrorism legislation, the Act makes a large number of amendments to other laws. It may be that the consequences of some of these changes are as dangerous to democratic rights and the conduct of trials.

The Guardian, on the day of the Commons debate said that: "We are not rushing into any of this". Tony Blair said in Parliament: "In the circumstances, we must be prepared for a long and strenuous struggle".

Many voices were raised in Parliament against the way it was asked to pass this law. The first four speakers against the business motion in the Commons to establish the procedure were a scrupulous Tony, one of the Old Labour Right, a Firebrand of Unionism and the standard bearer of the Labour Left (Richard Shephard, Gwyneth Dunwoody, Ian Paisley and Tony Benn).

Others of these complaints were reasonably - Ian Paisley was unhappy that anybody could be cited under the terms of the Bill. Anyone despite the qualms of many MPs and much adverse comment in the media, Blair's control of the Labour Party ensured that the Bill went through.

A massive campaign is needed to highlight what this will mean in practice and to defend those arrested as a result of its sweep.

We cannot allow the supposed concessions to bring about the same defeat the PTA had, that of an annual rubber stamping of repression.
Missiles strike Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan

Roland Rance

THE TERRORIST in White House and his allies have - not for the first time - targeted countries across the world, including those of the Third World and on Muslim people.

The destruction of the Shi'ite pharmaceuticals factory in Sudan will lead to untold further deaths, as it cited an estimated 30% of Sudan's paracetamol and antibiotics, and was Africa's major producer of vaccines. Even statements by several Western diplomats have challenged the US assertion that it was producing chemical weapons.

In Afghanistan, the target was allegedly bases of militiam close to Saudi millionaire businessman Osama bin Laden, new Public Enemy Number One of the US government.

Like many before him - Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi, Fidel Castro, Salvador Allende and many others - bin Laden has now become the focus of a concerted US military and propaga
dynomic offensive, which is targeted on which innocent bystanders and the truth will both be slaughtered.

Why is this happening?

The overwhelming reason is the refusal of the US government and foreign policy, the need to define and assert US interests against both other states and the US working class. For actors are those who threaten the ability of imperialist interests to be paraded.

In the words of Gore Vidal, "A constant stream of enemies is the only justifiable and for a half-century of military procurement; $5.5 trillion thus far."

This role was filled for a long period by the USSR and its allies, which represented not only a credible military threat, but also the possibility, however deformed, of a different social and economic system.

With the demise of the Soviet bloc and the US victory in the cold war, it has been replaced by the new war. A long pro
cession of adventurers, the US, Soviet Union, and Gulf War - has finally led to the ideal figure of fear and hate - the Islamic funda
tamentalist terrorist.

Although the bloodiest terrorist attack on the US has been by the "domestic ultra-right" in Oklahoma, the "enemy within" is not suitable for this purpose.

Islam, however, suits it admirably. The Muslim world is littered with real and imagined enemies, repressive governments, many of them installed and supported by the Western powers. Popular struggles against these regimes are increasingly turning to Islamic fundamentalism, led by the US and its allies. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, as a proxy in its campaign against the Soviet
diary regimes. Osama bin Laden, who had inherited a fortune from his father's construction business in Saudi Arabia, was one of the thousands of returnees from across the world who flocked to this cause.

Germans who received their training in Afghanistan are now prominent in the country's Islamic struggle. As well as forming the core of the Afghan Taliban, they are fighting in Iraq, Chechnya, Palestine, the Philippines, Egypt, Turkey, Kashmir and elsewhere.

Several of these "Afghan" fighters in Russia, though their role was not as influential as in other areas, and there have been reports of nuclear reactor support being arrested in Russia.

These conflicts also demonstrate how the Islamic movements are able to attract popular support. As bin Laden said in a recent interview on CNN: "With a simple look at the U.S. behaviour, we find that it judges the rest of the world not as poor Palest
ingian children whose country was occupied; if they throw stones against the Israeli occupa
tion, it says they are terrorists when al Qaeda, which بمبود the United Nations building in Qana, Lebanon while was full of women and children the US stopped any plan to con
demn Israel. At the time that they condemn any Muslim who calls for his rights, they receive the highest horror the bombs which killed hundreds of African civilians in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam will now see him as a victim of this US imperialism.

But, although Islamic "fundamentalism" is a useful focus for US foreign policy aims, and although it can, in particular circum
stances, overthrow rotten regimes such as in Afghanistan, and potentially Egypt and Alge
tria, it can certainly not defeat US imperialism.

Nor can it provide any lasting solution for the Arab and Muslim working class. This can only come through the development of a socialist opposition, which will mobilise mass support in a political struggle against imperialism and its local allies and link up with the strug

gles of the working class in the metropolitan heartlands.

Cynical slaughter as US manufactures a new "enemy"

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Terry Conway

IN THE WAKE of the criminal bombings of Sudan and Afghanistan and the death of Osama bin Laden, it seems rather trivial to return to the question of the President's sex life.

This is of course relevant to Clinton's gamblers when he timed the bombings to coincide with Lewinsky's second appearance before investigator Kenneth Starr - about which the press have been strangely silent ever since.

Clearly the potential impact of the United States - the most powerful man on earth - is a subject worthy of discussion and concern. Now it appears to, despite the support of Newt Gingrich (bought with the lives of those killed by the American raids), Clinton's address to the nation in which he con
tested his misdeeds were not surprising.

A leading member of the Democratic Party demanded a further apology.

Increasingly as the deadline for Starr's report draws nearer, deeper fissures appear within the American ruling class as to whether the President can - or should - be saved. These divisions are not only between Republicans and Democrats, but within Clin

on's own Party.

The discussion as to whether he should be impeached or censured straddles both parties.

But should socialists be in favour of Clinton's impeachment? For us this is not a question of his crimes as an individual - among which the slaughter in Afghanistan and Sudan take their place alongside other massacres - but on what the dynamic would be.

Our verdict is not that Clinton is a better or an otherwise healthy orchard. His rooting out would not lead in and of itself a lessening of the crimes against either the American people or the peoples of the world. Anyone who doubts this need only remember back to previous scandals such as Watergate. We have no confidence in the Supreme Court to hand out justice for our

class.

Much of the debate in the press hinges on the comparison, which we certainly do not share - that there is a funda
mental difference between the Republicans and the Democrats. So we are accurately informed that the driving force for Clinton's impeachment is coming from the Republicans - and their extreme right wing at that. The implication is therefore that he should be defended against this attack what
ever his crimes. Even prominent feminists have rushed to Clinton's defence, putting defence of the Democratic Party and its relationship in the White House before the interests of women. While this comes as no surprise given the fact that the National Organization for Women (NOW) has long been tied to the coat tails of the Democrats, it is none the less scandalous.

Clinton is not only accused of "inappropriate relations" with Monica Lewinsky but of sexual harass

ment of Paula Jones. Sexual harassment is never defined - and clearly the relation

ship in this instance is very clear. Our verdict has nothing to do with our view of the individ

uals making the accusa

tion.

In relation to the situation with Lewinsky the statement to the nation talks about an "inappropriate" relationship, but dodged the question of what was inappro

priate about it.

The crisis from the Republican. Christian fundamentalist right have focused on the question of extra

marital sex. Clearly this is not the issue for socialists, though we don't condone deceit in personal relationships including in marriage.

President Clinton is not just a bad apple in an otherwise healthy orchard.
14 SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Kosovo: US gives Milosevic green light for repression

Geoff Ryan

On 17 July the United States Senate passed two resolutions which declared that 'Slobodan Milosevic, President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, has committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide' and expressed support for the right of self-determination for Kosovo that the international community has repeatedly urged for the former Serb constituent territorial units of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, some of which have become independent'. (House Concurrent Resolution 304 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 105).

By late August American envoy Christopher Hill was negotiating a deal with this same Milosevic to which would leave Kosovo far short of autonomy.

At most it would give Kosovo a form of the rights it enjoyed before 1989, when Milosevic forced the Kosovo Parliament to agree to the repeal of Kosovo autonomy. Yet implicit in Kosovo's status in 1989 was the right to secession -- a right totally rejected in the Hill proposals.

The contradiction between these two positions is only apparent: the former represents the fine word about democracy and freedom US imperialism occasionally feels itself compelled to utter; the second is its real position. In the meantime the Albanian people of Kosovo suffer.

The declaration of Milosevic was backed by most of its NATO allies. These words encouraged the KLA to believe that they could rely on western support to defeat the Serbian police and army. They rather foolishly believed that NATO would offer them air support, if not ground troops, to drive Serbian forces out.

They were also aided by a temporary hesitancy in Belgrade: perhaps Milosevic too wasn't certain to what extent the US would allow him to continue repression. As a result the KLA was able to massively increase its control over large parts of Kosovo.

US special envoy Richard Holbrooke called for the inclusion of the KLA in any talks with Milosevic and insisted that there could be no solution without the KLA.

Yet within a matter of weeks US policy had undergone a noticeable change. The military successes of the KLA led to confidence of its land forces. The KLA was put under pressure to restrain its demands. In particular it was made clear there would be no western support for Kosovo independence. This was just the green light Milosevic needed.

Once he was sure he faced no more than verbal condemnation, his troops rapidly regained most of the liberated territory. The KLA was massively outgunned. Old Kalashnikovs and other light weapons snuggled over the Albanian border were no match for Serbian heavy weapons.

The KLA was forced to retreat to the mountains. Christophor Hill was then free to negotiate with Milosevic without the inclination of the KLA.

The United States' attempts to impose a solution in Kosovo take place against a background of continued repression of Albanians. In the first week of September alone over 300 Albanian civilians have been arrested and are awaiting trial. Large numbers of Albanian villages continue to be shelled and, after being looted, burned down.

The villages of Kodrat, Drenoc, Zhabel, Krelaz, Gergoc, Rakoc, Vrjace, Ciftake, Dezte, Sapanice and Pacente were all destroyed in the early days of September. Attacks have also been made on several towns, particularly Pacente. KLA units have occasionally fought back against Serbian attacks, in most cases the villages destroyed were not defended.

Those fleeting the fighting have also not been safe. Four Serbian troops fire on refugees as they cross into Albania, while in Kosovo refugees have seen the population of villages and small towns reduce by up to 10,000 people.

About 10,000 refugees have moved to Gucna, a village which normally has about 500 residents. Food and other basic necessities are scarce.

Ironically, Workers Aid for Kosovo recently managed to deliver 2 tons of food, donated by the miners' union, to Mitrovica after a five day journey to cover the few hundred kilometres from Tuzla.

For the US and its allies, this continuing repression is distinctly secondary to ensuring 'stability' in the region. The Albanian nation is divided, between four states: Yugoslavia (with Albanian populations in both Montenegro and Serbia included in Kosovo); Greece, Albania and Macedonia (where one third of the population is Albanian). Approximately 40 per cent of Albanians live outside Albania.

As for the KLA in Kosovo, would open up the issue of reunification of the Albanian nation -- even though KLA spokesman Adem Demaci has recently denounced the position of unity with Albania as a product of the KLA's 'teen-age years'.

Demaci's comments illustrate one of the biggest problems in Kosovo. Most Kosovo political leaders are in a dilemma: is the lifeless, self-styled President Rugova -- continue to hope, despite the clearest evidence to the contrary, that the west will intervene in support of Kosovar independence?

Much KLA criticism of Hill's proposed deal focuses on the nature of the proposed delegation -- from which they are excluded -- for talks with Milosevic. They insist that they are 'Europeans' and look towards Europe, in the naive belief that EU politicians will support independence for Kosovo.

It is this political weakness, many Albanians say, that the military defeats the KLA has recently suffered that holds back the Kosovar struggle.

Despite this, socialists cannot stand idly by while the western powers support the right of Kosovo to independence and the right of Kosovo to build up relations with other states, including the right to unite with Albania.

We need to ensure this debate is taken into the labour movement and the KLA, and continue to challenge both Kosovo to self-determination and rejection of any attempts by imperialism to impose a solution on the people of Kosovo.

Timebomb of Italy's new immigration laws

By a special correspondent in Italy

RECENT dramatic disturbances in the southern Italian resorts and centres "in Sicily are some of the first effects of the recently passed Italian immigration laws.

The law, passed by the Romano Prodi government in March '96, is the first ever attempt by an Italian government to deal with the overall situation of illegal EUs coming to Italy for any reason whatsoever (work, study, tourism or residence).

Up till now this issue has been covered by a series of piecemeal, sometimes contradictory, legislative decrees.

The new law has both positive and negative effects. Amongst the positive ones is the introduction of a "permanent" residence card, which can be obtained by an immigrant worker and his/her family after five years' legal residence in the country, and can be withdrawn only for serious offences.

There is also the right for the family of an immigrant worker to be united with the working father or mother in Italy, the guaranteeing of the rights of immigrant minors regardless of their parents' situation, and the right for workers to obtain a permit to enter the country to look for work, although the full implications of this latter clause are not yet entirely clear.

The negative aspects of the law, apart from the failure to give immigrants the vote in local elections -- a clause that was blocked on constitutional grounds by the right wing in the Italian parliament -- include the setting up of the already infamous "temporary holding centres".

The law states that foreigners without regular documents can neither be expelled instantly nor held in these locked, guarded detention centres for up to thirty days (20 days plus the granting of asylum appeal) before being reapparition. During the summer, over 1000 newly arrived foreigners, mainly Tunisians, Moroccans, Albanians and Kurds, were imprisoned in centres in the South of Italy and Milan, amidst scenes of extreme violence and rioting, with injuries, arrests and three mass escapes (between 50 and 100 people a time).

The opening of the detention centres is part of the law's amendation of the number of immigrants entering the country. But one of the biggest shortcomings of the new law is its failure to grant any kind of "amenity" for foreigners without regular documents who were already in the country before the passing of the law on March 27.

In fact, although the newly approved "entry flow control" mechanism (agreed on July 31 by the Cabinet) allows an "irregular foreigners" who were already in Italy before the 27th of March to become "regularised", under certain conditions, this decision has not as yet actually been implemented.

And so, the new law, whilst making some definite improvements for regularised immigrants in Italy, has in many ways failed to resolve one the most pressing and controverial questions of all that of illegle immigration.

The explosive situation in the new detention centres is the living example of this failure.

Milosevic (right) is using heavy force to crush Kosovo struggle
Behind the lines in Chiapas

Gill Lee

"ARMY!" came the shout. A line of women, dressed in the traditional red and white blouses of Chiapas revolutionaries, stood across the side road stretching their rope barrier. Above them a sign read "Welcome to Pollo, a new autonomous, rebel municipality. Liberty, Justice, Democracy. Zapata Lives! The fight continues!"

Below on the valley the sun glanced off the new tin roofs of refugee shock homes, home to those displaced by the Mexican army's "laws of war" against the Indian peoples of Chiapas.

The army jeep sped by on the main road and the men all cheered, and resumed their chanting and needlework. One dangled a child on a string. "Hey! Hey! Hey! We've been here less than a year, you know," he told me. "It was after the massacre.""The PRISTAN in 'Patz y Justicia' were boasting about what they had done there, about how much they had been paid to do it. They burned our animals, our furniture, everything that could be moved was stolen, and then they set fire to our houses.

"Acteal was on December 22 1997 and they burned the clinic on December 25. Seventy-eight families had their houses burned, so we came here. Two hundred and fifty people in all in the village."

Driven out

In the last two years, despite the signing of the San Andres Accord by the Zapatistas and the Mexican government, at least seventeen thousand people have been forced, from their homes by the army and the paramilitaries. The paramilitaries are controlled by the PRI, which has ruled Mexico for over sixty years.

The PRI's plan for tackling the Zapata insurgent groups is to group together the paramilitaries, to arrest and deport the population, and to destroy the bases of support for the rebels. Five days before Acteal the Governor of Chiapas gave more than half a million dollars to Patz y Justicia to "support and encourage agricultural production."

"The similarity of this strategy to that pursued in El Salvador with Contras is no coincidence: governments and army are being advised by the same U.S.-based counterinsurgency 'experts'."

In 1988 Mexico sent more soldiers for training in the United States than any other country. In 1980 115 Mexican soldiers went, while from 1996 and 1998 343 soldiers had been trained in the United States. These soldiers have been trained there as 'rapid reaction troops'. Many of those leading the war against the peasant Chiapas fighters were trained in Mexico. Juan Lopez Ortiz trained there in 1959 and was in charge of the war against the EZLN in Ocosingo in Jan 94 when Zapatista prisoners of war were publicly executed in the market square. Between 30,000 and 40,000 soldiers were concentrated in Chiapas, a state with just over 2 million inhabitants.

The Subcomitee for the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities recently passed the first United Nations resolution against Mexico's breaches of human rights. This resolution demanded that the Mexican government bring to justice those who carried out the killings of civilians in the autonomous areas.

The government responded by denouncing the Subcomitee for being made up of 'experts' rather than politicians and thus unrepresentative of international opinion. Meanwhile the numbers murdered by paramilitaries grew. Human rights groups state more than 500 have been killed between 1995 and 1997. In November last year Gilberto Lopez y Riveras, deputy president of Conpoz and member of the PRI of the Zapatistas, the name of the main leaders of Patz y Justicia. None have yet been charged.

The state deals differently with those thought to be leaders of the autonomic Zapata municipalities, declared illegal in April 98. Since then, through raids on Zapatista communities and arrests and jailing those thought to be in positions of leadership, the number of political prisoners in Chiapas has doubled, from 49 to 95."

Language

Miguel Angel de los Santos, defense lawyer for many accused Zapatistas, has denounced this. "In many cases the only proof offered for serious crimes such as kidnapping, assault or even murder has been the statements made by members of the PRI in these communities..."They have also ignored the requirement to presume innocence and the right under the constitution for indigenous accused persons to have translation from Spanish into their own language..."

When Chol speaking Indian Adolfo Lopez Vazquez was charged with homicide, the judge justified the fact that there was no translation saying: "My origins are also Chol and I speak Spanish well."

Adolfo was convicted on the basis of a three page statement in Spanish which he could not possibly have dictated."The wives of the political prisoners of the Cерро Hueso have organised protests against the framing of their husbands. On August 9, 70 women accompanied by their children began a 'strike of the machetes' in front of the town hall in Tuxtla Gutierrez. Each carried a wooden machete bearing the name of a man detained in Cерро Hueso and unable to work in the fields.

"Our husbands are prisoners because they want a democratic change in the country, because they demand that our voices are respected. They are in prison because they have been named as "experts" of our communities."

In Pollo too, many women are without men. "They are dead, or in prison, or with the EZLN," explained Fernando, "it's very hard for them.

"They have absolutely nothing and since arriving here no one has received a peso from the Mexican government." Around us canvas shelters made from hoarding adverts flapped in the breeze. "Marichal Red Man" sheltered one family while "Things go better with them - or did they? for another.

The Red Cross had laid temporary water pipes from the river and occasionally delivered planks and the canvas from which the shelters were made.

Three men were clearing a patch of ground. It had taken them a week working with pick axes to level the site but they were worried about what they were going to use to build their 'house' now that the site was prepared.

The last delivery of planks, tin and can-

vases was two to three months ago. There is nothing here to use unless the Red Cross delivers materials. Our test is full of holes so we need something more permanent."

Many of the children suffer from gastro-

intestinal disorders, and when it rains the whole camp turns mud to waste becoming treacherous. The streams in which people wash clothes and bodies become red with earth.

We passed the clinic, "Autonomous Clinic, Emilio Zapata." Like the school it was built of breeze blocks and was painted with an impressive mural.

"People decided it was important that we build our own school, clinic and meeting space," explained Fernando. "There's also a court for the young people to play football or basketball."

The wall of the meeting space was de-

corated with symbols of the forest: deer, birds, trees and flowers. The school bore two murals; one with the familiar ski-masked figures of the Zapatistas while the other showed masked women, the beri-

boned hats of San Juan Chamula and coffins.

On many walls bright stalks of maize - the staple food of Southern Mexico, and inert material from which Mayan beliefs say the first people were made - stretched towards the sky. I had to leave. The Mexican government deported more than 200 foreigners in the last year for alleged political activities, and in January told the International Red Cross to leave Chiapas.

"Questioning"

On the way to Pollo the collective taxi in which I had been travelling was stopped by the army, and the Mexicans inside ignored while on the other side the driver cursed. All my details were recorded and I was interrogated as to my travel plans in the region.

My story - that I was travelling to Pan-

tello (the last town on the road through Pollo) was interested in its traditional weaving - had fallen on sceptical ears.

It now seemed sensible that I should get to Pantelino that afternoon in case there was another checkpoint there. Heading up the main road, the barrier of women was again on its feet as yet another army truck thundered past.

On the main road to Pantelino the army jeeps passed every five minutes. "Sawmill" was the thought of a de-

livery visit. Signers reading "Social work" and "Doctors available" seemed a poor win-

dow-dressing for the campaign of represen-

tation being waged against the people of Chiapas by the Mexican army and govern-

ment.

(1) 45 Zapatistas, mainly women and chil-

dren, supporters of the autonomous group "Las Abejas" - the bees - were killed and dismembered by paramilitaries in an attack on an army post and supported by the army and the PRI (Institu-

tional Revolutionary Party, the ruling party in Mexico).

(2) La Jornada, 12/8/98

(3) As revealed in documents uncovered by El Poplo, 3/7/98

(4) La Jornada, 11/2/97

(5) La Jornada, 16/8/98 with data reprinted from The Washington Post.

(6) International Witness, February 98

(7) "En realidad esta es una coima integrada por un grupo de expertos, que no tienen responsa-

bility for the opinions expressed in this article."

(8) La Jornada, 13/1/97

(9) La Jornada, 16/8/98 with data reprinted from The Washington Post.

(10) International Witness, February 98

(11) Information given by La Ho de Cерро Hueso, voice of the prisoners of Cерро Hueso prison.
Key lesson of 1848 for today

The strategy of permanent revolution

The second of two articles by John Lister examining the lessons drawn by Marxists from the revolutions of 1848, in particular the theory of "permanent revolution.

W

ARX and Engels went in to the revolu
tionary movement of 1848 convinced that the
principal task was to complete the bourgeois ("democratic") revolu
tion—establishing national unity in Germany, and working for
democratic forms of rule to replace the old feudal and repres
sive aristocratic system.

The experience of the struggles in Germany, France and else
where in Europe revealed to them that this was not suffi
cient as a line for the embryonic
working class of that time.

The bourgeoisie always proved an inconsistent and inade
quate ally and a treacherous lead
ership in any struggle against the old regime, because of their fear of the potential strength of the
working class.

Marx and Engels had correctly unterlined what was to be the
driving fear of the bourgeoisie when they argued in the Commu
nists Manifesto of the successul bourgeois revolution in Germany
would not automatically open the
doors to the proletarian revolution.

In practice the bourgeoisie pre
ferred not to take that chance, but instead to do a new deal with the
old regime.

It was this dual led Marx to put forward the battle cry of
permanent revolution, a stern warning on the need for the
working class to organise itself separately from the bourgeoisie and
to prepare to fight on its own behalf to complete the struggle
for democratic rights and for its own independence.

Half a century later this same spirit of working class
independence became part of the
fighting spirit of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Indeed it was precisely over the
necessity for this type of firm and
disciplined leadership, and the
rejection of any perspective of
collaboration with the
"democratic bourgeoisie" in Rus
nia that the disputes of 1903 from the Menshevik wing of the
Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.

The Mensheviks - ignoring the

Through the strategy of permanent revolution the Russian working class rose to power in a predominantly peasant economy.

The lessons of 1848 - change to the no
tion that the liberal bourgeoisie would play the leading role in the
democratic revolution in Russia,
Lenin argued that the
centrality of the agrarian question in a
backward land of
massed peasantry raised the central role of an alliance between the workers and
the poor peasants as the driving
force of revolution. If victorious,
Lenin argued that these com
bined forces would establish a
"democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry".

This formulation left open the possibility of a regime which fell
short of a revolutionary workers'
party, but which rested on a more radical mass base than a "demo
cratic" bourgeois regime. Lenin
did not at first rule out the possi
bility that the peasantry might even develop a mass party of its
own which might play some inde
pendent role.

Trotsky criticised not Lenin's
focus on the agrarian revolution,
not the emphasis upon forming
an alliance of the most oppressed
against the tsarist aristocracy and the
liberal bourgeoisie, but the fact
that Lenin's formula placed two
antagonistic forces simultane
ously in the driving seat. It left
open whether the actual dictato
rial power would be exercised by
the proletariat or by the peasantry when it came to the crunch.

Trotsky argued that the
peasantry, for all its size and weight, did not have the political inde
pendence to form a genuine party
of its own which would not either fall prey to the bourgeoisie or fol
low the lead of the prole
tariat.

The completion even of the tasks
demanded of the peasantry could only be
achieved if the working class
assumed the lead
ning role, breaking boldly from
the landowners, and
making the demo
cratic programme part of its own.

Thus, the two sides of the battle
raged on for a long time, but it was
not until the Bolsheviks won
control of the government in
1917 that the dream of a
"democratic revolution" became a
reality.

The expropriation of the large
estates was achieved, the rule of
the bourgeoisie was
ended, and the peasants
were given their rights.

The "permanent revolution"
refers to the idea that the
democratic revolution must
be completed by the working
class, and that this must be
done through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

For Trotsky, the task of the
working class was to take power
from the hands of the bourgeoisie
and give it to the peasantry.

The Mensheviks, on the other hand,
were divided over this point, with
some supporting the idea of a
democratic dictatorship, while
others argued for a more radical
takeover by the working class.

The Mensheviks ultimately
chose to side with the Bolsheviks
in 1917, thus playing a key role
in the Russian Revolution.

Trotsky's ideas have been
influential in the development of
theory and practice of
revolutionary movements
around the world, and have
remained relevant to this day.
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Today it is a hallmark of Communist Parties and CP-influenced groupings which have descended from Stalin's Comintern that they - like today's nationalist leaderships and so-called "socialist" bourgeoisies - adamantly insist upon the separation of the democratic and socialist revolutions. That is the cornerstone of their search for "progressive" sections of the capitalist class and "broad popular alliances."

When we argue today that there is only a working class solution to the struggles in Indonesia, South Korea, South Africa, and the Philippines, we are not arguing for any less emphasis on the democratic tasks to be accomplished in the revolution. We are certainly not arguing against an alliance where appropriate between the working class and the poorer layers of peasants and petty bourgeoisie.

We are stressing even the minimal demands of the proletariat and the carrying through of the democratic revolution beyond anything that can be accomplished by or under the leadership of the "democratic" capitalists. We are insisting that the workers, committing themselves to the struggle must build and maintain their own independent organisations, and develop their own demands and programmes.

Fighting alongside the various "democrats" who are prepared to use revolutionary means against the existing regime, workers must also maintain their own revolutionary organisations. Incorporating the democratic demands, alongside the specific solutions of the worker's organisation, they must remain committed to the socialist struggle - and (as Marx and Engels insisted) not stop short "until all the more or less properly classified tasks have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power."

This is one reason why the bureaucratic machinery of the Kremlin expended such energy in slandering Trotsky's line - the line of Lenin and Marx - and instilling in the degenerated "Communist International" the discredited formulae of the Mensheviks.

...
Chinese Trotskyist Zheng Chao Lin (1908-1998)

Implacable opponent of Stalinism

Wang Fanxi

Zheng Chao Lin, a veteran of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and a Chinese Trotskyist, died on August 1 in Shanghai. He devoted his entire life to the cause of the liberation of the Chinese workers and peasants.

He was at once a writer, a poet, an historian, a linguist and a translator. His achievements were not only numerous but exemplary. He avoided a desultory or dilettante approach and probed deeply into the essence of things, assiduously perfecting his skills and knowledge.

Not only was he at first and foremost a faithful and unyielding revolutionary. His efforts and achievements in other fields took as their keynote his revolutionary thinking, and were shot through with his revolutionary spirit.

Chao Lin was born Zheng Chao Lin in Fujian Province in 1901, and as a boy he received a traditional Chinese education. In 1919 he went to work as a part of an "electrical work study" programme under which young Chinese students financed their education by working part-time in French industry, and came under the influence of socialist thinking, particularly the Russian Revolution.

He gradually abandoned his study of the philosophy of Confucius and Mencius and even Law. He went to the Tientsin People's University and embraced the ideas propagated by Chen Duxiu and his co-thinkers who advocated democracy and science. Shortly afterwards he embraced Marxism, and was soon progressing from thought to action.

In June 1922, when some young members of the Marxist living in Europe held a meeting in Paris at which they set up the "Youth Communist League of China", Chao Lin was among the 18 delegates, who included Zhou Enlai, Zhaosheng, and Lu Cun-chang.

In 1923 he had selected to go to Russia to study at Moscow University for a year. In July 1924, when the CCP urgently needed cadres as a result of the rapid development of the revolutionary situation in China, he went back to China with Chen Yannian and others.

He worked in the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee, edited party journals, drafted international resolutions and other documents, and translated Bukharin's "Theory of Communitarianism". He wrote the "Socialist Revolution" and the "Three Principles of the CCP". He translated the "Socialism in One Country" and translated the "Theory of the Communist Party of China".

In 1929 he took part in the Fifth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 1929 and 1930, he began to be sent to contact with Trotsky's writings on the Chinese situation, and then to the Shanghai Pudong Revolutionary.Between 1929 and 1930, he was appointed head of the Propaganda Department of the Shanghai Provincial Committee.

After the final defeat of the revolution, he took part in the party's famous August 7th conference. Afterwards he secretly moved back to Shanghai with the new Central Committee and took charge of the new party organ Buhahui, as its chief editor.

In 1928 he went to Fujian to reorganise party affairs in the province. In 1929 he married comrades Liu Jingshan. Not long afterwards he was arrested for the first time by the Guomindang. Fortunately, his identity was not discovered, and after just over 40 days he was released as a result of the secret intervention of the party.

B

between 1929 and 1930, he began to come into contact with Trotsky's writings on the Chinese situation and the Chinese Revolution. Deeply impressed, he turned towards Trotskyism, together with Chen Duxiu and others. In May 1931, Chen Duxiu and three other comrades represented the Proletariat group at the unification conference of the four Trotskyist groups.

He was elected to the General Committee and took charge of its Propaganda Department. Not long afterwards, he was arrested by the Guomindang authorities and sentenced to life imprisonment, though he was released after just seven years, when the Japanese war broke out.

After his release he rested and recovered. Soon after, he visited the village in Anhui Province together with his wife, and took up the cause of the country. After the death of his wife, Liu Jingshan, a communist, he returned to his revolutionary activities.

He continued to work for the international revolution and for the development of the Chinese Communist Party, becoming a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1949.

In 1950, he returned to Shanghai, where he joined the leadership of the Chinese Trotskyist organisation and the editorial branch of the underground newspaper, "Red Flag". He translated Voltaire's "Manual of the Art of History. His work was praised by the CCP. After the outbreak of the new war in Western Europe in 1959, differences of opinion grew up in the Chinese Trotskyist leadership. Those principal differences over what to do to the Chinese resistance once the Anti-Japanese war in China became in the wider war. A protracted dispute ensued, and spread from politics to organisational issues. As a result, the Chinese Trotskyist organisation split in 1942. Chao Lin was a leading member of the group that went on to form the China Trotskyist Workers Party of China.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese army occupied Shanghai, the foreign settlements and revolutionary activity directed against the Japanese became extremely difficult. From then until the Japanese defeat in August 1945, Chao Lin put his main effort into writing. Apart from editing Internationale, the underground Trotskyist journal, he wrote his memoirs. Three Travellers, a collection of political debates in the form of imaginary dialogues. He wrote the "IARC of Permanent Revolution" and "A Critical Biography of Chen Duxiu" (uncompleted). To earn a living he also translated some literary works, among them Ignazio Silone's Fontamara and a book by Andre Glise.

From August 1945 to May 1949, from the Japanese surrender and the civil war between the Guomindang and the CCP to the Communist victory in China, he was a member of the "Red Banner". He publicly declared Trotskyist fortiethly which was bound to China's post-war process. After the new government in 1949, he served as the Chinese Ambassador to France, in 1952, he was sent to France as the Chinese Ambassador to France, in 1953.

In 1956, he was expelled from the Chinese Communist Party and his wife's death a year later left him alone. In 1959, he was expelled from the Chinese Communist Party and his wife's death a year later left him alone. In 1960, he was expelled from the Chinese Communist Party and his wife's death a year later left him alone. In 1962, he was expelled from the Chinese Communist Party and his wife's death a year later left him alone.

In June 1979, as a result of changes in the leadership of the CCP and in response to calls by people both inside and outside China (in 1979 he was declared a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International), Chao Lin and 11 other survivors of Mao's gaols were restored to liberty.

In all he spent a total of 34 years behind bars, equaling the record for prison terms. In 1981, he was released from prison. In 1982, he died of cancer. He was buried in Shanghai, the city where he had lived for most of his life.

The death of Zheng Chao Lin marks the end of a chapter in the history of the Chinese Trotskyist movement. His life and work provide a valuable lesson for all those who continue to fight for freedom and justice.

Their son, Frei, born in 1916, died in 1945. In his final years, Chao Lin was cared for by his great niece.

The boyfriend's son, who is 21 years his junior, has been under close supervision by the CCP since 1965.

In the 10 years between his release and his death, Chao Lin's physical and mental health were the subject of careful observation by the authorities. He put enormous effort into reflecting on and recording the history of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Trotskyist movement.

In the years before he died, Chao Lin's health was monitored closely.
Socialist Outlook
Where we stand

IN THE NINETIES, millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorship. This reflects the fact that humanity faces overwhelming dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

More and more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democrats and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

Socialist Outlook is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide Marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy worldwide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence.

Socialism must be understood as a system of people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight for capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to gradually acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbian and gay men, and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around their specific problems and must fight to break the chains as those who wear them.

The work of the working class needs to fully commit itself to this struggle.

Furthemore, we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations — an alliance which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By building simultaneously revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International, we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a broad strategy against exploitation and oppression we aim to win the survival of the human race.

If you think this is worth fighting for, and you like what you read in Socialist Outlook, why not join us? Drop a line to the address on this page, and we'll be in touch.

What's On

September
Saturday 12
WARTH and Foley in support of the sacked Cann Group strikers. (See page 8)

Sunday 13
PUBLIC meeting organised by the Jewish Socialist Group. No proofs please! Solidarity with the Rome people! 7.30pm, Weir London Synagogue, 33 Saynouk Place, London W1.

Saturday 19
CONFERENCE of the Left or the TUC? Organised by the Liverpool dockers. 10.30am. Blue Coat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool.

Sunday 20
PERSONS Day March & Rally. Meet 1pm at Embankment Underground station, London, for march to Tottenham Green.

Saturday 19-
Sunday 27
PEOPLES March '98 from Birmingham to Blackpool

October
Saturday 4
NODSA Solihull March, called by the Rosie Cross Committee. Assembly 11.30am at Speaker's Green, Hyde Park, London for march to Tottenham Green.

Saturday 17
NATIONAL Conference. End the Sanctions on Iraq. "The Sakhi Kaheen" called by the Five Boroughs Union. 10.00am, the Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, Manchester.

November
There will be a special conference called by the TUC and Momentum in Manchester to discuss the current political situation in Iraq.

We welcome readers' letters on any topic. Letters over 400 words may be cut for space reasons. Write to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

email: outlook@gn.apc.org
BILL CLINTON may have the sexual morals of an alley cat: he may be a brutal bully who exploits his power to harass women; but the crimes for which he is not facing investigation are the most serious.

Just two weeks ago he took a cynical decision to unleash Cruise missiles against targets in Afghanistan and Sudan which killed innocent civilians. The eventual death toll in Sudan, where a vital pharmaceutical factory was destroyed has yet to be calculated.

Clinton acted at least in part to divert attention from his own crisis: but he also acted as a gun-slinger for US imperialism. He won backing from reactionaries around the world.

This, and similar offences are the reason he should be indicted as a war criminal by the workers of the world.

SEE INSIDE, Page 13

People’s March fights for union and welfare rights

LIVERPOOL dockers and the striking Tameside care workers are among the latest to give their support to the March from Birmingham to Blackpool to lobby Labour Party conference, which sets off on September 19.

The People’s March is a focus for all those angry at the miserable failure of New Labour to repeal the Tory anti-union laws, and their continuation of Tory attacks on the NHS and the wider welfare state.

Rallies will be held in Birmingham (September 19), Wolverhampton (September 19), Crewe (Sept 20), Chester (Sept 21), Warr (Sept 22), Liverpool (Sept 23), St Helens (Sept 23), Salford (Sept 24), Preston (Sept 25) and Blackpool, where the march will link up with the lobby on September 27 called by UCLH UNISON.

There is still time for union branches or Labour Parties to sponsor a marcher or make a donation to the People’s March.