

workers power

revolution
against
global
capitalism

November 2001

Issue 258 ★ Price 50p

**STOP THE
WAR DEMO
LONDON
18.11.01
BE THERE**
Details: 07951 235 915

Blood on Blair's hands



Cluster bomb victims,
Afghanistan. Not in our
name, Tony...

Defend Afghanistan! Defeat imperialism!

Stop Blair and Bush's war!

Blunkett's asylum reforms fine-tune UK's racist laws

Home Secretary David Blunkett unveiled New Labour's latest answer to the refugee "problem" on 29 October, more than a year after the government announced its review of the widely opposed voucher scheme for asylum applicants.

The government's proposals don't even begin to address the underlying issues that drove opposition to a scheme that opened to abuse asylum seekers in supermarket queues and left many of them with a weekly income of £36 or less.

By announcing the phased elimination of vouchers by spring 2003, Blunkett may have done enough to buy the silence of critics like TGWU general secretary Bill Morris. But his reforms have also won support on the Tory front bench, from people who had labelled Blunkett's predecessor, Jack Straw, a "soft touch" on the asylum issue.

Why did the racist Tories applaud? Because Blunkett's proposals are racist. They include:

- Compulsory fingerprinting and photographing of asylum seekers for "biometric" identity cards. These are likely to prove a pilot for a national ID card scheme.

- A dramatic expansion in the numbers of asylum applicants held in detention ("removal") centres – from 1,800 to 4,000.

- Further restrictions on the right to appeal an initial rejection of an asylum application, along with a pledge to accelerate the process of deportation. The New Labour manifesto proclaimed a target of more than 30,000 removals in the financial year 2003-4.

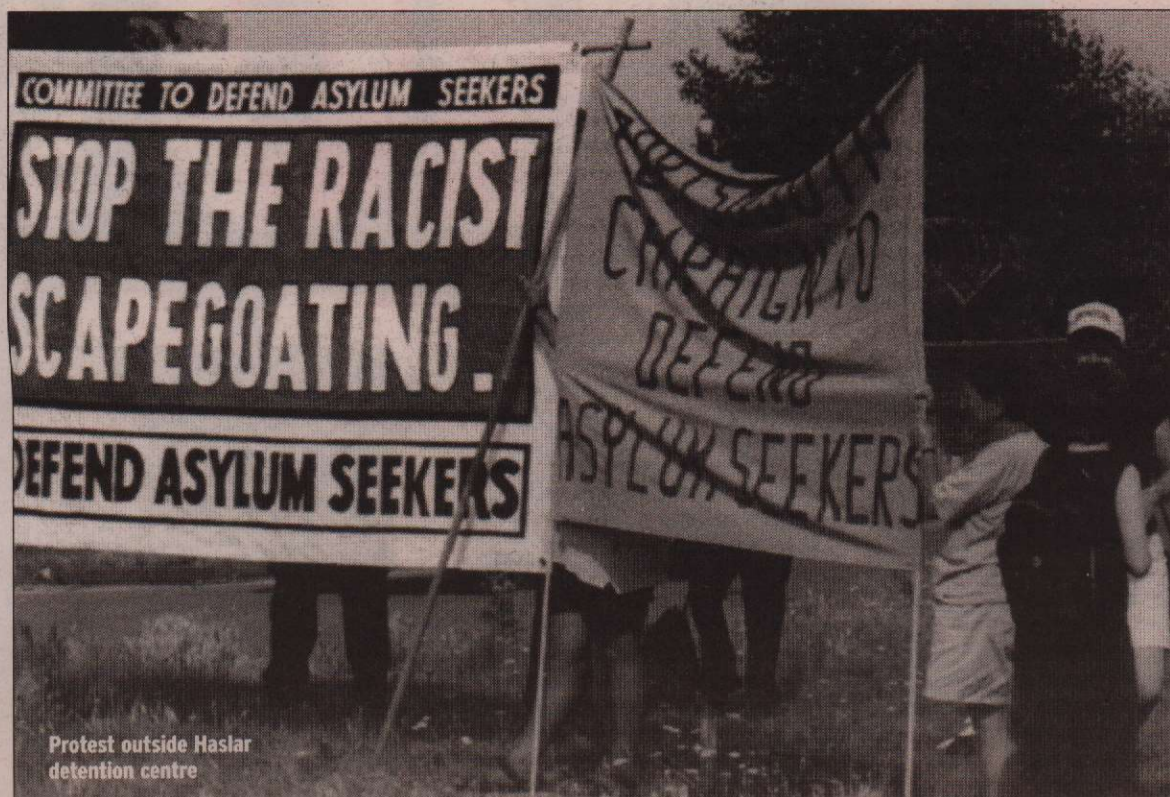
The Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers said about the changes: "These latest moves are a variation on the same old theme: so far as this government is concerned asylum seekers are not welcome here. The available evidence about the Harmondsworth facility near Heathrow and the 900-bed Yarl's Wood Unit opening in November, shows that both are all but indistinguishable from prisons."

Mohammed Asif is an Afghan refugee who was sent to Glasgow's deprived Sighthill estate under the government's existing forced dispersal scheme. But Asif sees the proposed reception centres as still worse than dispersal: "They will create a lot of problems. They are like prisons, against our basic human rights. The government have done this to satisfy the opposition and sections of the media," he said.

Sealing Off

The three types of centre (induction, accommodation/reception and detention/removal) outlined in the Blunkett announcement will all serve the purpose of sealing off asylum seekers from society in general. The government can claim that the centres will shield asylum applicants from the sort of racist violence that claimed the life of the Kurdish refugee Firsat Dag on the Sighthill estate. But the concentration of refugees in secure facilities is politically useful in another way. Isolation in such camps will make it more far more difficult to mobilise solidarity with the refugees.

The government has already increased the budget for surveillance hardware at major entry ports. In mid-September the Home Office announced the purchase of five mobile x/gamma-ray scanners and a new CCTV system for use by immigration offi-



Protest outside Haslar detention centre

"Reception centres will create a lot of problems. They are like prisons, against our basic human rights. The government have done this to satisfy the opposition and sections of the media," Mohammed Asif, asylum seeker

Citizenship classes – adding insult to injury

David Blunkett has decided to follow the example of the USA and Australia as he floats the idea of compulsory English language and citizenship classes for immigrants who apply for British nationality. The stated aim is to give UK passport applicants "an understanding of British democracy and culture".

There is, of course, a certain irony in a former Education Secretary compelling often highly educated refugees to take English lessons: an estimated one-in-five of the British adult population is functionally illiterate in their native language.

And what would the citizenship course consist of? Will it explain the role of Britain as a colonial power, stealing from the Third World and destroying the economies of developing countries? Will it explain our constitution? No – we have none. And what "culture" will they be taught? Will it be tea and cucumber sandwiches, Elgar and rules of croquet? Or will it be the pub, a curry, club-trance music and the price of buying an "e" on a Saturday night? The mere question shows the absurdity of it. Lurking behind this proposal is a more sinister agenda. In effect, David Blunkett is proposing a New Labour twist on Norman Tebbit's notorious "cricket test", where British Asians were supposed to display their loyalty to "Queen and Country" by backing the English cricket team. The aim lodged in a programme of citizenship/indoctrination classes will be to inoculate applicants against "alien" ideologies whether those be Islamic fundamentalism, revolutionary Marxism, or supporting the wrong team in the wrong sport.

Green cards: a beauty contest in which the poor need not apply

One of the New Labour sweeteners fed to its asylum critics is a liberalisation of policies that have made coming to work in the UK from abroad all but impossible. The introduction of a US-style green card scheme was also supposed to alleviate critical skills shortages in sectors of the UK economy.

The "Highly Skilled Migrant Entry Programme" is still on the civil servants' drawing board, but it is clearly intended to enable bosses to cherry pick refugee and overseas graduates. While it may prove a boon in the longer term to employers lacking computer software specialists, the government clearly intends to use it in tandem with a far harsher clampdown on so-called economic migrants.

The Blunkett announcement referred to a new ministerial group charged with examining "ways of toughening up action across government to tackle illegal employment and the exploitation of those who are in the UK illegally". In particular, this will mean still more deportations.

Government ministers will make moralistic denunciations of the "people traffickers", who prey upon the desperation of tens of thousands each year, but by refusing to relax, much less abolish, immigration laws that are inherently racist in their concept and implementation New Labour is ensuring that the trafficking in people will only grow with higher financial stakes.

what we think

- Against the Green Card proposals we are for the scrapping of all immigration controls, combined with cancellation of all Third World debt and an end to the grossly unequal terms of trade that drive so many people to escape grinding poverty in their native countries.
- With capital almost entirely free to roam the globe in the quest for the highest rate of profit, we must at the very least stand for the right of working people to travel as they see fit. Even right wing economists like Samuel Brittan now say globalisation is unfair unless the poor can migrate to find work and shelter. The Labour movement must add its voice to the call: scrap all immigration controls.

cers at Heathrow airport in order to monitor passengers from incoming flights.

This war against refugees has been explicitly linked to the "war against terrorism". In addition, the government has moved to strengthen the working links between the police and the Immigration Service, while imposing a new civil penalty on the operators of Euro-tunnel as part of a clampdown on the transport of "illegal immigrants".

Multinational companies such as Group 4, Wackenhut and Sodexo will continue to profit from the misery of asylum seekers, even if Sodexo ceases to enjoy a state-sponsored revenue stream from the administration and promotion of the voucher scheme. All of these corporations are involved in the operation of detention centres. In particular, Sodexo, through its subsidiary UK Detention Services, operates the Harmondsworth facility, has obtained an exemption from minimum wage legislation and so legally empowered to pay asylum detainees a mere £12 a week to perform catering, cooking and maintenance jobs in the facility.

Denied support

Meanwhile, asylum seekers will still be unable to work legally for at least their first six months in Britain, while those pursuing a judicial review forfeit their right to receive any support from the state. Similarly, those refusing to accept a place in a secure accommodation centre will be denied access to any support package.

Despite the gloss applied by liberal sections of the media, and the mealy-mouthed response of the Refugee Council, the Blunkett proposals mark an intensification of the government's war against asylum seekers. The Afghan war has provided a useful pretext for the increased emphasis on the systematic identification, monitoring and physical confinement of asylum applicants.

Against this background it is crucial that anti-racists step up their opposition to the whole thrust of New Labour's asylum and immigration policy.

Even with the abolition of the voucher scheme, campaigners must renew the call for the restoration of cash benefits at the level of income support as an absolute bottom line. In addition, restrictions on the right to work must be lifted from the time an asylum applicant first arrives.

There is also an urgent need for far greater co-ordination between the wide range of existing anti-deportation and anti-detention campaigns to ensure must larger demonstrations demanding the release of asylum detainees and the permanent closure of such facilities as Campsfield and Harmondsworth.

Above all, in the context of a rapidly growing anti-war movement it will be vital that the issue of asylum rights is pushed to the fore as part of the struggle to combat the racist backlash unleashed since 11 September. The anti-war movement in Britain has a particular responsibility to make sure that those who have fled repressive, often previously US and British-backed regimes do not figure among the domestic casualties in Bush and Blair's war against terrorism.

■ For further information and to get active contact: Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, BCM Box 4289, London WC1N 3XX, Mobile: 07941 566 183/E-mail: info@defend-asylum.org

From a 'wobble' to a winter of discontent

A cold blast of reactionary politics slammed into the face of the world's anti-imperialists and anti-capitalists in the wake of the explosions that levelled the World Trade Centre (WTC). It was hard to stand up for basic progressive arguments as the flag wavers hijacked the genuine grief of millions of Americans. Now, thanks to George W Bush and his cluster bombers, it is hard no longer. Less than two months on from September 11 the tide is turning.

The fundamentalist reactionaries of the Taliban and Al Qaeda sit undefeated in their mountain hideouts. America's bombs instead are wiping out civilian families, Red Cross hospitals and - slowly but surely - the moral advantage imperialism claimed after the New York atrocities.

So on top of the images of Manhattan in clouds of dust and flame are overlaid newer images: of Israeli tanks rolling into unarmed crowds in Bethlehem; of Afghan parents wailing over the bodies of children killed by Uncle Sam; and of New York firefighters clashing with riot cops over their right to go on digging for their comrades' bodies on the prime real estate now known as "Ground Zero".

And beyond all these shocking images, the weeks ahead will see the famine that is about to grip Afghanistan.

The smoke was still billowing from the ruins of the WTC when the World Bank issued a cynical press release predicting 40,000 children would die as a result. The twisted logic? World trade would suffer from the attack, increasing poverty and raising child mortality. What will the World Bank say about children whose emaciated bodies will be piled not in tens of thousands but hundreds of thousands as the ending of foreign food aid, combined with the bombing, leads to mass starvation?

There will be images, too, of military failure. The dropping of cluster bombs - airborne land mines that will maim and kill far more civilians than Taliban militiamen - is just the first own goal by the West. These bombs come packaged in the same shade of yellow as the food parcels US planes have scattered along with their deadly payloads.

All this is the background to what The Sun dubbed the "wobble" in British public opinion in late October. It started with the demonstration on 13 October: largely unreported, but some 50,000 strong and composed of a spontaneous alliance of peace campaigners, anti-capitalists, trade union activists and mass delegations from the Asian communities. It was mirrored in large local demonstrations and meetings: 1,500 on a Monday night in Birmingham; 1,000 in Sheffield on 27 October; hundreds marching through Exeter's usually quiet streets.

And while the mainstream media try to minimise the size of organised political opposition, they cannot stop the flood of unorganised dissent from thousands of callers and e-mailers to local and national TV and radio programmes. The tabloid press - which relies on an ability to judge and indulge, as well as shape, the "mood" of working class people - picked up the shocking truth early on. Masses of people are either against the war full stop, mistrust the USA or simply want a pause in bombing to allow humanitarian aid.



A poignant summation of the hurt felt by so many comes from Nelofer Pazira, an Afghan woman living as a refugee in Canada who despises the Taliban but told The Observer: "It makes me feel sick and the rest of the world should feel the same. We are bombing a people who already have 10 million unexploded bombs under their feet in the form of landmines. The politicians in the West are making a terrible mistake."

The Mirror had to dig out Vietnam-era journalist John Pilger - effectively banished from the paper 15 years ago - to write the piece that summed up why there is a mounting anti-war mood. And in parliament it was left to Paul Marsden, a previously compliant and obscure Labour backbencher to lead the 14-strong group of MPs that has so far stuck their heads above the parapet.

Let's be clear, though: those calling for a halt to bombing and a return to emergency food aid go way beyond the ranks of anti-imperialists and even humanitarians. They include the SNP, Plaid Cymru, sections of the Liberal Democrats and even arch-Tory novelist, Frederick Forsyth. You can bet therefore that they also include, covertly, a growing part of British imperialism's diplomatic and military establishment.

The many people who follow such

prominent voices of "unease" do not as yet object to America's right to stomp around the globe shooting people - only at the USA's "bad tactics". But November can and must be the month in which the anti-war movement rallies all progressive opponents of this war to the biggest protest the Blair government has ever faced.

Bush and Blair are now entering uncharted political territory: where the truth is stronger than spin and speech-writing. Standing over the ruins of the WTC in September, with Oxbridge and the Ivy League graduates scripting their every word, they sounded strong and decisive. By late October Blair looked weak and superficial - touring the Middle East, only to be told repeatedly by the dictators who rule such states as Syria and Saudi Arabia to get lost.

And as America gets bogged down in Afghanistan, while its economy goes to pieces, Bush's current standing will also slump.

Straight after the September 11 tragedy, Bush and Blair took the opportunity to ram home repressive laws, to crack down on ethnic minorities and demand of union leaders a truce in the class struggle. They demanded total loyalty: you're either with us or you are with the terrorists. They demanded a new

round of trade talks in which to bully developing countries; they doled out debt relief to those who supported the war and threatened to impoverish those who objected.

But millions of people across the world will not accept the "new", New World Order. They include the millions of peasants and workers in developing countries who are on the receiving end of IMF, World Bank and WTO policies. They include the survivors of US-sponsored terrorism - from Nicaragua to Palestine. And they include the growing anti-globalisation movements in the West, which have found themselves now combined with the older forces of the peace movements, Green parties and the left of social democratic parties.

That is the movement that can stop this imperialist war.

Before September 11 the anti-globalisation movement was at a crossroads. After the repression of the Genoa protest - itself 300,000 strong - we declared that it was time to sink roots deep into working class communities. The endless summer phase of summit hopping, irreverence and disorganisation was coming to an end. It would now be a hard slog to put the street-protest movement alongside reformist workers and ethnic minorities in their more mundane - but also

more powerful - day to day struggles.

George W Bush has now created the conditions where that can be done far more quickly. In Britain, the Socialist Alliance - which has been struggling to break out of a protracted phase of small-scale unity between left groups, union activists and a few Labour dissidents - now faces a much bigger prospect. It can become the socialist pole of attraction for the much wider mass movement - including left-wing Greens, Tribune Labour Party members and peace activists. It is not inevitable that the Socialist Alliance will play this role - especially if it is placed on the "back burner" by the leaders of the SWP and Socialist Party. But whether it is through the SA or through some other organisational form that takes months or years to build, the direction of the movement is clear.

We are creating a new, mass political opposition to Labour.

Revolutionary socialists are working in united campaigns with Muslim youth, anti-capitalist youth, left-wing trade unionists and Labour Party members on a scale not seen since the Poll Tax struggle.

If America is checked or still better defeated in its murderous Afghan adventure, Blair will be exposed for what he is, a supercilious, grinning puppet of US imperialism.

So far, Blair has cannily kept the mainstream Labour party base happy with a few morsels of policy change: ending student loans (in the future); asylum vouchers (ditto); pulling the plug on Railtrack etc.

But this month Gordon Brown has to start deciding whether he will tax the rich to pay for the promised spending increases or use wartime to break the bad news that the spending is postponed.

As the traditional winter crisis in our hospitals begins, as job losses mount in industries hit hardest by the downturn, as the house price boom fades and the credit card limits are reached in millions of homes, the collective psychological trauma that followed the death and destruction on September 11 will recede still further.

We must turn the war "wobble" of sections of the media and the middle class into a mass movement of revolt led by the working class: a movement of opposition to the war, to privatisation, to global capitalism's trade and debt rip-offs in the Third World.

And unlike in any war before: we will see it all unfold in real-time, 24-hours a day on the internet and on the money-guzzling TV news services our rulers have created. One revolt will inspire another as information crosses the globe faster than ever before.

A global revolution against war, environmental destruction and capitalist exploitation is being born. It will unite those who toil in the dust and snow of Afghanistan with those labouring in the sweatshops of the global South and the workplaces of the west.

They will discover, amid war and recession, that they all have one thing in common. They have had enough of the present system and they to get a better world they will have to rid it of its present rulers, and impose a different new world order, from below.

■ WTO pushes global capitalist agenda in Doha - page 6-7

Unison activists launch new united left

More than 150 activists in Britain's biggest union, Unison, gathered in Manchester on 3 November to give a significant left unity initiative its formal launch. Unison United Left (UUL) currently embraces supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and the former Committee for a Fighting and Democratic Union, where the Socialist Party had been the single biggest force. Workers Power and other tendencies, along with a smattering of Labour Party members and independents, are also involved in UUL.

The founding conference addressed the war against Afghanistan, eventually agreeing to affiliate to the Stop the War coalition and in the process firmly rejecting the position of the Alliance for Workers Liberty, which draws an equal

sign between imperialism and fundamentalist Islamism (see page 9).

One of the UUL's absolute immediate priorities must be to overturn the 10 October's decision of the union's national executive that gave "reluctant" backing to the bombing of Afghanistan, and to mobilise growing numbers of members that is keen to discuss, debate and increasingly oppose the war.

The conference voted unanimously for a resolution that would significantly strengthen the union's tepid opposition to the Blairite privatisation agenda, though the motion appeared to fall short of calling for a nationally co-ordinated campaign of industrial action to stop PFI consortia taking over ever more of our hospitals and schools.

A relatively uncontroversial motion opposing racism and fascism against the background of the "war against terrorism" and the spectacular rise of the British National Party in Oldham and Burnley also gained overwhelming approval. More controversial was a proposal from Bromley Unison branch secretary and Socialist Party member, Glenn Kelly, that commits the UUL to a campaign that prides open the union's Affiliated Political Fund (APF). The UUL will be seeking to build on the victory scored at this June's national conference that agreed to a review of the union's political funds. The APF is currently tied to the Labour Party and there is no possibility of contributions to other candidates.

An amended version of Kelly's position, which was eventually carried, would allow for base units of the union below branch committee level to decide on whether to give financial backing for candidates whose stated policies are in line with those of Unison itself.

The Manchester conference was undeniably a step forward, breaking down some of the sectarian hostility that has bedevilled the left within Unison.

At the same time, however, if the UUL is to make a real difference it must be much more than an alliance for contesting seats on the national executive. It must become a forum both for democratic debate of policy and a force that enthruses rank and file activists to battle for a root and branch transformation

of Unison into a truly fighting, democratic and unashamedly political union. The current war makes that task both more urgent and straightforward.

■ The conference welcomed speakers from a number of current disputes including Glasgow medical secretaries, where a workforce of nearly 300 women workers staged indefinite action in defiance of Unison full-time officials. Having secured a deal, the Glasgow NHS reneged on it so the secretaries are, at time of writing, back on strike. Donations to: Kathy McLean, Treasurer, UNISON office, Cuthbertson Building, Glasgow Royal Infirmary, Castle Street, Glasgow G4 0SF.

Tel/fax: 0141 211 4984, E-mail: carolyneleckie@blueyonder.co.uk

Support benefit workers' strike

It's not often that a strike finds itself on the end of a kicking in the *Guardian*. But the strike among Public and Civil Service union (PCS) staff at the Benefits Agency has done precisely that with a full page attack on it by Polly Toynbee in the 2 November issue.

The strike started in September when workers at both Brent and Streatham Benefits Agencies, in London, found builders removing their protection screens.

The screens removal is part of the government's Jobcentre Plus scheme, which aims to create a one-stop-shop for job and benefits advice in an open-plan office. At present there are nearly 60 offices on strike and the dispute may go national. The striking workers have taken a brave step in the current climate where the TUC is going out of its way to avoid industrial confrontation.

But, contrary to what Toynbee said in the *Guardian*, the strike isn't solely about the screens. In fact, the workers welcome the friendlier environment. What they object to is management's lack of consultation and refusal to carry out proper risk assessments.

Attacks on benefits staff rose by 100 per cent last year to 5,000, and whatever Toynbee says about only a few of these actually doing physical harm, the fact that the assaults have doubled – and have included staff being hit with a hammer and threatened with knives – show strikers' concerns are valid.

Furthermore, strikers at Streatham have said that they only want to keep the screens up when they make the final decision on a claimant's benefits – hardly the "Soviet environment" that Toynbee claims strikers wish to work in.

But there is something greater at risk than the safety of staff. And that is the government's plans for welfare reform.

Jobcentre Plus is a key plank in New Labour's strategy to end to reform the welfare state – that is to remove people from benefits. Alistair Darling, secretary for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), has been the pioneer in government of welfare reform and won many plaudits, especially from Polly Toynbee of the *Guardian* who is an enthusiastic supporter of the government's benefits strategy.

The strike, therefore, is seen by gov-

ernment and friends as an attack on a central plank of its strategy, and something that must be broken.

The seriousness in which Benefits Agency management, and it seems Darling and company at the DWP, view the strike can be gauged by the reports that in London management have been putting up strikebreakers in expensive hotels and calling the police to monitor picket lines. It also seems that calling in friendly journalists is now one of their tactics.

It does not matter how plush the carpets and comfy the chairs are in the new redesigned offices, it is still the case that benefits are far too low for people to live adequately on. And however much money is spent on cosmetic changes or on improving the treatment of claimants, the main aim of Jobcentre Plus is still to drive the unemployed into low paid work.

Until the benefits system treats claimants with respect and pays them more money so that they can live with dignity, workers genuine fears about safety should be supported. As one striking worker said: "If we didn't pay shit money then we wouldn't need screens."

And they say we're paranoid...

The idea that the West is ruled by a "military-industrial complex" is often derided as a paranoid invention of the left. We live in a democracy – don't we – not a society where government is just a front for the generals and corporate bosses?

Well...this month the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) is organising a very timely conference – it has organised an event called "Battlespace Digitisation: Roads to the Future". The RUSI is of course completely independent academic institution. The fact that the Ministry of Defence is sponsoring the conference could be purely due to convenience – as RUSI handily occupies a building right next to the MoD in the heart of Whitehall.

At the event, RUSI, says it "will ask senior military, government and industrial figures to look at roads to the future in the digitised battlespace". But it warns that "significant technological and fiscal problems must be overcome". It promises an "open and dynamic forum". Open of course to generals, ministers, civil servants and bosses on payment of £799-plus-VAT per delegate.

The fiscal and technical problems amount to this: how to get Britain's taxpayers to shell out large amounts of money for military systems that they do not need and, quite often – as in the case of the Army's "digitised" radio systems – do not work.

Happily these complex problems will be addressed by people who are uniquely qualified to understand both military matters and business.

Some are just generals. Some are just businessmen who work for firms like Raytheon and Marconi. Some are just civil servants. But there are others so talented that one job is just not enough. For example, Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Hayman-Joyce KCB CBE DL. He will chair the event and is both a general and chairman of Raytheon Systems Ltd. Then there is Major-General Bill Robins CB OBE. He will lead one session, and just happens also to be "director of CA1STAR development", at BAE Systems plc.

Clearly only a raving bonkers Bolshevik would dare to suggest that this cabal of bosses, civil servants and generals could in any way confirm Lenin's assertion that the capitalist state is "a committee for the administration of the affairs of the bourgeoisie" cloaked by a powerless fiction called parliamentary democracy.

After Genoa – where next for Italian left?

A letter from Italy

Since the brutal crackdown on protesters in Genoa in July, the right wing Italian prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, has been using his vast electoral majority to pass laws that effectively remove from the statute books crimes that he and any number of his deputies are being investigated.

Cooking of company books is now no longer an offence, links between foreign and home based corruption cannot now be investigated, people who sent money abroad to avoid taxes are now offered bonuses instead of criminal charges and jail sentences.

Thinking that America's bully-boy response to the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers had provided him with fertile terrain on which to begin spouting supremacist garbage, Berlusconi made the astonishing announcement that western civilization and culture are superior to those of the eastern world.

From Genoa to Afghanistan it is clear that the international prestige of Italian imperialism has been profoundly shaken. Berlusconi wants to be George Bush's best pal. But the Toxic Texan is keeping him at a respectable distance.

Berlusconi's election victory, the brutal crackdown in Genoa and now the war led to talk of a "hot autumn" in the Italian class struggle. But the official left opposition – the Democratic Left (DL) is still reeling from the collapse of Stal-

inism and from its own period in government. And it is paralysed in the face of the rise of an enormous anti-capitalist movement that is successfully bidding for the hearts and minds of Italian youth.

The DL has been unable to cope in any credible way with its wish to attack the movement because of its anti-capitalism and its attempt to have influence in it in order to make sure it is derailed. Having said it would participate in the 21 July demonstration in Genoa, it backed out at the last minute following the carabinieri murder of Carlo Giuliani the day before. Recently it voted in favour of America's war against Afghanistan and then participated in the Perugia-Assisi Peace March on 14 October.

The DL's contradictions will not and cannot go away. Its upcoming extraordinary conference in November will see it move further to the right when Piero Fassino is elected secretary. Like his sponsor, party president Massimo D'Alema, Fassino is a former Communist Party functionary and bureaucrat. And like D'Alema, Fassino recognizes the legitimacy of the Berlusconi government.

He argues that the left's task is to "challenge it on the theme of modernization". The working class base of the DL will therefore be further demobilized as the "challenge" to Berlusconi is conducted with useless (and more often than

not flattering) speeches in a parliament where the right wing has a huge majority.

In the meantime, the modernization of Italy (that is a legislated shift in the class struggle in favour of the bourgeoisie) will go ahead ratified by D'Alema and Fassino, who in fact began that modernization and supported the Nato war against Serbia while they were in government.

It was rightly pointed out by Luca Casarini, leader of the White Overall Movement, that these warmongers are the same people who accuse the anti-globalisation movement of being violent. But while Casarini and social forum spokesperson Vittorio Agnoletto have recently enjoyed relatively high profiles in the newspapers and on television; and while they have been coherent and principled in their defence of the anti-capitalist movement against government, police and social democratic attempts to criminalize it, it's difficult not to believe that they, too, have felt the pressure of the anti-movement propaganda campaign.

During the Perugia-Assisi march, for example, Casarini was at the back of the demonstration, deliberately keeping a low profile so as not to go against the calls of the clerical organizers to avoid transforming the demonstration into a politically oriented one. This meant that when Democratic Left politicians were

being rightly harassed, booed and insulted by other demonstrators, the social forum militants and leaders were not present.

But there are also objective reasons for the present defensive stance of key mass movement leaders. If there is one thing that reveals the reactionary nature of the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers it is the fact that it has radically shifted attention away from the anti-capitalist movement and has lent legitimacy to the reactionary governments that the anti-capitalist movement was exposing with its militancy.

Gone from press, television and radio reports is the focus on police brutality in Genoa. Back in the limelight as the guardian against international terrorists is the organizer of police terror in Genoa, minister of the interior Scajola.

The overall response of the Genoa Social Forum has not, however, been all bad. It should be noted, first of all, that the Genoa Social Forum no longer exists. It is now the Italy Social Forum, made up of various local social forums located on the national territory. These local forums have both their positive and negative sides.

On the one hand, they allow political and organizational participation without having to travel long distances; on the other, they can be and are being used by right wing elements of the movement as centres for the promotion of localism

as an end in itself.

They want to avoid mass demonstrations which they consider too "confrontational" and which, as they see it, distract attention from the "real issues". At the national congress of the social forums in Florence on 20 and 21 October, organizations such as Arci, Legambiente and Rete Liliput argued against the anti-WTO demonstration to be held on 10 November in Rome. This is because it will be held on the same day as the pro-war demonstration called for by Berlusconi.

It looks like there will be no "hot autumn" in Italy, and this despite the hot air of the main union leaders during the summer. One reason for this, however, is that the present government is moving slowly in its attacks on the core of the working class, and has not yet made any major structural moves against the historical gains of Italian workers.

But the issues are there, and are being taken up by active militant minority of the workers' movement in alliance with the anti-capitalist militants and masses of students. It is the job of socialists to cement this alliance and expand it to include the bulk of the workers' movement which remains demobilized by passive and opportunistic union leaders and by warmongering social-democratic politicians.

Workers Power, Milan
October 2001

A peace without justice

On 23 October the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) confirmed that it had put part of its arsenal beyond use, in order to prop up the tottering Northern Ireland Assembly.

The British government praised Sinn Fein leaders for their statesmanship in securing the IRA decision and hailed the move as an historic step. And indeed it is – backwards!

Since the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) was signed in 1998 the Irish peace process has been marked by recurrent crises. The last six months alone have seen the suspension of the assembly, renewed talks in Britain between all the GFA parties, intensified Loyalist violence and, finally, increased military operations by republican splinter groups.

In short the GFA, the 1999 elections to the assembly and the two, on-off years of the power-sharing executive singularly failed to resolve the underlying issues that fuelled the 1969-72 social explosion and ensuing guerrilla war.

The assembly has merely showcased sectarianism rather than narrowing the communal divide. As a result, both constitutional unionism and nationalism/republicanism have been weakened to the benefit of loyalist paramilitaries and republican splinter groups.

Three processes have been at work in recent months that provide the background to the IRA decision

Most important was the determination of the Unionist parties to see the Assembly collapse if the IRA did not destroy weapons by this autumn. For most of the year the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) has moved ever further to the right, issuing repeated ultimatums to the SF/IRA to destroy weapons, rather than placing them in bunkers for inspection.

The growth of support for “lumpen” Loyalism and anti-GFA forces within the unionist population had already strengthened the UUP’s so-called Donaldson wing. David Trimble’s position as UUP leader was further undermined by the June general elections results, revealing a sharp fall in UUP support and an increased vote for Ian Paisley’s Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

Under this pressure Trimble resigned as First Minister in July, forcing the British to suspend the assembly twice to fend off its collapse.

In October, Trimble attempted to remove SF from the assembly’s executive. Having failed, he submitted the resignations of his three UUP ministers in a further attempt to force SF/IRA’s to hand over weapons.

The past year has also seen a rise in violent sectarianism by Loyalists against the Catholic nationalist community. The Ulster Defence Association publicly renounced the GFA in July after most of their prisoners were released under GFA terms, and sectarian attacks on nationalists mounted (including the murder of two teenagers).

There were numerous pipe bomb and street attacks in September and the Loyalist Volunteer Force carried out the first ever political assassination of an Irish journalist in more than 30 years. Also in early September there was an orchestrated Loyalist campaign of intimidation of Catholic parents and children around a North Belfast primary school.

Thirdly, because of growing disillusionment with the results of the peace process, the Real IRA has been able to step up its operations in Northern Ireland and start them in Britain. In June 2000 it carried out their first attack in Britain – the bombing of Hammersmith Bridge in London. In March 2001, the Real IRA exploded a car bomb outside the BBC at White City, followed in August by a bomb in Ealing, West London.

While a return to guerrilla war was unthinkable for the SF leadership, the dysfunctional assembly meant that political support for the GFA was ebbing. So Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness had to try to convince the IRA to make the required concession to get Trimble and the UUP back into the executive.

A deal had been done whereby once the IRA made a move, then military observation posts in South Armagh would be dismantled, so removing hated symbols of the British military occupation from republican heartlands. Further prisoner releases will occur. All this will be rightly welcomed by the anti-unionists. But nothing on offer from the Blair government will remove the underlying structures of discrimination and repression.

At present, there is still the issue of Loyalist paramilitary violence against the Catholics. The pipebomb attacks are likely to continue.

More than ever the Catholics will be dependent on the improbable support of the RUC and British army for protection. In the medium term, the assembly is unlikely to be able to transcend its sectarian character, so strengthening the impact of unionist obstructions to mild progressive reforms.

In the longer term, Gerry Adams hopes that Catholic voters, who now make up 40 per cent of the electorate, can one day become a majority, so ensuring victory in a referendum on a united



Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern stands with Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams and chief negotiator Martin McGuinness.

How the IRA's move was secured

For the most part, Sinn Fein's leadership has kept the General Council of the IRA in tow since April 1998. The General Council, however, had adamantly refused to destroy weapons until the British army and RUC also demilitarised.

For three years the peace process has been stuck in this contradiction: the IRA saw that political concessions could only be extracted from the Unionists if they retained some military muscle. But the Unionists refused to carry on with the devolved power-sharing “while they had a gun pointing at their head”.

The crisis over the summer brought things to a head as Trimble gradually pulled the plugs on the Assembly. Soon Adams would have to decide whether to let the Assembly collapse and risk a return to direct rule and the end of the IRA's ceasefire.

Then in August James Monaghan and Ireland. Such a prospect would probably provoke pre-emptive violence and countless legal challenges from the unionists.

In short, if there is peace, it will not be one in which justice reigns. What is the alternative, then?

Immediately, there is a need for the unconditional withdrawal of British troops and the disbanding of the RUC; both have meted out violence and have a long record of colluding with loyalist violence. These objectives must be

Martin McAuley, two alleged IRA engineers, were arrested in Colombia while on a visit to exchange information with the guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). FARC is high up on the White House's list of “terrorists” and the main target of the \$1.6 bn Plan Colombia.

These arrests were an affront to the US administration and an embarrassment to Sinn Fein's “friends” in Congress. Millions of dollars annually from Irish-Americans had helped keep SF and the IRA afloat.

Bill Flynn, chairman of the Mutual Bank of America and one of Sinn Fein's biggest supporters, made it clear to Adams after the Colombia fiasco that the only way to rescue republicanism's reputation in Washington was for the IRA to disarm. “They listen to me because they know I am a strong supporter of what they are doing to

pursued on the streets, through mass organisations of struggle staging strikes and demonstrations.

There is also the need for cross-community organisation in the workplace and across cities, controlled by rank and file workers themselves that fights against the closures, sackings and privatisation and for democratic rights for all the citizens of Northern Ireland.

And against the Assembly there is a need for a democratically elected and convened all-Ireland constituent assembly,

unite Ireland,” he told *The Observer*.

With North American support rapidly dwindling Sinn Fein risked the closure of its Washington office.

In Ireland, Adams and his supporters on the Army Council, which had never sanctioned the Colombian adventure, were determined to remove the obstacles within the IRA.

But it was not until the 11 September attack on the World Trade Centre that the balance of forces shifted decisively. More than ever before, the IRA were likely to be branded “terrorists” rather than “freedom fighters”.

At a late September meeting Martin McGuinness temporarily became the IRA's chief-of-staff.

Over the ensuing weeks the SF and IRA leadership traveled the length and breadth of Ireland persuading key figures to back their new policy and they eventually won the argument.

The end of the IRA's long war

For 80 years the IRA fought a sporadic guerrilla campaign to unite Ireland, which had been partitioned in 1921 by the British and Unionist minority in the island's north-east.

For most of the intervening years the guerrilla war was desultory and, indeed, by the late 1960s the IRA was all but moribund. The civil rights movement in Northern Ireland came into existence demanding equal rights for the Catholic minority in the sectarian statelet.

The Unionist state and its police (RUC) smashed this idealistic movement in 1969 and out of the ensuing conflict the IRA was revitalised. In part, this was because the IRA offered some protection against pogroms and in part because many Catholics agreed with their ultimate goal. Repression convinced most working class Catholics that the sectarian state could not be reformed and that their only

hope for the future lay within a united Ireland.

A fierce mass struggle in the years 1969-72 ended with Protestant-dominated Stormont (the Northern Irish parliament) collapsing and London imposing direct rule.

Between 1972 and the mid-1990s the IRA's several hundred volunteers fought a guerrilla war in which 3,600 died, among them some 1,500 Catholic civilians – mainly victims of the RUC, loyalist paramilitaries and the British Army.

Throughout these years British socialists had a duty to support the struggle of the anti-unionist minority against repression and in clashes between the IRA and stand for the RUC or British army, and the IRA's victory in a legitimate struggle for national liberation.

Nevertheless, socialist revolutionaries rejected the IRA and Sinn Fein's vision

for the shape of a future united Ireland and how to fight it.

Sinn Fein/IRA saw in the Republic's politicians natural allies in the fight for an effectively capitalist united Ireland. Socialists saw these same figures as ensuring the exploitation of the working class in the republic and as the natural allies of the British in maintaining partition.

The IRA was a self-selected, clandestine elite military group: lightly armed and highly sophisticated, astute in organising far-flung support in the Irish diaspora to finance its struggle.

It acted on behalf of the anti-unionists, but not through them. The IRA often left nationalists unprotected against RUC violence because the nature of guerrilla war often took them out of their communities. Tit-for-tat retaliation was the norm, rather than self-defence.

There was also a fundamental distrust

of the nationalist working class, both employed and unemployed. Republicanism viewed the nationalist ghettos of Belfast and Derry as the base of electoral support as SF moved to the twin strategy of the bullet and the ballot box. In SF's calculations the working class never figured as a social force to be mobilised in the workplace and on the streets to smash the apparatus of repression. At best, it had a secondary role as a stage army around set piece commemorations, such as the 1981 funeral of hunger striker Bobby Sands.

By the late 1980s the Sinn Fein leadership, dominated by Gerry Adams, recognised that the IRA's military struggle could not win. But instead of turning to mass revolutionary socialist politics as the basis of a new strategy they effectively dropped their stated aims.

In 1994 the IRA declared a ceasefire,



renewed in 1996. The 1998 GFA embodied the political capitulation of physical force republicanism.

In it Sinn Fein recognised the sovereignty of the British over Northern Ireland and the veto of the Unionists on progress towards a united Ireland.

Trading in misery

As the world's trade ministers gather at Doha in Qatar, there is just one thing on their minds: a new round of trade negotiations aimed at ripping off the poor of the developing world. *Keith Harvey* explains why the new trade round should be stopped

After its disastrous Seattle meeting in 1999, the World Trade Organisation has retreated to the Gulf sultanate of Qatar for its 9-13 November gathering. Many delegations have been scaled down; most business delegates are staying away.

Those that do attend will be issued with gas masks in case of attacks from some of those enraged by the US-led war against Afghanistan and who rightly see in the WTO a key economic tool used by the same the forces responsible for carpet bombing one of the poorest countries in the world.

The WTO is as much a part of the rule of imperialist global system as the B52s over Afghanistan's skies. Trade rules rather than cluster bombs may be its chosen weapon of enforcement, but on a global scale its impact no less deadly.

The WTO was born in 1995 as the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The GATT, dating from the end of the Second World War, was a treaty that committed the signatory nations to a long-term policy of reducing tariffs.

From the outset, GATT was a rich man's club that decided in which sectors free trade would be introduced and in which subsidies could be maintained. For example, the US and European countries insisted that their textile and agricultural sectors had to be protected from Third World imports, while also arguing that the poor nations had to open up their markets to the North's industrial products and the banks.

For example, the supposedly "temporary" Multi-Fibre Agreement, adopted in the 1950s, which protected the US cotton industry from competition, remains in force.

This combination of tearing down tariffs that obstructed its own exports and insisting on special treatment for its own industries and agriculture, served the United States well for 40 years.

By the 1990s, however, its needs had changed. Whereas in the 1950s, it had insisted on excluding agriculture from GATT rules in order to protect its own farming industry, it now wanted to exploit its much higher agricultural productivity.



Two migrant workers sleep on a sidewalk after a morning's work in central Beijing. With China's entry into the World Trade organization (WTO), unemployment is expected to rise.

As the US agriculture secretary, John Block, put it in 1986, "(The) idea that developing countries should feed themselves is an anachronism from a bygone era. They could better ensure their food security by relying on US agricultural products, which are available, in most cases at much lower cost."

Equally, the huge expansion of US-based "multinational corporations" – especially after the fall of the USSR in the early 1990s – created new priorities. The USA, therefore, argued that GATT should be replaced by a new organisation, the World Trade Organisation.

As Walden Bello, has put it, "It was not global necessity that gave birth to the WTO in 1995. It was the USA's assessment that the interests of its operations were no longer served by a loose and flexible GATT but needed an all-powerful and wide-ranging WTO. From the free-market paradigm that underpins it, to the rules and regulations set forth in the different agreements that make up the Uruguay round, to its system of decision-making and accountability, the WTO is a blueprint for the global hegemony of corporate America. It seeks to institutionalise the accumulated advantages of US corporations."

The WTO had a larger brief than GATT. Not just agriculture, manufacture and services but its jurisdiction would also reach so-called "trade related investment measures (TRIM's)" and "trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS)".

rights (TRIPS)".

The first of these sought to remove all barriers to cross-border trade between the subsidiaries of transnational corporations. Restrictions on investment have been reduced virtually everywhere in the 1990s. By 1997 1,330 investment treaties, involving 162 countries, were in place: three times as many as in 1992.

TRIPS aims to consolidate the US advantage in the cutting-edge knowledge-intensive industries.

As well as extending the range of trade issues the WTO could deal with, US officials also wanted to create a much more powerful means of enforcing decisions. The decisions of the WTO's "dispute resolution mechanism" are now enforceable through sanctions and apply to all 142 member-countries, thus usurping the legislatures of second and third world nations and of local government.

As C.Fred Bergsten, head of the Institute of International Economics, told the US Senate, a strong WTO dispute settlement mechanism serves US interests because, "we can now use the full weight of the international machinery to go after those trade barriers, reduce them, get them eliminated."

Through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) it intends to bring virtually all areas of human existence under its purview. This would mean, for example, that governments would have to open up areas such as

Who benefits from subsidies?

There is a widespread misconception that subsidies exist to keep poor farmers in business, both in the North and South.

Subsidies are grants to the biggest agribusiness multinationals to help them push their exports and drive out of existence the small farmers both in the Third World and the richer countries.

In 1999 the OECD estimated subsidies to be \$306bn, up 5.6 per cent over 1998. The US, EU and Japan accounted for nearly 90 per cent of these.

In the UK four-fifths of agricultural subsidies are taken by the largest 20 per cent of farmers. Taxpayers subsidise the top tenth of US farmers by more than \$13bn a year. The US think-tank Food First says:

"It is a transfer of money to large multinational corporate farmers who dominate world



trade. They buy the grain, or whatever, at give-away prices and use the subsidies to capture markets around the world and drive farmers out of business."

In the EU in 1999 200,000 farmers left the land. In the 1980s in the USA 235,000 family farms closed. The beneficiaries are the big MNCs who grab the lion's share of the \$300bn a year trade in agriculture – doubled since 1980.

Ten companies dominate the world market for seed, fertilisers, pesticides and shipping. They control 60 per cent of the international food chain.

Free trade, fair trade or pl

Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) seek to reform the WTO by giving a greater say to the countries of the South. Others want to abolish the WTO and return to a looser GATT-type framework for negotiating trade flows, which would allow Third World countries greater scope for preserving domestic businesses through protectionism.

Workers Power agrees with those NGOs that want to see the WTO scrapped and not simply reformed. The WTO has one sole aim: expanding corporate globalisation at the expense of the workers and small farmers of "North" and "South".

We are, however, wholly opposed to protectionism by the developed countries against the products of the global South. Here we are in favour of free trade. The answer to employers taking advantage of "cheap labour" in the less developed countries is not to exclude

their goods by tariff barriers but to use trade union and democratic pressure to raise the wages and social conditions in these countries towards the levels of the OECD countries.

First and foremost this means defending the right to form trade unions and political parties to fight for these goals.

At the same time, however, we should oppose the prising open of the markets of the second and third worlds to the big banks and corporations of the first. We defend the right of such states to protect their economies. The best means to do so would be by a democratically organised state bureau of foreign trade.

Neither free trade nor protectionism can meet human needs and ensure development that is compatible with sustaining this planet. In contrast to any capitalist arrangements for global economic exchange we stand for planned social exchange instead of "free

trade". Practically, this means that:

- There must be no limit on the ability of governments and people to regulate in order to protect, health, safety, public services and the environment. End the drive to privatise social services where they are at present provided by the state. Defend and extend these services at the expense of the rich.
- We must put an end to corporate patent protectionism. Seeds, medicine, the results of the study of plant, animal and human genetics should all serve human needs, not the profits of the multinationals. The patenting of life forms including micro organisms must be prohibited. Essential medicines and other goods, must be made available free to those in urgent need – especially to people with AIDS.
- All support for export-oriented agribusinesses must be ended in Europe and North America. The dumping of their surplus products in

Africa, Latin America and Asia must be halted.

- The semi-colonial countries must be free to feed their people so as to maximise their own food production, maintain employment, and slow the tide of expropriated peasant farmers to the shantytowns of the ever growing mega cities. Only in this way can these countries achieve "food sovereignty and security", encourage small farmers' co-operatives and practice sustainable agriculture, which minimises environmental damage.

- The WTO's Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) agreement must be junked. Third world countries must have the right to use locally produced goods to develop their own productive sectors.

- There must be a 100 per cent write-off of Third World debts to the North's governments and banks. Instead, huge compensation funds for past exploitation must be levied from

Issues at Qatar

WTO officials are desperate for Qatar to launch a new trade round. The big corporations and the G7 governments want the WTO to adopt rules on government procurement, food and water, energy distribution, social services, education, health and safety, genetically modified organisms and environmental sustainability.

In all of these areas they seek rules which will compel governments to admit private capital into these spheres. Before September 11 the prospects of successfully launching a new trade round at Qatar at this month's ministerial seemed slim because the same Third World countries that walked away from an agreement in Seattle have the same concerns now.

While the Southern nations have lowered their barriers to penetration by the big MNCs, many of the agreements of the last negotiating round (Uruguay, 1986-94) that would have benefited the South have still be to implemented. In particular, the EU, Japan and US have not opened up their markets, especially to clothing and textile imports.

Delegations from developing countries will be calling for the elimination of the huge and growing agricultural subsidies that the USA, EU and Japan give their farmers, which underwrite their cheap exports to Third World (see box). The US, however, refuses to cut subsidies for its farmers' exports, even as it attacks the Third World exporters with a barrage of "anti-dumping" complaints.

Developing countries are also angered that the US has refused to back a formal statement that WTO rules protecting patents can be overridden where a country faces a national health emergency, such as AIDS.

They accuse Washington of double standards, after the US threatened to break the Bayer patent over Cipro, the main anti-anthrax drug, in order to force the pharmaceutical corporation to reduce the price.

But it is not just the "South versus North" conflict that threatens the launch of a new trade round. The EU insists that issues like environmental protection are placed on the agenda but this is strongly resisted by the USA and others who see in this a concealed way of protecting their farmers.

The Bush administration has tried to take advantage of the attack on the World Trade Centre to push the idea that the "war against terrorism" should bring the world's nations closer together by breaking down remaining barriers to free trade.

In addition, 11 September had a big impact on investment, stock markets and consumer confidence, helping to quicken the slide into world recession. The idea gained ground that the world economy badly needed the injection of several hundred billion dollars that the successful launch of a new round of trade liberalisation could bring.

But late last month a key meeting of WTO delegates could not even agree a draft agenda, as a number of Third World countries refused to bend to US pressure.

health, education, and energy production to international competition in which the multinational corporations would generally have the advantage over local providers.

GATS is nothing less than a privatisation charter. The European Union commission admits that: "It is first and foremost an instrument for the benefit of business". The WTO's services director argued that "without the enormous pressure generated by the American financial sector, particular compa-

nies like American Express and Citicorp, there would have been no services agreement."

This agreement aims to break into the public sector and make health, education and transport provision open to competition from private sector. It excludes government services that are "not in competition with [private] services suppliers", but since most UK public services are already in competition at some level with private sector this is no protection at all.

anned trade?

the big banks and corporations – run under workers' inspection and control. With these funds – under the control of third world workers and peasants' organisations to prevent corruption by the elites – the problems of poverty eradication, development, health and education can begin to be tackled.

But an environmentally sustainable, socially just and democratically accountable trade system cannot be achieved under corporate capital's global rule.

Only social ownership of the means of production can lead to a genuinely democratic, planned exchange of goods and services across the world. But struggles to achieve some or all of these goals will expose to millions the neo-liberal free trade assault on the poor and train us to take over the world economy from the billionaires and the mega corporations.



What we think...

Events such the attack of 11 September move history rapidly on. Political logjams are broken; cultural taboos confronted; old ties severed and new initiatives seized. That is as true for the workers movement as it is for the governments of global capitalism...

workers power

Before 11 September, George W Bush was struggling to find legitimacy as president of the United States. His approval ratings since last November's stolen election barely reached 55%. Outside his own country he was considered a standing joke: more a chimp-like moron than leader of the free world.

Corporate America, of which Bush was CEO, was reviled across the world and had spawned a growing mass anti-capitalist movement. It reached new heights in Europe in Genoa in July and was set to do the same in Washington in late September.

Then 19 Middle Eastern hijackers reshaped the New York skyline. Embittered by the reactionary results of US foreign policy in Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia they brought their own brand of reactionary solution, killing several thousand ordinary New Yorkers.

Bush seized the opportunity created by the shock and revulsion at the terrible loss of life at the World Trade Centre to use military force and diplomacy to tighten the USA's political grip on the world.

Just as US has sought – through the IMF and the WTO – to force the economies of the world to open their banks and multinational corporations, so the USA is now exercising the right to take military action anywhere on the globe to force what it defines as rogue states to bow to its will.

The Bush administration has engineered a huge shift to the right. He unleashed a massive rally to the flag among US citizens and has seen his poll ratings soar above 80 per cent and stay there. At least for now he has disoriented and reduced the impact of the anti-capitalist movement in the US. It has made it easier for him to get Congress to hand over billions of taxpayers' money to his friends in failing businesses hit hard by the recession.

At the same time, the top level trade union bureaucracy has signed up to Bush's war drive and dampened down prospects of working class fightback against the massive job cull that is underway. American racism has become more respectable and active. And having already arrested and detained indefinitely without charge and in places unknown 900 people in connection with 11 September, Congress pushed through the Patriot Act. This is biggest erosion of civil liberties since the McCarthyite witch-hunts against communists and radicals in the 1950s. The Patriot Act will be used to hound and terrorise anti-capitalists opposed to corporate power.

In foreign policy Bush asked for and was given unprecedented war making powers from the US Congress. He has openly warned of the need for ground actions by US troops and the possibility of significant casualties and thus overcome the decades long Vietnam syndrome that has constrained US military strategy. He has got Congress to reverse its 25-year ban on political assassinations of the USA's enemies abroad.

Perhaps the most immediate political gain for Bush outside the USA has been the 25-member coalition he has

put together to fight his war against terrorism. He easily increased the USA's leverage over its European and Japanese imperialist allies. Article 5 of the Nato charter (an attack on one member is an attack on all) has been invoked for the first time in its 50 year history. Japan amended its constitution after 11 September to allow more military assistance to the USA. France, normally a Nato critic of the USA, moved swiftly to offer naval help.

China and Russia have abandoned their normal practice of vetoing any UN Security Council resolutions that give the go-ahead to US unilateral actions. The USA has strong-armed Pakistan to let the American use its airspace and bases for the attack on a country whose regime is sympathetic to Pakistan and originally created by it. Several of the southern Asian republics of the ex-USSR, traditionally in Russia's backyard, have made airbases and communication lines available to the USA.

Economically, the events of 11 September also provide the US administration an opportunity to revive an old project – if and when the Taliban are removed – to construct pipelines from Central Asian gas and oil reserves to the Arabian Sea off Pakistan.

Bush's coalition also strengthens those states who have jumped aboard the war on terrorism bandwagon, like China, Indonesia and Russia they receive thereby silent consent for their brutal terror against their own oppressed national minorities (Chechnya, Aceh, Tibet and Uighers). In Israel, the Sharon government is using the cover of the war to provoke and destroy the Palestinian National Authority (see page 11).

Bush – and his lapdog Tony Blair – are determined to use this war to free themselves of the constraints, hesitations, half-measures which marked the various attempts to impose a New World Order after the downfall of Stalinism. In the Gulf War, in Somalia, in the Balkans from Bosnia to Kosovo, the US was often indecisive. It proved unable to follow through, hemmed in by its allies, blocked by its former Cold War foes and haunted by the Vietnam factor.

Bush hopes to put all that behind the US. His first post-Taliban ambition would be to further isolate Iraq. But after Saddam's regime it will be open season on all the obstacles to global corporate power: the Mahathir regime in Malaysia, the anti-capitalist movement, unions and workers parties in the developing world. We will all be in the crosshairs of the imperialist attack.

This is why Bush and Blair must not succeed. This is why imperialism is the main danger. This is why its defeat at

the hands of the masses of the Middle East and central south Asia – even when they are led by reactionary political Islamist forces like the Taliban or Hamas – is preferable to the victory of the self-appointed champions of civilisation, freedom, democracy and human rights.

Bush and Blair and their allies are in reality fighting for none of these things. What they are after is unhindered super-exploitation of these naturally rich but economically impoverished regions and a bloody retribution for anyone who resists this.

A military withdrawal, without having achieved the imposition of a client regime in Afghanistan, or the capture or murder of bin Laden, would be major reverse and humiliation for US imperialism and its allies. It could have enormous implications for a crisis of the imperialist world order. It could encourage a world wide resistance in the semi-colonial world and an enormous strengthening of anti-capitalist forces in the imperialist heartlands.

The US and British attack on Afghanistan has provoked a storm of opposition across the world, from street protests, riots in Pakistan and Palestine to large antiwar marches in Indonesia, Nigeria, Latin America, USA, Italy, Germany France and Britain.

There is mass anti-war mood across Europe among a broad spectrum of people. Barring a swift victory for the USA this movement is likely to grow to major proportions. A protracted war would give a stimulus to upheavals in surrounding states and even the overthrow of Musharaf by pro-Islamist faction of the army. Even the Saudi monarchy could see a palace coup – ushering in a more hardline anti-US faction.

If on the other hand the US attack succeeds quickly – producing a splintering of the Taliban or rout for their forces at the hands of the Northern Alliance and the installation of a pro-imperialist coalition government this will encourage the USA to proceed further with the agenda of global domination.

The present war demands that all socialists and radicals unite to build the anti-war movement. We must strengthen the open and courageous forces of revolutionary communism – those fighting for the defeat of US imperialism and its allies.

It needs voices who are prepared to say clearly and courageously – despite the unpopularity of the message that terrorism cannot be removed by the very causes of its existence. The "war against terrorism" is a war for the causes of terrorism – the economic super-exploitation and military coercion of semi colonial countries.

Fighting for peace then and now

Mark Hoskisson
reviews *Peace Now*,
by Rhodri Jefferys-Jones, Yale
University Press, 1999, price
£12.50



Peace Now is about the movement that helped stop the USA's war against Vietnam. It looks at four component parts of that movement: students, African-Americans, women and organised labour.

The anti-war movement in the USA is rightly regarded as a key factor in bringing about the defeat of imperialism in Indochina. This takes nothing away from the Vietnamese themselves. Their courage and determination brought about military victory. Without their fight the USA would have no Vietnam Syndrome to get over.

But their second front was the peace movement. It grew to such proportions, influenced so many US citizens and shook the establishment to such a degree that it played a crucial role in assisting the victory of the National Liberation Front (NLF) in Vietnam.

This book's value is that it proves protest – at home and against the aggressor – works. In that alone there is a message so relevant to today as we strive to build a mass anti-war movement against the US/UK onslaught on Afghanistan.

Criticisms aside

Let's get the criticisms out of the way first. The book is too dry, too short on anecdote and too long on footnotes. In other words it has an academic fustiness that could quite easily put the less determined reader off. It is far too enamoured of its thesis: the impact of minority mentalities on government policy and the relationship of such minorities to the silent majority.

The author spends far too much time proving his thesis than he does exploring the nature of the protest movement itself – devoting pages to the twists and turns of Presidents Johnson and Nixon as they sought to outflank rivals within their respective parties.

Worst of all, the book is gratuitously anti-left and anti-communist. The contribution to the anti-war movement of the organised left, especially of the Socialist Workers Party (US), is skated over in a couple of paragraphs.

Bear these points in mind and you can then enjoy the rest. The anti-war movement shattered the cosy post-war consensus in the US. Of the four social groups he looks at Jefferys-Jones points out that all of them – students, African-Americans, women and organised workers – began the decade in thrall to the American Century.

They were not only loyal to the stars and stripes, they were desperate to be, and to be seen to be, all-American guys and gals. Their respective struggles at the start of the 1960s, brought together through the anti-war movement, ended that conformity. By 1969

hundreds of thousands of US citizens were more likely to burn the stars and stripes than drape it outside their homes.

Three lessons for stand out when we look at the US anti-war movement:

- The need to put direct action and imaginative tactics at the centre of the campaign if we are to mobilise the dynamism of the young people.
- The need to draw black people and women into the movement by relating the underlying imperialist goals of the war to their daily oppression at home.
- The need to patiently argue against the "patriotism" spread by a venal trade union bureaucracy amongst rank and file workers so that they too can see the relationship between the destruction of a Vietnamese village by napalm and their own exploitation by the global corporations.

Political activism

Among the youth, and primarily among the students, the anti-war movement required a whole new method of political activism. Students had started to become radicalised through support for the black civil rights movement. Through the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the broader Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a whole generation were into forms of direct action that brought them into conflict with the state.

Black activists and students began to develop new tactics. Voter registration trips, mass breaches of Jim Crow (apartheid) restrictions, sit-downs and occupations all played their role alongside traditional demonstrations and parades.

On the basis of experience gained in one struggle the anti-war movement built on this. The students occupied their colleges to hold teach-ins, they smashed college windows, "stole" rich kids from their parents so that the rich kids would start giving endless ear-ache to their (mainly) fathers to start lobbying against the war. The movement produced lively underground papers, like the *San Diego Free Press*. Colleges, especially Berkeley in California and Columbia in New York, became citadels of anti-imperialism and freedom.

State repression

The students occupied the research centres being used by the military to develop napalm and other weapons of mass destruction, waging running battles with police at Stanford, Coyote and other installations. You name it, the youth tried it. And it culminated in the mass draft dodging movement, involving hundreds of thousands of youth, who refused the call-up, burnt their draft letters and fled to Canada.

Nixon's chief rival in the Republican

Party, Ronald Reagan, was so alarmed by the insurgency he saw at Berkeley that he resolved to end it even if "it takes a bloodbath" (p90). He was serious. And in 1970 – a year after millions had taken to the streets against the war – National Guardsmen shot four students dead at Kent State University Ohio, while two were shot dead by the police at Jackson State College Mississippi.

The CIA and FBI launched "Operation Chaos" against the anti-war movement in a bid to "isolate" and repress ringleaders. What they found were thousands of ringleaders and a movement so extensive that no matter how many were imprisoned, battered tortured and vilified, others would immediately step forward to take their place.

Fighting racism

But the action was linked to the struggles of the oppressed. From 1965 to 1967, the period when President Johnson poured troops and bombs into Indochina, black people rose in a revolt against poverty and marginalisation in the USA's inner cities. Scores were killed as black people demanded not only the fulfilment of civil rights but an end to their confinement to low-paid jobs or unemployment.

Gradually more and more black leaders came out against the war. In 1966 the Black Panthers wrote:

"We will not fight and kill other people of colour in the world who, like black people, are being victimised by the white racist government in America." (p104)

Malcolm X took a similar position. And then, in 1967, the pacifist black civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr., delivered an anti-war speech at the Riverside Church, New York. President Johnson was rocked by this. He had counted on King's support. Yet he had cut the spending on his "Great Society" social budget, designed to alleviate black poverty after the uprisings in order to boost military spending by \$80 billion. King saw the truth. The US was paying lip service to anti-racism at home while spending billions to preserve the racist Washington establishment.

Black Americans faced racism at home. They faced endemic racism in the army itself, with black troops being put in the front line in disproportionate numbers. And they realised that all of this was being done in the interests of a tiny, white rich elite. That is why the greatest ever boxer in history, Muhammad Ali, in April 1967, when ordered to step forward to join the US forces said: "Who is this white man to order a descendant of slaves to fight other people in their own country." (p94)

His stance brought countless thousands into the anti-war movement.

Women

Exactly the same thing happened with the women's movement. Women within the armed forces staged a Fuck the Army rebellion (p155) towards the end of the 1960s. The singer Eartha Kitt made an anti-war speech at a women's White House luncheon. And thousands upon thousands of women joined the anti-war movement as activists for both peace and equal rights, challenging the chauvinism both within the movement and within society at large.

The struggle against the war fused with the struggle against racial and sexual oppression and as a result brought countless new recruits to the battle against the established order.

Lessons for today

The final lesson for today illustrated by this book is the need for patient and persistent argument among the rank and file of the working class.

George Meany was the boss of the AFL-CIO (the US equivalent of the TUC) and backed the war in the name of organised labour. Some union leaders did organise counter-demos against the anti-war movement (the infamous "hard hat" parades).

Jefferys-Jones ignores the crucial role that revolutionary socialists played within the broader anti-war movement in ensuring that this initial stance was not taken as the final word. Indeed, it was socialists, among the students, who linked the anti-war struggle to that of the United Farm Workers Union against super-exploitation in the 1960s.

Yet as early as 1967, an opinion poll revealed that union members, in their majority, opposed the war, a fact that led the *New York Times* to comment, "labour leaders are not always good barometers of the thinking of their members." (p185). Even earlier the longshoremen (dockers) had organised opposition to the war on the west coast – absolutely crucial given that it was from west coast ports like San Francisco that much of the supplies to Vietnam was shipped.

Working class support for ruling class wars is a complex phenomenon. Working class parents will instinctively defend their children who are doing the fighting against criticism. But combatants also write home telling of the horrors of the wars they are engaged in, the injustices, their complaints against the officers who order them to risk their lives but do nothing themselves. But the class

struggle does manifest itself in the armed forces, especially, as in the Vietnam war, where those forces are drafted.

As a result working class opinion on wars changes under the impact of their own direct involvement. And in Vietnam as more body bags came home, as

more vets returned to working class districts – shattered in body and soul – as more stories of the sheer brutality of what the US war machine was doing came to light so working class support for the war ebbed.

And, just as African-Americans felt betrayed when Great Society spending was cut in order to bolster the military budget, so workers who, especially after 1971, faced increased unemployment and job insecurity, began to ask, where do the priorities of our rulers really lie.

The result was that towards the end of the war the anti-war movement was a mass movement within which workers actually played a decisive role because of their social weight in the economy and in the functioning of the war machine itself. Working class opposition to Nixon meant working class obstruction of the war effort. It became decisive.

And because arguments had been had and won, action organised and mobilised for the image of the pro-war "hard hat" working class demonstration gave way to the reality of massive organised working class opposition to the war.

All of this is crucial for us today. We need to recreate methods of struggle that appeal to the young, fuse them with the struggles of the oppressed and ensure that that the working class – the decisive force in society – is mobilised to play its strategic role in bringing the war machine of Bush and Blair to a halt.

By showing that it was done once, this book shows it can be done again.

Within the anti-war movement different positions are emerging. Here we look at the problems with three specific trends: the Alliance for Workers Liberty, Class War anarchists and the SWP

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty's slogans "Against imperialism. Against fundamentalism!" and "No to War, no to the Taliban!" are a disgrace for people calling themselves Marxists. They equate the Taliban with imperialism, failing to understand the relationship between the two, and of both to the world economic and political order - The Taliban being a creation of that order, the US being a major shaper of it.

Worse the AWL even says: "In social, political, historical and human terms, the fundamentalists are reactionary even compared to George Bush!" and that their backward-looking ideology is more reactionary than "advanced capitalism."

If the AWL really believe that the Taliban is more reactionary than George Bush, they should follow through and change their slogan to "for imperialism, against fundamentalism." If they think the two are equal, they need to say what they would do if they were in Afghanistan on the ground. In reality they cannot quite bring themselves to take the logical conclusion of their own slogans and vacillate between the two positions. They are in total confusion.

The problem for the AWL is that, incredibly, they deny that imperialism as an economic system exists today, despite their use of the word as a convenient, radical-sounding term for militaristic policies, such as bombing Afghanistan.

They say - wrongly - that Lenin was only referring to colonialism when he wrote about imperialism. In fact he explicitly named China and Latin American countries such as Argentina as countries that were not politically conquered and turned into colonies but still economically and politically dominated by the imperialist countries companies and banks. These countries he called semi-colonies, formally independent states, in reality controlled by imperialism in all important respects. From the Falklands to the Gulf War to today's struggle the AWL has always rejected the existence of imperialism and semi-colonial countries.

It is true that the Western powers - from the 1950s and 1960s abandoned direct colonial rule - thought not without a series of brutal wars from Algeria to Vietnam. Today their interventions in East Timor, Kosovo, Afghanistan are not a search for new colonies. Why bother since the weak governments in these UN protectorates are no obstacle to their complete domination by the multinationals, the IMF, World Bank, and so on.

But the designation of those states which defy the policies laid down by imperialism (now called "the international community") as "rogue states" or "failed states" indicates that the iron fist is still needed to allow the big banks and corporation to carry on sucking the blood of the poorest section of humanity

The AWL start from the viewpoint not of the international working class but from that of the reformist labour bureaucrats of the imperialist countries. From this viewpoint they believe that what they call "advanced capitalism" is progressive. They cite its democracy, its extensive rights for women, its culture of rationalism, its balanced developed economies, its advanced technology etc. as infallible proof of this.

On the other hand they absolve imperialism from any responsibility for the rise of the Taliban. They state that fundamentalism basically emerged out of a crisis of modernisation, "a product of the disappointments and turmoils of the capitalist development. Not especially of 'the West'."

They even rush to provide an alibi for Bush and Blair's war. It is, don't you see, a war on terrorism, not a war for imperialism: "To explain this war from the pipeline project is contrived 'economic determinism', not Marxism. The 11th September bombing is the cause of the war."

Of course no revolutionary Marxist ever sought to explain every political and military act as driven by "economic motives" in a direct and unmediated form. This same old argument has been wheeled out by bourgeois "scholars" against Marx and Lenin time and time again for a century and a half.

Of course the "economic motives" are mediated through a worldwide political and military strategy to ensure this continued exploitation. This requires teaching all states not to mess with the USA and its miniature British sidekick. In the specific case of the oil and gas pipelines through Afghanistan, nobody would seri-

ously claim that Bush planned a war to get them built. What is true is that a major outcome of a stable, imperialist ruled Afghanistan would be to redraw the power map of Central Asia, with US or Nato troops on the ground allowing the more orderly exploitation of the area's natural resources.

What the AWL want to do is to downplay or ignore altogether the fundamental cause of the war. The terrorism which the US has targeted for a ten year war arises precisely in the weak and exploited countries as a response to the imperialist powers domination. The AWL seek to turn attention from the vast spoils countries like the US and Britain extort or steal from the middle east, Africa, Asia and Latin America on top of the profits they make from their own working classes.

They want to turn attention away from what maintaining bases in Saudi Arabia, what bombing Iraq, what supporting Israel's remorseless settlement of the Palestinian lands, what corrupting the ruling classes of the myriad of small, weak states of the region means to their poverty stricken peoples.

For the AWL the Taliban's Afghanistan is merely a small, backward, but equally capitalist regime. This is just

the way of the capitalist world. Some win and others lose. And it is a vile religious dictatorship to boot. The two are thus equally reactionary.

But here the AWL hit a real problem. If imperialism doesn't exist anymore (unless you define any bullying aggressive military policy as imperialism) then why not support the USA when it "defends itself against terrorism" or takes on a "backward, mediaeval bigot" like bin Laden.

The reason is plain. It would mean saying goodbye to being a "revolutionary socialist group" or even, for that matter, a part of the Labour movement. There is no room for a tiny fifth wheel on the war wagon of Blairite imperialism.

So the AWL just can't follow through on the logic that Taliban and bin Laden are worse than Bush and Blair. They have to return to a purely political-military reason for opposing the bombing - effectively a liberal pacifist reason. This enables them to say "a plague on both your houses". But it does not enable them to become revolutionary internationalists.

Faced with the undeniable evidence that Lenin and Trotsky held that it was the elementary duty of socialists in the imperialist countries to be for the defeat of their own countries in every war waged by the world exploiters, and to support the victory of all colonial or semi-colonial countries no matter what the character of their regimes, the AWL pulls back from the brink.

The AWL's paper tells us: "It is premature, to say the least, to be shouting 'Defend Afghanistan' or 'Side with the Taliban', now" Premature? But not inconceivable? Not completely wrong? Not unprincipled? Or perhaps it is unprincipled now but tomorrow it may prove necessary?

What a muddle twenty years of dumping all the major elements of the Marxist programme gets you into. Turning instead to public opinion and common sense of one (imperialist) country leaves the AWL without a political compass.

The left and the war

The anarchist No War but the Class War group (NWBCW) in London has criticised the socialist left for joining broader forces together under the slogan "Stop the War", which they consider pacifist.

After a lengthy debate about whether to even go on the October 13th demo, the anarchists came with a samba band contingent and stayed drumming after the speakers left, a supposedly deep contrast to the tactics of the other groups on the demo. Now they have published a leaflet, with a section on anti-imperialism, it says:

"The response of the left to the war is to drag out the tired old discredited formula of anti-imperialism in which the USA is the imperial power to be opposed. This in turn means giving support (conditional or critical, it matters not) to the barbarous misogynist pro-capitalist regime of the Taliban. Not surprisingly this quickly develops into anti-Americanism, which writes off an important section of the working class as irredeemably reactionary. That the left performs such as counterrevolutionary role does not surprise us they are after all the left wing of capital."

This is sheer nonsense. Anti-imperialism that falls into anti-Americanism couldn't be consistently anti-imperialist, because it would not only (a) write off the force that will ultimately give US imperialism its death blow in its own home: the US working class - as the leaflet correctly says - but (b) it would mean slacking on the struggle against other imperialists like

Britain, the other EU states and Japan..

And it is quite possible to say that you want the US to lose the war they are waging - to replace the reactionary misogynist bigots of the Taliban with the reactionary misogynist bigots of the Northern Alliance - without giving any political support to the Taliban.

We do not want to see the Taliban in power. We want to see them overthrown by the working class, the poor peasants, by all the progressive forces in the country. But we do not want them to be overthrown by imperialism nor by those in its service.

But what is really startling is the sectarianism of NWBCW towards the Stop the War movement, and the ridiculous alternative they propose: that the struggle against the war and the struggle against capitalism are one.

In one sense it is true, if a bit abstract. But if this truth means refusing to unite with all those are not (yet) anti-capitalist to defeat the government's war effort and win hundreds of thousands of people to anti-capitalism in the process then it is just sectarianism.

After all, the two objectives aren't mutually exclusive. Unless that is that is you regard your task as solely changing people's minds (and waiting for the revolution to come of itself).

Anarchism is always wrong-footed by national liberation struggles and wars: it is against war, against capitalism, against the nation and the state. But it can't recognise a just struggle; it can't operate tactics that go beyond having a better band than the peaceniks and a louder song to sing.

The main force in the Stop the War coalition is undoubtedly the Socialist Workers Party. The main initiative for launching the Coalition came from them.

For this they deserve great credit whatever political and tactical criticisms we have of them. More than this, Socialist Worker has not simply adopted a pacifist condemnation of all war. It has identified who is the main enemy:

"Those opposed to this war have to identify the US and Britain as the main enemy to be defeated. The power to do that lies in the hands of the workers and impoverished masses across the globe - especially in the Middle East."

Unfortunately however the SWP doesn't really take this call out of the pages of one issue of Socialist Worker and call openly for the defeat of US and UK imperialism in Afghanistan - on the placards on demonstrations, on the front page of every paper, when speaking at meetings.

Why does it vote against the Socialist Alliance - a political organisation with a general programme - taking such a position? It is as if the SWP believes this anti-imperialist position is for revolutionaries only, not something to be fought and argued for in the working class movement.

Instead of saying, this the SWP in 99 per cent of their propaganda will stick to the message "Stop the War" and a condemnation of the bombing on humanitarian grounds. This means that the SWP has two policies. Pacifism for a mass audience and revolutionary defeatism for the contemplation of its own members.

But only with a defeatist agitation is it possible to really tackle British patriotism head on and to free a significant vanguard of the most active working class militants from its drug-like effects. British patriotism means that instead of solidarising with workers of countries attacked and exploited by these selfsame bosses they shatter the real strength of the working class its internationalism

Of course this message will not win a majority in the here and now. But it will create an expanded internationalist minority who have broken decisively from the patriotism of the ruling class, and from the pacifism of CND. This minority will not be fooled by ruling class propaganda and when this propaganda is showed up for the pack of lies it is by subsequent events, this courageous minority will become much bigger as ordinary workers say "they told us the truth".

The SWP's refusal to call openly for the defence of Afghanistan derives from two central strands of its leaders' method. The first is what Lenin called "tailism" (a not very translatable Russian word). He used this to describe how opportunists would not raise demands that they thought were too far ahead of the consciousness of the workers.

So instead, what demands they raised depended on where the workers were at. This is the SWP's method and its standard practice in all struggles. It is the reason they shrink from raising hard, sharp slogans such as "defeat imperialism" in their agitation and propaganda. It is not necessary, they think: events will do the job for us. As the workers radicalise, the SWP will follow. Complications might inhibit the size of the antiwar movement - and why unnecessarily slow the rate of recruitment?

In addition, the SWP doesn't elaborate what the slogan "Defend Afghanistan" would mean on the ground in Afghanistan - how would you relate to the Taliban when it fights imperialism, for instance?

This refusing to say what is necessary in Afghanistan as well as in Britain, is a symptom of the second method problem of the SWP.

While being part of an international tendency - the IST - it has no central political programme guiding its militants in all countries. So to try and lay down tactics of struggle for a far-off country like Afghanistan isn't necessary - a general slogan will do.

The roots of Islam's revival

Across the globe, Islamic movements are locked in struggle with pro-imperialist governments. Modern day Islamic movements have roots in the different struggles going on – from Burnley to Bangladesh. In the first of a two-part article, *Dave Stockton* outlines the roots of modern Islamism in the anti-imperialist revolts of the past 150 years.

It is important to make a distinction between Islam as a religion and Islamism – a political movement. There are more than a billion Muslims in the world. They form a majority in more than 48 countries and a rapidly growing minority in Europe and North America. There are nearly five million Muslims in the USA and Canada. Most of these worship and live their lives in ordinary communities. The expansion of Islam as a faith is a fact of modern life.

Revivalist movements are common to most religions. Often they take the form of a "return" to supposed primitive, uncorrupted versions of the faith and to a more literal interpretation of their scriptures.

Such movements often run into conflict with both states and religious establishments and often arise at times of upheaval; the decay of powerful states or socio-economic crisis.

Karl Marx famously described the contradictory role religion plays at such times in the preface to an *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1844)*.

In a world of exploitation, injustice and hardship religion acts as a fantasy-like release from all these woes, acting "universal source of consolation and justification". Marx wrote: "Religion is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people."

In other words religion is both an expression of the pain and a pain-killer to make it bearable. It can both quell revolt and occasionally express a revolt.

Islamic revivalism

There was an important wave of Islamic revivalism in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This was caused by the transition from one epoch of human history to another. Powerful Muslim states – the Ottoman, Persian, and Mogul empires, as well as the smaller states of North Africa and Central Asia – suffered fragmentation under the impact of expanding European colonial powers: France in north Africa, Britain in Egypt, Sudan and India; Russia in central Asia and the Caucasus.

These countries also experienced economic decline and domination by foreign merchants and bankers, under the impact of expanding capitalism.

One response in the Islamic world was a series of modernisers – liberals, socialists, communists, who argued that the Arab world must "catch up with the west", and learn from its techniques and ideologies in order to escape domination.

Another current sought escape from domination by a return to the fundamentals of Islam: the Qur'an and model of Muhammad and the early Muslim community. The earliest such response was Wahabism, named after Muhammed ibn Wahab. Wahab, who died in 1787, declared holy war (jihad) on the corrupt Ottoman Sultans' possession of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Though this revolt failed, Wahabism was taken up by the central Arabian chieftain ibn Saud. In the post-First World War period, the Saud clan did in fact seize control of the holy cities, unite most of the Arabian peninsula and – aided by the discovery of oil – in 1932 created a Wahabi state: Saudi Arabia.

Beginnings of fundamentalism

The main inspiration for religious ideas that have come to be known as fundamentalism, can be traced to this Wahabi tradition, though there are others, notably



Islam has been used for a variety of political movements

the Deobandis who emerged in British India in the 1860s.

A second wave of religious revivalism after the First World War rapidly took on a political aspect. The Anglo-French imperialists had wooed the Arab peoples of Arabia, Palestine, Syria and Iraq with the promise of "liberation" from the Ottoman Empire.

This, in turn, produced an Arab renaissance in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. But the British and the French swindled the Arab leaders, colonising (under the thin disguise of League of Nations mandates) Syria, Lebanon, Palestine. In the latter, the British encouraged large scale European settlement, just as the French had colonised Algeria. By the late 1920s this had led not only to the growth of secular Arab nationalism but to political Islamism too.

A similar process took place in India where the Indian National Congress radicalised under the leadership of Gandhi and the Caliphate movement radicalised the Muslims of Northern India. The Caliphate movement was a protest against the British and Young Turk overthrow of the Ottoman Sultan – who was also Caliph, the religious head of all Sunni Muslims.

It was in the two British colonies – Egypt, with its strategic canal, and India, the jewel in the crown of the Empire – that Islamism was born. The Muslim Brotherhood, (al-Ikwan- al-Muslimim) was founded in Egypt in 1929. The Islamic Society (Jamaat-i-Islami) was set up in Pakistan in 1932. Both of them became prototypes of today's Islamic movements.

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) was founded by Hasan al-Bana. Egypt was a British protectorate, under a puppet monarch. Al-Bana wanted the replacement of Egypt's British-imposed secular constitution and legal system with one based on the Saudi-Wahabi model.

The MB became radicalised by the 1936 Palestinian uprising against the British colonial authorities and the Zionist settlers. It began to arm, to penetrate the police and the army, to advocate insurrection against the British. It spread to Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Sudan and Iraq.

In Egypt the MB expanded rapidly, having perhaps 500,000 supporters by the end of the 1940s. The social base of the MB was the lower middle class school teachers, technicians, clerks, artisans, small merchants. People jocularly referred to it as the "brotherhood of engineers" because of the large number of the latter who

Timeline

- 18th century: Muhammed ibn Wahab declares Jihad or holy war on corrupt Ottoman sultans
- 1929: The Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt.
- 1932: The Saud clan creates the first Wahabi state: Saudi Arabia.
- 1932: The Islamic Society (Jamaat-i-Islami) was set up in Pakistan.
- 1950s: Muslim Brotherhood suppressed by secular nationalist Nasser.
- 1970s: Islam used to cover a variety of states and leaders. Such as Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's socialism in Libya and the reactionary pro-imperialist Islamism of General Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan.
- 1978-9: Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini comes to power.

joined it.

In the late 1930s and 1940s it copied features of European fascism, having a militia modelled on Mussolini's blackshirts. Its militants assassinated the Egyptian premier in 1948, in the wake of Egypt's first humiliating defeat by the Israelis.

The MB suffered severe repression and disorientation. Nevertheless it supported the Free Officers' overthrow of the monarchy in 1953. But it rapidly fell out with the secular-oriented Gamal Abdel Nasser and was heavily repressed throughout his regime. Sayyid Qutb, the key intellectual of the movement, who was executed by Nasser in 1966, emphasised the religious hostility of Christians and Jews to Islam: imperialism was for him merely a continuation of the Crusades.

Qutb went on to stigmatise all the existing Muslim states that had compromised with secularism or adopted western legal codes and so on as being non-Muslim – in effect pagan. Qutb's movement was anti-democratic and indeed potentially totalitarian in that it insisted that "there should be no parties save that of God".

He stigmatised the official Muslim hierarchy, the ulama, for their servility to the corrupt rulers of the Arab world. He denounced Arab socialism as well as

atheistic communism. His ideas set the tone for a new wave of Islamism in the 1970s and the 1990s. The founder of the Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan, Abu al-Mawdudi, developed a similar and influential ideology.

The late 1960s ushered in another period of crisis in the Middle East. In the 1950s the old colonial powers Britain and France had been, unwillingly, hustled out of the Middle East by a combination of Arab nationalist movements and regimes – aided by Soviet economic and military aid – and American pressure.

Between 1960 and 1964 the Palestine Liberation Organisation was formed as a federation of Arab nationalist and Stalinist organisations committed to a war of liberation. But in the Seven Day War of 1967 Egypt, Jordan and Syria again suffered a humiliating defeat. It appeared that bourgeois nationalism of the Nasser variety had failed. A more radical Palestinian nationalism with powerful "communist" components emerged. But these events stimulated another wave of Islamism.

During the 1970s across the Muslim world Islamic symbols, slogans, ideology, and leaders irrupted into politics. Islam was used to cover a wide spectrum of states and leaders from the radical to the reactionary. In Libya, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's *Green Book of Islamic Socialism* was obviously modelled on Mao's "little red book". At the other end of the spectrum there was the reactionary pro-imperialist Islamism of General Zia ul-Haq, which he used to cover the military coup in Pakistan in 1977.

Capitalism's part

The negative effects of capitalist "modernisation" are crucial to understanding the new Islamic resurgence.

After the Second World War, across the developing world, there was massive migration from villages to cities that had extremely poor infrastructures. In the overcrowded cities there was a breakdown of traditional family, religious, and social customs. The adoption of a superficial western lifestyle, a symbol of modernity, was often also felt as moral decline – because of the corruption of officials, prostitution, crime etc.

The rampant unemployment, and glaring inequalities of wealth – especially after the failure of state socialism in the 1970s – created a milieu of angry and disillusioned young men. Those drawn into

this movement were often open to the propagation of very reactionary social views, particularly on the role of women. Thus some of the Islamist movements – especially those in north Africa – went beyond the normal Islamist demand for the separation of men and women in education, jobs and social and religious life and demanded their actual exclusion.

The social base of the Islamist movement shifted to include large numbers of the unemployed, sections of the educated who could not find jobs, and the poorest shanty-dwellers. The Islamist-influenced mosques and societies began to provide an alternative Islamic social welfare system and advocate it for society as a whole. This meant that some Islamist groups and movements were ready to pay the role that fascism played in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s: providing a mass, plebeian base for the exploiting classes against the working class and the progressive middle class.

Right wing Islamism could and did adopt a totalitarian model of society and revolutionary street tactics for achieving it. The religious character of this ideology makes it analogous to the clerical fascism of Spain and Portugal, rather than the secular racism of Hitler or a Mussolini. But it would be wrong to tar the whole Islamist movement with the same brush. Other parts of it are analogous to revolutionary populist anti-imperialism, others to a social reformist parliamentarism, yet others to simple bourgeois conservatism.

In Egypt, the secular president Anwar Sadat proved a poor successor to Nasser. He broke Egypt's alliance with the Soviets, and went for rapprochement with the USA and Israel. He opened up Egypt to exploitation by the US multinationals. Sadat also mercilessly crushed the left and all independent working class organisations. Thus a real potential alternative to imperialist domination was crushed. Sadat initially encouraged the Islamists – including the Muslim Brotherhood, which he semi-legalised – to smash the leftists on the streets and in the universities.

However he was bringing closer his own destruction. The Islamists regarded him and the other leaders of the Arab world as no better than infidels and the official religious establishment, co-opted by the government, in much the same light. The political and religious elites would have to be overthrown and a new Islamic state and Islamic law imposed.

These radical revolutionary groups, like Egypt's al-Jama' al-Islamiya, though small in membership, proved effective in political agitation, sheer disruption, and eventually in political assassination. A rapid series of political events ushered in a new era.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the jihad proclaimed against it by Islamists, enthusiastically aided by the USA, the occupation of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 by religious radicals, Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981 by Islamist militants... all these events sent shockwaves through the Muslim world. But the biggest boost to Islamism was Ayatollah Khomeini's takeover of the Iranian revolution of 1978-79 against the Shah and his proclamation of it as an Islamic revolution.

In reality the rise to power of Khomeini was an Islamic counter-revolution, made on the broken bones of tens of thousands of secular muslim or atheist leftists in Iran. But the foundation of the Islamic Republic in Iran, and its initial victories over the USA in the hostage crisis of 1981, triggered the growth of a whole series of new Islamist parties and terrorist groups. ■ We will look at the last 20 years of Islamic radicalism in the second article in the series.

End of the road for Oslo Accord?

Israel has seized on the "war on terrorism" to cloak its own reign of terror in Palestinian areas. With Arafat's authority in tatters, *Mark Lyons* asks if the "two-state solution" is now finished

The invasion and destruction of Palestinian areas in the West Bank and Gaza strip during October by Israeli troops represents a deliberate escalation of the conflict by Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. At times it has reached the stage of all-out war against the lightly armed forces of the Palestinian National Authority.

Using the cover provided by the USA's "war on terrorism" he has declared that Arafat is Israel's Bin-Laden and is determined to create facts on the ground in such a way as to reverse substantial elements of the Oslo accords that ceded territory to the Palestinians.

Unlike the previous Labor prime ministers, Yitzak Rabin and Ehud Barak, and his own foreign minister, Shimon Peres, Ariel Sharon is not a "believer" in the Oslo process. The very idea of "land for peace" cuts against the ideological conviction of his supporters and right-wing coalition partners that the territories occupied by the Israeli state in 1967 form part of "Eretz Israel" (Greater Israel).

Indeed in contrast to his Likud predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, Sharon makes no pretence at negotiations to get concessions from Arafat.

For the first time since the beginning of the Oslo process, Israel has a prime minister who openly talks about the end of the "Arafat era", the Oslo peace accords and the Palestinian Authority. His intentions are clear – by insist-

ing on a full cessation of Palestinian violence before any re-opening of the diplomatic process, he is seeking to shift the blame of Western and especially American opinion for war onto Yasser Arafat. In the meantime, brutal and disproportionate Israeli violence against the entire Palestinian population continues unabated.

By insisting that Arafat's Palestinian Authority arrest and hand over those wanted by Israel, he is seeking to provoke an internal Palestinian conflict which would strengthen Israel's case for crushing the second Intifada and re-occupying the territories. By violating areas administered by the Palestinian Authority and attacking the Palestinian security apparatus, he is undermining not just the Palestinian Authority's ability to defend itself and Palestinian civilians from Israeli incursions, but also Arafat's ability to deal seriously with his opponents in the form of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Previous Israeli governments – even Netanyahu's, when placed under exceptional and rare American pressure – understood that they needed to offer Arafat some sort of face-saving concessions if they were to have any hope of repressing Palestinian opponents of the Oslo sell-out. Sharon has no such qualms, as he has no special desire for Arafat to consolidate his position in Palestinian society so that he can cooperate with Israel's continuing occupa-

tion, colonisation and dispossession of Palestinians from their land.

Indeed, the "Al-Aqsa Intifada" that erupted in September 2000 – after the then opposition leader Sharon made a provocative visit to a Muslim holy site in East Jerusalem with armed guards – has been as much a rebellion against Arafat, the Palestinian Authority and the Oslo peace accords as against Israeli occupation and repression. Arafat, from being seen as a popular leader engaged in a pragmatic pursuit of national aspirations with his Israeli "partners in peace", has been discredited as a collaborator with Israel at worst, and a weak and ineffectual leader at best.

His social base in the territories now rests largely on corruption and patronage, funded by the reconstruction aid given by the European Union, the Arab states and exiled Palestinians and directed through Arafat's personal control – and that of his closest collaborators.

The battle-hardened former guerrillas, who came from the PLO's exile in Tunis after 1992 to form the Palestinian Authority's administration and security forces, are now despised as little better than mercenaries trying to line their own pockets and achieve the trappings of power through the plunder of their own people. As during the first Intifada from 1987 to 1992, real power on the street in many areas lies with the popular organisations and their armed wings – the foremost of which has

been the Tanzim, the armed wing of Arafat's own Fatah movement. They, rather than the Palestinian police, are seen by the people as their protectors from Israeli violence and state terrorism. This time, however, they are no longer under Arafat's control – nor are they likely to be.

This sorry state of affairs is the result not only of the injustice and disparity inherent in the Oslo peace accords – in which the Palestinians recognised Israel in exchange for a few pieces of land and vague promises of a negotiated settlement, without even a clear commitment to a viable Palestinian state or full withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967. It is also the result of the "two-state" programme embraced by Arafat in the 1970s and officially adopted by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) during the first Intifada in 1988.

It should be clear by now that the two-state solution – to be achieved by international mediation spurred on by acts of heroic resistance to the occupation – could only ever have led to what now exists – a collection of motley Palestinian bantustans, surrounded by and economically dependent on Israel, divided by numerous illegal Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, and subjected to repeated economic and military blackmail.

The two-state solution – even if achieved through negotiation with a dovish Israeli administration seeing ethnic partition as the best way to guar-

antee Israeli security – could never have been capable of solving the main problems of the national oppression of the Palestinian people – the refusal of any Israeli government to countenance the return of the 1948 refugees and their descendants being a case in point. And, as subsequent developments have shown, there remains considerable opposition within the Israeli ruling class to any form of Palestinian state – with calls for a policy of outright annexation, settlement and "transfer" (ethnic cleansing) becoming increasingly vocal.

It should be clear to all consistent democrats and opponents of national oppression that the only progressive solution is a state which embraces the whole of historic Palestine; which recognises the right to return of all Palestinians, full citizenship for the Israeli Jews, and the eradication of all national privilege.

This programme will be achieved not through diplomacy with the imperialist powers, alliances with the bourgeois rulers of the Arab states, or through a religiously-inspired campaign of individual terror and suicide bombing of Israeli civilians – but through the action of the Palestinian masses, in alliance with the masses of the region and such progressive and democratic Israelis as can be broken from Zionism's hold.

In that direction lies the hope of a genuine peace and a just resolution of the conflict.

Hamas: a dead end for the masses

Ever since Hamas's explosion onto the political scene in December 1987 it has been a pole of attraction for those who reject a deal with Israel. But what is Hamas? *Jeremy Dewar* supplies the answers

While much of Islamic fundamentalism claims to be international, recognising no borders, the first thing to say about Hamas is that it's a Palestinian phenomenon. It was born from the social conditions of the Palestinian masses in the West Bank and Gaza.

Huddled into crowded refugee camps after the mass expulsion of Arabs after the 1948 war, economically dependent on and for nearly 30 years occupied by a hostile Zionist state, denied the basic democratic rights, the Palestinian people have led a heroic struggle for self-determination. Hamas, like the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, is a direct result of that struggle, not a foreign import from Iran, Saudi Arabia or Syria.

Hamas emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) movement which took root in the British Mandates (colonies) of Egypt and Palestine in the 1920s (see article opposite).

After the expulsion of the Palestinians from Israel, there was a contrast between the position of the MB in the two destinations for refugees.

On the West Bank the MB were welcomed as a moderating influence by the Hashemite court in Jordan; in the Gaza Strip, ruled by Egypt, MB began to root itself among the poor in the refugee camps. Here it was virtually the sole provider of welfare and social services like healthcare, food, housing and (Islamic) education.

After the 1967 war, Israel occupied both territories. Ironically, this brought some relief to the MB, allowing it operate across the territories in a more united way. Also Israel saw the movement with its concentration on da'wa – the provision of welfare and education – as a force for social cohesion and a bulwark against the revolutionary nationalism and armed struggle advocated by the PLO.

In 1973 the MB founded al-Mujamma' al-Islami, the Islamic Centre. The Mujamma' provided an infrastructure for the islamists to expand through its social activities and through mosque-building. Its first violent clashes were not with

the Zionist state but with leftist students of the PLO, DFLP and, especially, the PFLP.

Two events shaped the next stage of the Islamist movement in Palestine. The first was the 1979 Iranian revolution, which brought an Islamist government to power through violent armed struggle. The other was the Israelis' 1982 attack on Lebanon, which drove out the PLO. The Islamic Republic in Iran provided the inspiration for a state based on shari'a (Islamic law) while the damaged prestige of the PLO opened a space for an Islamic military movement.

The universities in Hebron, Nablus and Gaza witnessed the first acts of Islamist violence – again directed against Palestinian nationalists, and they remained a recruiting ground for Hamas's militants. But few actions were against Zionist forces.

The 9 December 1987 changed all that. The Intifada was a spontaneous revolt against Zionist rule and the complete lack of democratic rights in the occupied territories. It involved direct confrontation with the Israeli Defence Force, facing tanks with small arms and, more commonly, stones. But it also involved civil disobedience, mass strikes, demonstrations – a whole array of actions designed to bring adverse international pressure to bear upon the Zionist state.

Within weeks of the Intifada's explosion, Hamas was born. Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement, whose initials in Arabic spell Hamas – or "Enthusiasm") did not, however, come out of thin air. The mosques, many of which were run by the inner circle of MB cadres, were, as in Iran, one of the few places where political debate could take place in the occupied territories. There the concept of jihad was debated.

Jihad can take two forms: internal jihad conducted within the Muslim or Arab community against secularism and, in particular, communism, and external jihad, waged against infidels, i.e. Jewish and Christian foreigners (Zionists are considered 'foreigners' among Palestinian islamists). The

more militant Islamists felt that the external jihad should take precedence over the internal jihad so, when the Intifada began, they rapidly formed an organisation which could conduct the jihad without bringing the whole of the MB crashing down in a wave of repression.

Over the following six years Hamas became the most active of all the armed groups participating in the Intifada. While it gained prestige and wide support for its uncompromising role, it is also true that Hamas was, along with rivals the Islamic Jihad, the most indiscriminate, racist and anti-semitic part of the resistance to Israeli rule. When the deportees of 1989 returned from Lebanon they brought with them Hizbollah's tactics of car and suicide bombs, which were used to strike terror into the communities of Israel proper.

To make this dramatic change of direction, Hamas had to justify itself, both within the terms of Islam and within the terms of Palestinian nationalism. Its motto is purely Islamic: "Allah is [Hamas's] goal, the Prophet is its model, the Qu'ran is its constitution, Jihad is its path, and death for the sake of Allah is its most coveted desire."

But this was not enough to justify its separate existence from the PLO and the United National Command of the Intifada, which Hamas refused to join. It also had to differentiate itself with regard to the national struggle of the Palestinians.

Hamas did this by declaring Palestine a waqf, a holy land which it is the duty of all Muslims to strive to liberate from non-Muslim control. No one, says Hamas in its charter, has the right to partition or give up part of Palestine. This set Hamas against its biggest rival the PLO, or more precisely its leading faction Fatah, which had already signalled its preparedness to settle for a two state solution.

Unlike Bin Laden's Al Qaeda or the Taliban, Hamas gives a role to women in the struggle. Although it says women's main role is one of child-rearing and looking after men, Hamas does say that

women can join the resistance, even without their husband's consent. This was important for it to gain support among a people whose secular nationalist traditions had produced many female political and guerrilla leaders.

The Oslo accords of 1993, which brought about the end of the first Intifada and the birth of Palestinian Authority, caused a crisis in Hamas. Should they stick to their rejectionist line and try to continue the Intifada? If so, they risked losing support from a population which was war-weary – they could be crushed by Israeli or PLO forces. Should they participate in elections to the Palestinian Authority (PA), which would compromise their ability to continue the jihad and would taint them with responsibility for the unjust and unstable partition?

As Hamas debated this, divisions between the various class forces and social interests within the movement began to surface.

In the end, Hamas fudged the issue – it didn't stand in elections, but neither did it boycott them; it did not declare a ceasefire, but agreed not to launch attacks from within the PA.

As the Palestinian masses face relentless attacks from Ariel Sharon's stormtroopers, and as Arafat's police prove incapable of stopping the Israeli onslaught, it is inevitable that Palestinian youth will look to the more "radical" rejectionists of Hamas – and cheer on even the reactionary tactic of suicide bombing.

But neither the PLO nor Hamas can provide the solution that can unlock the Palestinian struggle: a struggle based on the working class to smash the state of Israel and replace it with a secular socialist Republic in which the Palestinians are given the right to determine their own future and Israeli Jews have no special rights above the rest.

■ For more on Hamas read: *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* By Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, Columbia University Press, New York, 2000

- **Victory to the Palestinian Intifada**
- **Israeli troops out of Palestinian areas**
- **For a socialist Palestine**

STOP THE ISRAELI TERROR!

Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have murdered more than 100 Palestinians since the 11 September atrocities in New York, mostly during bloody invasions of Palestinian-controlled territories.

The occupation and terrorising of Beit Rima in the West Bank late last month was particularly brutal. Tanks surrounded the village while soldiers entered and killed five people. They prevented journalists and ambulance crews from entering for over 24 hours.

The IDF blew up several homes with explosives, with the blasts causing damage to many of the houses nearby and knocking out the electricity for the entire village. Six families, made up of 35 people, lived in the houses. They were not allowed to remove their possessions before the explosions.

Others were arrested. Brigadier-General Gershon Yitzhak in charge of the invasion said he did not know if the actual assassins were among those killed or detained but "This is the village that the killers... come from": a chilling statement echoing the excuse made by the Nazis when carrying out reprisals in the Second World War for assassinations of German officers.

The pretext was that of catching the assassins of the far-right Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Ze'evi, killed on 17 October by militants of the Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

It was the first assassination of an Israeli government member by a Palestinian since the founding of the state of Israel. The assassination was an act of revenge by the PFLP after Israel assassinated the PFLP's leader, Abu-Ali

The aftermath of an Israeli attack



Mustafa in August. Ze'evi was a member of the Israeli Cabinet that decided to murder Mustafa.

Ze'evi was known as the most radical politician in the far-right camp inside the Israel establishment. The assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was a supporter of his party, and many of the group led by fascist Rabi Meir Kahana (who was also assassinated in 1989) supported his party. Ze'evi openly called on many occasions for the removal of all Palestinians from Israel and the Occupied Territories to surrounding Arab countries - i.e. ethnic cleansing.

He was popular among the Jewish settlers. He supported the reoccupation of the PNA's territories and the demolition of Palestinian cities and villages.

A day before he was assassinated, he decided to leave the government with his partners in the faction since he thought Sharon too weak.

Given his record of active racism and complicity in the murder of PFLP leader Abu-Ali Mustafa, no anti-imperialist can mourn the loss of this foul politician.

Sharon insisted that the "terrorist attack" on Ze'evi was on a par with the assault on the World Trade Centre on 11 September. The two actions are not comparable. Having sanctioned the assassination of the political leader of the PFLP, all the Israeli cabinet made themselves legitimate targets for resistance - even if the assassinations of Israeli politicians will not strengthen the intifada.

Since coming to power in May

Sharon has stepped up the destruction of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem, strengthened the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and assassinated more than 40 political activists connected with Hamas, the PFLP and Fatah.

Bush and Blair have been alarmed by the aggression shown by Sharon since 11 September. Not because they feel the pain of the Palestinian people, or have suddenly been converted to the cause of the Intifada. Rather, they fear that Sharon's actions will tear apart the anti-Afghanistan coalition, so enraging the masses of Arab and Muslim supporters of the Palestinians that governments throughout the regions will be forced to withdraw their backing for the US.

Blair and Bush both rushed to declare their support for a Palestinian state and Bush pressured publicly for an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank PNA areas. But Sharon ignored the pleas and the "support" for the Palestinian state.

In any case this leaves out the all important question of how this "state" will differ, if at all, from the one they have now, granted to them under the Oslo accords: shrivelled, discontinuous shards of land punctured by hostile armed Jewish settlements, constantly vulnerable to Israeli attack when they deem their "national security" is under threat.

Nor have Bush and Blair suddenly embraced the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their land and homes. They have not even demanded the disarming or dismantling of all the illegal settlements put up under since the Oslo agreement was signed.

The Palestinians cannot trust the self-interested diplomacy of the West. Their only allies are those workers of the region and beyond that support their just struggle for genuine self-determination.

- Victory to the Intifada!
- Israeli troops and settlers out of the West Bank and Gaza strip!
- The right of self-determination for the Palestinian people.
- For the right of all Palestinian refugees to return
- Down with the racist state of Israel! For a workers and socialist Palestine in which Jews and Arabs can live equally in peace!

■ Page 10-11: The roots of radical Islam; Where is Israel going? The political contradictions of Hamas