

# workers power

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**T**HE WORKERS of Argentina have given the working people of the world an object lesson in how to deal with global capitalism and its corrupt politicians.

In the closing weeks and days of 2001 they said: "enough of hunger, enough of austerity, enough of corrupt politicians, enough of paying the foreign debt, enough of the IMF!"

They showed the rest of the world, facing privatisation, rising unemployment, disintegrating social services - you don't have to take it. You can fight back.

Unemployed workers redistributed the food of the supermarkets to those who were starving.

Public and private sector workers - especially transport workers - went on strike.

Young people fought the police outside the Presidential Palace and the Congress building.

Even white collar workers and middle class people flooded into the streets banging their empty cooking pots in protest. And they refused to go home until five presidents - one after another - themselves had to give up and go home. Only by bringing in a Peronist president who has the support of the trade unions, Eduardo Duhalde, has a temporary breathing space been won for the Argentine ruling class.

And Duhalde has had to denounce the last 10 years of IMF-inspired neo-liberalism and promise a new economic policy. This will be easier to promise than to deliver. The working people of Argentina will soon be on the streets again.

### THEY NEED OUR HELP.

Argentina is crushed under a debt burden of 31 billion dollars. This is owed to the banks of New York, London, Paris and Madrid. Here in Britain, one of the world's biggest financial centres we can do something about it.

The trade unions, the anti-capitalist movement, the anti-debt campaigners from the NGOs can mobilise tens of thousands on the streets. We can campaign to force our rulers to completely cancel this debt.

We can collect money to help the struggle in Argentina - for the rank and file fighting organisations of workers, unemployed and youth.

Argentina is in a revolutionary crisis. The street revolt has destroyed the legitimacy of the ruling political elite. Only a revolution can save the people from paying yet more in starvation and misery for the profits of the Western banks and the corruption of Argentine politicians.

# Argentina in revolt!

*The day  
millions  
said  
'enough'  
to the  
IMF...*



## Solidarity with Argentine workers! Demonstrate 12 January

12 noon to 1.30pm outside the World  
Bank's headquarters, New Zealand House,  
Haymarket, Central London  
(near Trafalgar Square)

### Join the Argentine Solidarity Campaign

Phone 07960 398152 for details or email [argentesolidarity@hotmail.com](mailto:argentesolidarity@hotmail.com).

Come to the demonstration on Saturday 12 January,

- Solidarity with the Argentine Uprising!
- Cancel the Debts!
- Release the prisoners - stop the police repression!

*Argentine revolutionaries speak out: pages 6 and 7*



# Alliance gears up to challenge Labour at polls and in unions



**Mark Hoskisson**, a member of the Socialist Alliance national executive, outlines the way forward after a turbulent period for the newest political force on the left

The new executive of the Socialist Alliance met in mid-December last year in the aftermath of a national conference that decided upon a new constitution.

The conference had wrongly confined itself to a constitutional debate when it should have debated the Socialist Alliance's position on the war against Afghanistan and its activity in the anti-war movement. But the major players – the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Socialist Party (SP) – had decided they wanted to do battle to the death over the constitution so no other issues got a look in.

The outcome of the conference was the transformation of the alliance from a federal organisation into a more centralised, individual membership organisation with no automatic rights of representation to organisations. It was a victory for the SWP. The SP had wanted to deepen the federalism of the alliance.

While Workers Power put forward its own alternative to both sets of proposals (see WP 259) our position remains that the constitution is subordinate to politics. The future of the alliance will

be determined by how it responds politically to domestic and international developments in the class struggle – by whether it can be moved towards a revolutionary programme rather than limit itself to a set of left reformist policies.

The SP disagreed and said that the new constitution gave too much power to the SWP. So the SP walked out of the conference and the alliance. This walk out was at the wrong time and on the wrong issue. The question of whether the SWP will dominate the alliance depends on the development of the alliance itself. And the technicalities of a constitution are not as important as the politics of the alliance. The walkout was in essence, a sectarian move, designed to insulate the SP's membership from a real world where they have to engage, and make compromises with working class forces who don't yet agree with them.

At the new executive, regret at the SP's decision was unanimous and it was agreed that the alliance would discuss with the SP to ensure that electoral clashes were avoided.

But the main question facing the new executive is how to revive the Socialist Alliance.

Since the general election many local alliances have withered. A large measure of responsibility for this lies with the SWP. Though they always insist that they agree with our formulation that the alliance must not be treated as an "electoral ANL" – wheeled out for elections but left on the shelf between them – in practice this is what they allowed to happen in many areas. In particular they sidelined the alliance during the war.

The net result of this is that much of the momentum built up during the gen-

eral election has been lost. Members have disappeared, meetings haven't happened and the alliance has lost its campaigning profile on the streets and around the workplaces.

The new executive set itself the task of turning this situation around. It agreed a recruitment drive. It agreed to produce a pamphlet on the political fund and, above all, it agreed to go all out to build the trade union conference in March.

These decisions were positive. To the extent they are carried out they will lay the basis for a more effective campaign around the local elections. But if, after the elections, the alliance is then put back on the shelf it will be a disaster.

That is why the alliance needs to be ruthless in the local elections. It should not try to repeat the extensive operation mounted around the general election.

It should focus on those areas where the alliance established real roots in the locality, maintained a real campaigning presence and therefore has a chance of both building itself further and getting a reasonable vote.

If this is not done then repetitions of the Ipswich by election are inevitable – a by election in which the alliance did extremely badly with support falling away as compared with the general election.

At the same time it is crucial that we develop the alliance's programme for the elections beyond the limited set of reforms for local government contained in the manifesto, *People before Profit*. To do this we must do two things:

- Address the key complaint that most working class voters feel is wrong with local government – their sense of an

absolute loss of control. We can do this by fighting for workers' and service users' control of local government in order to carry through a mini-revolution in every town hall and build organisations of the working class capable of defending every gain made

- Involve the local people themselves in deciding what services they need – we should carry through an audit of working class needs in every locality and then produce a budget to meet these needs and a plan of action to fight to get the money off the central state and the bosses.

This will really make a mark. It will prove the alliance is different to the established parties and, combined with opposition to privatisation, it can win over not just the odd Labour voter but serious sections of the working class.

## BUILD THE TRADE UNION CONFERENCE

FOR OVER 100 years the trade union movement has loyally bankrolled the Labour Party. But that support can no longer be taken for granted. Bitterness with the government grows by the day.

Despite massive public opposition Tony Blair continues to ram through his Tory privatisation plans. The government has sat back and watched as hundreds of thousands of jobs in the manufacturing sector go to the wall. The TUC remains paralysed by the ideas of social partnership whilst the New Labour government ruthlessly attacks the poorest and most vulnerable in society. This has left many trade unionists disillusioned with New Labour.

In recent months a serious debate has opened up inside the trade union movement over the issue of the trade union link with New Labour and the right to donate money to political organisations other than the Labour Party. The debate has already begun in a number of trade union conferences.

For example:

**CWU:** last year's annual conference voted to withdraw the union's financial support for New Labour if it went ahead with any further privatisation of Royal Mail.

**FBU:** at last year's annual conference delegates voted to open up the union's political fund to candidates other than New Labour.

**RMT:** delegates at last year's conference gave a warning to New Labour that it would not continue to indefinitely fund a government implementing anti-union policies.

**UNISON:** delegates at last year's conference of Britain's biggest public sector union voted to set up a review of its political fund to Labour.

The relationship between the trade union movement and New Labour has reached a critical point. Many trade unionists want to discuss supporting political organisations like the Socialist Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party, whose policies are more in tune with the trade union movement. There is also a real need to bring activists together to organise a united campaign against privatisation, job cuts and how our money is used.

That is why the Socialist Alliance is organising a conference to discuss these issues. We are appealing to all trade unionists - individuals/shop stewards committees/trades councils/union branches/regions/national bodies - to support this conference, which is to be held on:

■ Saturday 16 March 2002, 11am-4pm ■ South Camden Community School, Charrington Street, London NW1 ■ £4 waged/£2 unwaged

■ Write to: Socialist Alliance, Wickham House, 10 Cleveland Way, London E1 4TR



## Pull the plug on Tony's dosh

When Tony Blair left the stage at the TUC congress just after the news of the 11 September attacks came in, the union leaders meekly called off their campaign against New Labour's privatisation plans.

Blair departed from the British political scene, transforming himself into George Bush's gopher on the world stage. He got a taste for long haul travel and shuttle diplomacy and left his ministers back home to get on with the domestic agenda.

Despite Gordon Brown using Blair's absence to promise money for the NHS and bolster his old Labour credentials in preparation for a future leadership quest, the key element of Labour's plan for education and the NHS – a massively increased role for the private sector through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Public Private Partnerships (PPP) – remained.

It was this that the union leaders had promised to fight on. After 11 September they abandoned this promise and concentrated on supporting the "war against terrorism".

But opposition to backdoor privatisation is widespread among the rank and file. Increasingly the union leaders found themselves under pressure to resume

opposition to Labour's plans to "modernise" the public sector by opening up services to the money grabbing scavengers of the private sector like WS Atkins, Nord Anglia and Capita.

In the aftermath of the long strike by Dudley Hospital workers against a PFI scheme – a strike that failed to win thanks to the refusal of the Unison leadership to translate the massive support in the union for the strikers into solidarity action – direct action against privatisation has been limited, sporadic and localised. But opposition is now being expressed in an important political move.

In early January the general union, the GMB, announced that it was cutting its funding for the Labour Party by £2 million. Commenting on this move the GMB leader, John Edmonds – by no means a left winger in the union movement – said:

"My union has supported Labour candidates in every election since it was founded more than 100 years ago. But no longer can the party take the support of our members for granted."

The reason for this dramatic decision was, according to Edmonds, that his members did not fund Labour and work for its election in order to see it "introduce the same privatisation poli-

cies forced on us by the Tories."

The significance of the GMB's decision is that it confirms a real shift inside the organised working class towards outright political opposition to Blairism. Last spring, at the firefighters' union conference the FBU passed a resolution opening up the union's political fund to candidates other than Labour who support union policies and oppose privatisation. Unison - against the advice of its leadership - voted to explore the possibility of doing the same.

A similar resolution was narrowly defeated at CWU conference, though it will undoubtedly have more chance of winning at next year's conference given Consignia's threat to sack thousands of postal workers and New Labour's unabashed desire to see the Royal Mail privatised.

In each case the unions have decided not merely to weaken their links

with Labour – punishing it by withdrawing funding that the party still relies on heavily – but to consider supporting alternative candidates who oppose privatisation. Defeating privatisation will clearly take more than this. It will mean organising for strike action to beat back every PFI and PPP scheme. It will mean mounting a massive national campaign to stop local struggles getting isolated and going down to defeat. But this political opposition is nevertheless extremely important both for the unions and for breaking the Labour Party's monopoly over union political funds and affiliations.

That is why it is vital to build on the decisions of the GMB, Unison and the FBU. The Socialist Alliance has agreed to launch a campaign around this issue, culminating in a conference to discuss both the political fund

and the struggle against privatisation in March (see panel, left).

The debate on the fund for socialists is not a selfish money-getting exercise. Our prime concern is not to get our hands on the money. It is about ensuring that there is real union democracy, a real right to discuss politics in the unions and take decisions on who to support that reflect the real wishes of the members. Equally it is about organising opposition to New Labour and its privatisation agenda.

We will argue for the Socialist Alliance to support and build unity in action with any working class candidates supported by the GMB and other unions – while fighting for them to affiliate to the Socialist Alliance.

For that reason we urge all our readers to support the Socialist Alliance campaign and conference.

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What we think...

# The year the system trembled

As 2001 drew to a close the media focused its assessment of the year on the effect of 11 September. Apocalyptic language was universal: "a turning point in history", "the loss of innocence", "a challenge to civilisation", "nothing will ever be the same again".

Once this rhetorical bubble is pricked what remains is a pretext by the ruling classes for launching a counter-attack on all the forces at home and abroad which have been resisting capitalist globalisation over the last two years.

The speed with which this opportunity was seized was a sure sign that our rulers felt their system was under attack. It also offered an opportunity for them to temporarily escape responsibility for a series of worrying developments.

First, it diverted attention from the deepening US and world recession. This is now widely admitted to be the first really synchronised recession, affecting imperialist countries and semi-colonies alike, since the mid 1970s.

Second, it enabled George Bush, who had been elected by one of the most brazen of electoral frauds in history, to become the most popular president in US history.

It enabled the world leaders – whose gatherings had been besieged by angry anti-capitalist demonstrators – to gain a much needed respite. It divided movements of resistance between those who bought into the "war against terrorism" as a "war for civilisation and human values" and those who rejected this as cynical nonsense. It enabled Bush, Blair and Schroeder, to pose as saviours of their peoples from an "evil" and incomprehensible threat.

After 11 September, riding a surge of fear and patriotism, the US Congress pushed through the Patriot Act which enabled Bush to seize foreign nationals at home and abroad, try them in secret military tribunals, with no proper legal defence, no proper system of appeal and to impose death sentences on them.

More than 1,000 people have been arrested and detained without trial in the USA. The civil rights of US residents coming from Arab and muslim countries have been abolished at a stroke. A witch hunt hysteria has swept the country.

In the USA anti-war activists have been harassed by the FBI, accused of "anti-Americanism", and of "supporting terrorists" simply because of anti-war activity.

In Britain there has been a rise in racist attacks on those perceived to be muslims. Tony Blair's reactionary home secretary David Blunkett has rushed the second "anti-terrorism" bill through parliament in less than a year.

The measures include declaring a state of emergency, suspending the operation of the European Human Rights Act and allowing the police to round up suspects and deport them to the USA. Democracy at home has been the first victim of imperialism's wars abroad.

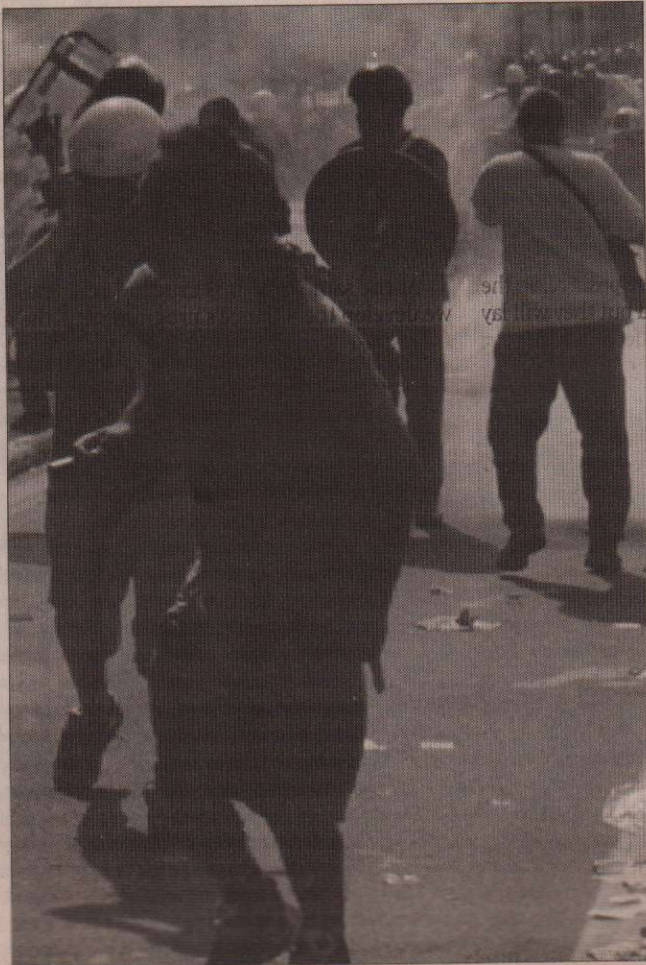
Within the US administration the hawks and extreme right-wingers around Rumsfeld have gained the upper hand and are determined that since "the USA is on a roll" they will roll over all the "rogue states" that they believe threaten US dominance in the oil-rich regions of the Middle East. Their eyes – and their cruise missiles – are now firmly fixed on Iraq.

Perhaps the most reactionary consequence of 11 September has been the worsening plight of the Palestinians. Ariel Sharon has been let off the leash by Bush. Sharon's brutality against the Palestinians reveals once again just what a "terrorist state" Israel is. It has got away with assassinating dozens of leaders of Hamas and the Fatah using helicopter gunships, anti personnel mines and F16s – all "made in the USA".

More than 200 young people – armed only with stones – have been killed since 11 September with scarcely more than a word of reproof from Washington.

But if the months following 11 September have seen a powerful reactionary onslaught we should not forget that the years which preceded the onslaught were ones of mounting opposition by millions of people to corporate globalisation and the reactionary peace settlements of the 1990s.

The second Palestinian intifada erupted in September 2000; six general strikes shook Argentina



during the last two years; other mass protests grew in the countries suffering from IMF austerity programmes and the crippling burden of debt. The anti-capitalist movement, which erupted in Seattle in late 1999, continued to grow.

In Quebec, Gothenburg and Genoa, hundreds of thousands filled the streets to voice their hatred of corporate globalisation and to show their solidarity with those suffering and resisting the onslaughts of the IMF and the multinational corporations. Not since the 1960s has there been such a widespread radicalisation of young people. In a number of countries, Italy first and foremost, this radicalisation included the working class.

It was this resistance that provoked the counter-offensive from the rulers of the world. The first signs of this were visible in Europe before 11 September.

The EU leaders had already decided to terrorise those who besieged their meetings. In Gothenburg three young demonstrators were shot. In case anyone thought this was an accident in Genoa, Silvio Berlusconi and his "ex"-fascist interior minister, Gianfranco Fini, went further. Demonstrators, both pacifist and militant, were brutally attacked, beaten mercilessly, even tortured. Carlo Giuliani was gunned down and the G8 leaders uttered not a word of protest.

But the response of Italian workers and youth was magnificent. In the week after Carlo was murdered they took to the streets of Milan, Genoa, Rome, Naples, and many smaller cities and towns in hundreds of thousands. They halted the repression and put Berlusconi back on the defensive.

Social forums, like the one set up in Genoa for the anti-G8 mobilisation, sprang up across the country. They united anti-capitalist youth, members of political parties like Rifondazione Comunista, Ya Basta!, anarcho-syndicalists and the young metal-workers from FIOM. This accounts in part for the dynamism of the anti-war movement in Italy – the country where the movement was least adversely affected by 11 September.

This marked resilience of the movement in Italy has continued throughout the autumn and winter with several strikes by FIOM, mass demonstrations, assemblies and occupations by school students. The reason for this resilience is plain – it is the fruit of the fusion between the anti-capitalist youth and sections of the working class. Where this has not happened and where the working class

movement has retreated under the impact of the war – the situation has deteriorated.

The main trade unions in all the imperialist countries – at a leadership level at least – supported the war, as did the reformist parties.

But the militants of the socialist, communist, radical ecologist and anarchist left, plus peace and anti-racist campaigners, went onto the streets and built an anti-war movement.

In Europe a powerful mass anti-war movement developed in many countries. There were demonstrations of 50,000 and then 100,000 in London. In Germany similar numbers mobilised in Berlin and other centres. There were even bigger demonstrations in Italy – 300,000 in Assisi.

In the USA – despite the immediate wave of shock and hysteria – brave grass roots activists of the anti-capitalist and labour movements threw themselves into building an anti-war movement. In New York itself, in Washington, in Berkeley they did come out immediately to renounce a war of revenge.

But within the anti-capitalist movement most of the NGO leaders, the academics, the mainstream journalists and trade union officials stayed home during the war. At best they signed letters of protest in the liberal press.

In France ATTAC, the right wing of the anti-globalisation movement, hardly moved a finger to oppose the war. Given ATTAC's strength it is no surprise that the French anti-war movement was the weakest in Europe.

When the World Trade Organization met in Qatar and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund met in Ottawa much reduced numbers of demonstrators took to the streets.

In Europe however there was a powerful sign of revival. In Brussels on D13 and D14 120,000 trade unionists and 25,000 anti-capitalists marched against the neo-liberal policies of the EU and against the "war against terrorism".

North American anti-capitalists are preparing once more to mobilise against the World Economic Forum in New York in late January. In Europe around the same time there will be a mobilisation against the NATO summit in Munich.

The Afghan war and the threat of more wars to come – and the fight to mobilise against it – has taught many who were on the streets before 11 September that globalisation is not just an economic system which starves us, but a military, war-making system that shoots and bombs us. It taught those who did not already know it that global capitalism is IMPERIALISM.

Then at the end of the year came the revolutionary days in Argentina, covered in depth in this edition of Workers Power.

What then are the main lessons of 2001. Genoa taught us the importance of unity between the radicalised anti-capitalist youth and the working class.

In Buenos Aires too we saw the centrality of the unity between the young demonstrators of the Plaza de Mayo – six of whom were killed by the bullets of the police – and the mass forces of the working class, the unemployed, and the radicalised middle classes.

It is only the masses – first and foremost the working class – who can stop dead all the wheels of the world system of exploitation and oppression. It is only the working class who can finally settle accounts with capitalism. It is only the working class who can build a fundamental alternative society – socialism.

To bring this decisive force into play – or rather to make sure it is not deceived by juggling the personnel at the top of the capitalist state – the working class must become conscious both of its great strength and of its capacity to solve the problem of social insecurity, exclusion, misery and inequality. Making this happen is the task of the revolutionary vanguard.

We cannot simply rely on the "spontaneity" of the masses or the "objective process" of economic and political crisis to do this for us. Of course, the working class learns from experience. Of course, it is creative and outstrips even the most revolutionary of "vanguards".

But unless workers can create from within their own ranks new political and trade union leaders to kick out the privileged career bureaucrats and politicians the lessons from each struggle will be

**From Genoa to Buenos Aires the streets erupted for social justice. The desperate and reactionary attacks of September 11th gave the bosses the excuse for repression and war. Now recession, revolution and the threat of nuclear war haunt our rulers. Welcome to 2002...**

lost amidst the cynicism and disillusion which follow each defeat or betrayal. The "old crap" as Marx called it – whether this be social democracy, Stalinism or Peronism – will revive again. That is why the building of new revolutionary parties bound together in a new revolutionary international is indispensable for victory. In 2002 it is vital for the anti-capitalist movement to continue the return to the streets in force, as it did in Brussels, as hopefully it will do in New York. The anti-war movement needs

to prepare to do so the moment USA and its allies launch round two of the "war against terrorism".

The growth of co-ordinated international action against corporate power and against imperialist wars is essential to revive the working class movement in the 21st century. Revolutionary communists must work internationally to be the most conscious, active and well organised vanguard of this struggle.

The lessons from Genoa and Buenos Aires are clear: we need to speak in the language of mass demonstrations and all out strikes to Blair, Schroeder, Chirac and Bush. To do this we have to unite our forces. We need to build new fighting organisations like the Italian social forums, in every city and town, in every country. Then we can really throw back the reactionary counter-offensive.



# Blunkett's offensive stokes up racism and aids BNP

December 2000 saw the passage of a draconian "anti-terrorism" bill, a sharp escalation in the number of asylum applicants deported and the publication of reports designed to whitewash the role of the police, local authorities and the media in last summer's "riots" in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, writes GR McColl.

Presiding over all this was the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, rapidly making a name for himself as the man prepared to speak "controversially" on issues of race and racism.

In the early autumn Blunkett hinted at the introduction of a new "citizenship" programme for immigrants to Britain. In December he repeatedly emphasised the advantages of such a loyalty test for immigrants in Britain.

He used the 11 September terrorist attacks in the US to introduce the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act, which was railroaded through the House of Commons, only to be stymied briefly in the Lords. To get the Bill through Blunkett's principal compromise with the Lords was over the section that would have created a new offence of incitement to religious hatred. This was an ill-conceived sop to mainstream Islamic clerics in the wake of a sharp increase in "anti-Muslim" violence following 11 September.

While Blunkett was remarkably quiet as the Leeds footballers Lee Bowyer and Michael Woodgate walked away from Hull Crown Court as free men, we can rest assured that the Home Secretary will be calling for the stiffest possible sentences against Asian youths involved in last summer's uprisings triggered by police and fascist provocations.

Blunkett is deliberately "playing the race card", just as past Labour governments have done. For Labour the tactic of stoking up racism is a means of diverting attention from the real problems of poverty and deprivation - problems that Labour's pro-big business policies do little to alleviate.

Shortly after taking over the Home Office, Blunkett established a special ministerial working party charged with examining the root causes of the uprisings by Asian youth in Bradford and else-

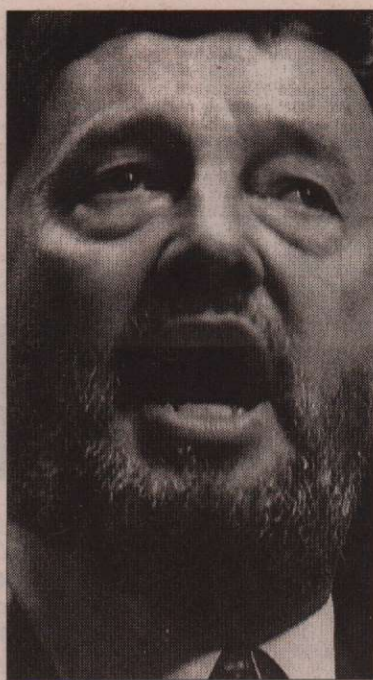
where in the weeks immediately prior to and after the general election.

This group's eventual report, *Building Cohesive Communities*, marked a sharp departure from the liberal consensus on "institutional racism". That consensus had been established less than three years ago in the Macpherson Report on the murder of Stephen Lawrence. *Building Cohesive Communities* made it plain that Macpherson had been all but consigned to the dustbin of history so far as New Labour was concerned. Institutional racism was no longer the problem - black people were the problem. They didn't fit in.

A longer document accompanying the report, written by a panel chaired by local government bureaucrat Ted Cattle, implicitly lays much of the blame for the northern uprisings at the door of the Asian communities. They have been at sharp end of racist thuggery, media and police scapegoating and discriminatory housing and employment practices. Yet in the Cattle report there is much talk of their "self-imposed segregation" and a failure "to develop a greater acceptance of, and engagement with, the principal [British] national institutions".

The report displayed a particular obsession with the supposed failure to learn the English language among Britain's Asian communities. Cattle and co call for "a universal acceptance of the English language (seen as particularly important in some areas)." This demand must seem both bizarre and offensive, as there was abundant evidence that the vast majority of the youth who took to the streets to resist racism were not speaking Urdu or Sylheti but English, with unmistakably Lancashire or Yorkshire accents.

The Cattle report shows how quickly the debate on race has moved to the right for a report last autumn called *Community Pride Not Prejudice*, blamed local politicians and community leaders for exacerbating the divisions among the people of Bradford. While the report, commissioned by Bradford Vision, was limited both in its remit and its politics it did highlight how local politicians have fostered suspicion, intolerance and division, which contributed to the growth of racism in the area.



Blunkett's offensive stokes up racism and aids BNP

First and foremost among the Cattle proposals is a call to define "the responsibilities of citizenship", culminating in the formulation of a "statement of allegiance". In short, the 12-strong Home Office panel, which includes a Labour-appointed Asian peer, and two national union bureaucrats (Mohammed Taj of the TGWU and Bob Abberley of Unison), has helped revive Norman Tebbit's infamous cricket test.

When Blunkett goes on to Jimmy Young's Radio 2 programme and declares his determination to "defend the coherence of our nationality", alarm bells should be ringing. For those with longer memories such rhetoric is all too reminiscent of Margaret Thatcher in 1978, as she wooed National Front voters with television interviews that spoke of "immigrants swamping our culture".

The specific context of Blunkett's remarks on the Jimmy Young show was the largely symbolic attempt by desperate Kurds and Afghans to escape from

the deplorable conditions at the Red Cross' Sangatte refugee camp through the Channel Tunnel. But Blunkett was clearly not just scapegoating asylum seekers. By invoking the notion of "a coherent nationality" the Home Secretary was pandering to the racist and xenophobic prejudices of "middle England" and sections of the white working class.

Britain's top fascist, British National Party (BNP) leader Nick Griffin, wasted little time in identifying himself with much of what Blunkett had said. Blunkett's outbursts are timely for Griffin and the BNP who are gearing up to capture one or more council seats in Lancashire towns at the May local elections.

Blunkett is unrepentant, not least in stressing the importance of English as the nation's universal tongue. But his views have provoked some dissent in the Labour establishment. The usually tame Blairite black journalist turned New Labour politician, Trevor Phillips, launched a warning shot at the Home Secretary in a *Guardian* article.

He recalled the experience of first-generation African-Caribbean immigrants: "have you forgotten that the Windrush generation travelled thousands of miles to fight shoulder to shoulder with white Britons against Hitler, yet they were still consigned to inner city slums after the war?" He went on to say "what 'sense of belonging' are Asian families to feel when they are dumped in sink estates by local councils?"

But beyond the offer of a few more multicultural palliatives Phillips has no solution to the problems facing the Asian communities of Bradford, Oldham or Burnley.

Multiculturalism is patently not the answer. It has failed to integrate communities because it cannot begin to tackle racism and its underlying causes. It will do nothing to win over white workers who may be driven by desperation towards the BNP. It will not make the systematic racism faced by the Asian communities any more palatable.

Blunkett's "coherent nationality" crusade has been countered by socialist politics and revolutionary integrationism.

## Home Office rips up Geneva convention

The Home Office crackdown on asylum seekers has intensified in recent months. November saw the opening of the single largest detention centre for asylum seekers in western Europe at Yarl's Wood in Bedfordshire. The purpose-built facility has 900 spaces for men, women and children, and is operated by Group 4. Already Blunkett's stated aim is to increase the number of asylum detainees to at least 4,000 by 2003, more than double the number held in de facto prisons when he took over the job. He has also made plain that in the future any asylum applicant in receipt of a support package will be housed in a segregated accommodation centre.

The Home Office is also accelerating its programme of fast track deportation on a massive scale. The annual total of individuals deported from the UK each year is set to rise nearly fourfold to 30,000 by 2003. This has already cost the life of a Ghanaian asylum seeker, who fell to his death from the third-story roof of the house where he had been living in Streatham, south London.

Meanwhile, Gabriel Nkwelle, a member of the Social Democratic Front in Cameroon and a champion of asylum detainees in Britain, was nearly put on a flight out of Gatwick to Cameroon on Christmas Eve. A judicial review may ultimately prevent his deportation, but it has become increasingly clear that the Home Office is more than prepared to expel individuals who have committed no crime and who have presented persuasive evidence of torture by state authorities in their countries of origin. Recent news reports have highlighted Home office rejection of asylum claims by political activists from Zimbabwe. There are claims that one man deported in December was arrested and beheaded by Mugabe's government. Other activists detained in Britain are fearing for their lives if they are returned, but the government has stated that the political situation in Zimbabwe does not warrant granting asylum status or exceptional leave to stay.

To all intents and purposes, the British state has already torn up the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees to which it was a signatory.

Socialists must stand in the front ranks of opposition to the current racist backlash. David Blunkett's policies and statements are encouraging this backlash and that means we need to take him on too.

Racism is embedded in all capitalist societies. To get rid of it we need to get rid of capitalism. But that does not mean we just wait for the revolutionary overthrow of the system. We can take up the fight against racism to achieve real gains now.

We can begin by fighting to get rid of all immigration controls, not only because we support the free movement of labour, especially against the background of globalisation, but because such controls are inherently racist in their conception and operation. The arsenal of laws against refugees and other would-be immigrants serve to brand the "foreigner", and particularly the non-white foreigner, as the problem. They serve to divide working class opposition to the system. Immigration and nationality laws give an official state sanction to scapegoating and deflect anger from the grotesque, class-based inequalities in wealth and power in Britain, the fourth biggest economy in the world.

Socialists recognise that much so-called "voluntary segregation" among Asian and other minority ethnic communities in education and housing reflects the impact of racism - from street-level violence and

harassment to US-style white flight from inner-city neighbourhoods. Where racists, fascists or the police engage in violence, we stand for organised self-defence, based on and accountable to the community itself and supported by the wider labour movement.

At the same time, we champion the maximum degree of genuine integration - in all spheres. In the workplace, for example, this may require forms of positive discrimination for black and minority ethnic workers to end the often covert racist working practices that take place in virtually every company. In the unions it will mean fighting for caucusing rights for black and other minority ethnic workers, so they can organise to address their specific needs and combat racism within the labour movement.

Elsewhere, this drive for integration will translate into a massive injection of public investment in the construction of social housing, dramatically increasing the volume and quality of dwellings available to people from all communities, regardless of skin colour. Ending discriminatory practices by local authorities and other landlords will be crucial but not sufficient to address the

issue of residential segregation in many areas.

In schools an end to opting out, selection and the current system of league tables, along with some curbs on so-called parental choice, will be essential to reversing the trend in some areas towards mounting racial segregation. And, in sharp contrast to New Labour's conversion to the promotion of faith schools, socialists believe that there should be no funding to religious schools of whatever faith. This means ending the current state subsidy to the more than 6,800 Church of England and Roman Catholic schools, as well as the tiny handful of Jewish and Muslim faith-based schools.

Education must be anti-racist, not simply multicultural. There should be a curriculum that includes a full exposure of Britain's colonial past and imperial present. Understanding such a history is essential in order to grasp the roots of racism and, indeed, why the population of Britain has its current ethnic make-up.

Britain's blasphemy laws, which accord a uniquely privileged status to Christianity,

should be scrapped in their entirety. Protection against "Islamophobia" will not come from the introduction of yet another law against incitement to religious hatred, but through the promotion of tolerance and real equality for all religions and religious practices.

But there is an important proviso: those practices which deny basic democratic rights to people, as with the practice of female genital mutilation and forced marriages, should be opposed. Here, the fight against the oppression of women comes first over and above any misguided liberal defence of cultural relativism. Likewise, we categorically oppose the promotion of virulent homophobia and attempts to deny women reproductive rights, long associated with many Christian churches, especially the Roman Catholic church.

Ultimately, the fight for and development of working class unity across ethnic and racial divisions will provide the best conditions for the marginalisation of religion in general and, in particular, of its role in justifying a series of reactionary practices. And, of course, such unity and solidarity will be absolutely vital not just in narrowing this society's obscene disparities in wealth and power, but in laying the foundations for a fundamentally different society that can finally bury racism once and for all.

what we say



Here we publish the statement of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International, adopted on 21 December in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of the Plaza de Mayo and the downfall of President Fernando de la Rúa.

# Argentina: on the road to revolution

The pro-IMF hunger administration of President Fernando de la Rúa has fallen only one day after imposing a state of emergency. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets across Argentina, outraged by de la Rúa's declaration that their democratic right to protest had been suspended.

The president's action followed the mass street protests, the general strike and the outbreaks of looting which gripped the country on December 19 and 20. What the country witnessed was a mass popular uprising against hunger. Then De la Rúa's decree tried to rob the people of their democratic right to protest just as he had already robbed them of their jobs, their wages, their pensions, their savings.

The immediate reaction by the people was to defy his decree and continue demonstrating, indeed besieging the presidential palace itself. Not satisfied with being tossed the head of the hated neo-liberal economy minister, Domingo Cavallo, they went on to force the resignation of de la Rúa himself who fled the presidential palace in a helicopter to the thunderous cheers of demonstrators.

Workers, unemployed, students, the Mothers of the Disappeared, had all confronted the horses, tear gas grenades, water cannon and rubber bullets of the police for twenty four hours. At least 26 demonstrators had been killed in the repression. Earlier, demonstrators actually set fire to the economy ministry.

There can be no doubt these were revolutionary events. The working class, leading all the other popular forces, crushed the attempt to impose "order" for the IMF. These events mark the opening of a profound revolutionary situation in Argentina. There is a near total disillusion with the Radicals, with the opposition Peronists and with the whole political class. Nor do any of these politicians know what to do to solve the crisis.

The main danger now is that the Argentine bourgeoisie can nevertheless – because of its control of the political and state apparatus and the economy – block the road to the development of the struggle into a social revolution.

The reasons for the unrest are well expressed by the demonstrators themselves, by their banging of empty pans and by the looting of food stores. Wide sections of the unemployed and urban poor are actually going hungry. Of Argentina's 36 million population, 15 million are living on or below the poverty line: five million are unemployed.

As many as one third of those who are still employed have not been paid their wages for months. Government employees have had their wages cut by 13 per cent. The recent government measure barring access to bank savings has hit the middle class and the workers too.

That is why women and their children have been to the fore in the expropriation of food from shops and supermarkets, now stuffed with goods for the Christmas festivities – celebrations that so few of them can afford. Some police disobeyed orders rather than



Demonstration, Buenos Aires, December 2001. Masses need their own government to stop more austerity plans

attack them.

Argentina has faced four years of grinding recession. Across the country unemployment stands at 18-20 per cent according to official figures. But at least as many again are underemployed, that is, they have part-time, irregular, insecure, employment. Such work does not pay enough for a family to live on.

In cities like Rosario and Concordia, where food riots and demonstrations have been severe, unemployment stands at 22.8 per cent and 19.5 per cent respectively. But even in cities like Mendoza with "only" 13.5 per cent out of work there have been food riots too.

Dozens of stores were ransacked in the capital, Buenos Aires, and in the northern Entre Rios province, while in the second-largest city, Cordoba, workers protesting at government plans to further reduce wages actually set fire to the town hall.

The reason for the acute crisis of Argentina's economic system is not hard to find. It lies in capitalism itself – and on top of that the absolute subordination of Argentine capitalism to the "economic superpowers" of the G7. In 1991 in an attempt to escape a situation of hyperinflation (4,000 per cent in one year alone) Cavallo put Argentina in the straitjacket of a "peg" of one peso to the dollar.

At first it seemed to do the trick and foreign investment flowed in to benefit from the mass sell-off of state assets. But in 1998 Argentina went into crisis. Now its exports are too expensive for the Latin American market and other countries' imports are much cheaper. Companies have gone bankrupt in wave after wave, sacking their workers and ruining their middle class investors.

Over the last three years there have been eight austerity packages which have reduced wages, slashed services like health and education, privatised and closed factories and industries.

Each of these measures met stiff resistance from the workers but they got through in the end thanks to a lack of a leadership equal to the militancy of the rank and file fighters. Now at last it appears that the Argentine workers, the unemployed and even the middle classes have stood up and said a resounding and united "No More!"

On 13 December the eighth general

strike in two years closed down factories, offices, and public transport across the country. There were also roadblocks and pickets in many provinces. The support of transport workers contributed to the strike's success. The general strike was called by both the "official" and by the so-called "dissident" wings of the General Labour Confederations (CGT) and the Argentine Workers' Congress (CTA).

Official CGT leader Rodolfo Daer and dissident CGT leader Hugo Moyano denounced the measures imposed by the government. But only recently they joined in a rotten "pact" to control social unrest "in the interests of the country", arguing that "people do not want any more strikes".

It may be true that workers were indeed becoming sick and tired of one day or 36-hour general strikes that got no results. But it is now clear they are straining at the leash for real action which promises an end to the ongoing crisis and misery – namely, that the IMF austerity plan is immediately renounced, that workers are paid their full wages, and that food, clothes, etc. are distributed free to the unemployed and underemployed.

A general strike, drawing in the unemployed, the road pickets, the students, the youth, the women, "Tous ensemble" – all together as the French workers say – can unite all these sectors behind the working class and prevent the bourgeoisie from playing one off against another.

The aim must be to arm the working class with the capacity to launch a general strike when the government launches its inevitable counter-attack on the masses. In every district of the biggest cities and in every smaller city and town, delegates need to be elected in every workplace and from every fighting organisation. Such delegates must be elected not only in the factories and offices but in the pickets' assemblies, in the schools and colleges too and unified at a national level.

These delegates – recallable at will by their electors – can form powerful councils to run the strike and force all union leaders to follow the wishes of their members, preventing their sell-outs and betrayals or replacing them directly. From instruments of struggle they can

rapidly become organs of power.

Another key task is the organisation of the most fit and active workers, students and unemployed into a militia to undertake the acquisition and equitable distribution of food, keep order in the popular districts and protect the demonstrations, picket, workers' centres and districts. Then if the government tries to use the police and the army again to impose its will it will be possible break or halt their first attacks and agitate to win them to the side of the people. Such a revolutionary general strike could bring down any government that tries to impose austerity in a matter of days. But what then?

Certainly the Peronists led by Carlos Menem will be no better. Nor would a "government of national unity" which is in reality a government of bourgeois unity against the working people, the poor and indeed the middle classes too. Clearly a weak interim government will not be able to impose the IMF's \$3bn cuts which the masses have just defeated on the streets. But such a government may simply let the economic crisis rip, claiming it cannot control it. They will hope that worsening economic conditions will demoralise and demobilise the masses.

A forced default on the debts will lead to a mass flight of capital. Argentina will be treated as a pariah by the international bankers and corporate investors. The already terrible recession will be deepened still further with an even more disastrous rise in unemployment.

A devaluation on the other hand will lead to a massive increase in poverty since most people's household debts and mortgages are in dollars. It will also lead to a big peso increase in the value of this debt.

Hence the burning need to expropriate the banks and finance houses who hold these debts and put them under workers' control. Indeed in a situation of deepening economic crisis workers must impose their control over the factories, offices and banks. They must refuse to let the investors, foreign and Argentine, close them down and walk away with the proceeds whilst workers are thrown onto the streets.

The Argentine bourgeoisie and its politicians have shown their complete incapacity to run the economy. Hence the need for the workers to take over the ownership and running of it. The bank-

rupt Radicals and Peronists could try to retain power by resorting to the ballot box – to new elections. Given the workers and poor of Argentina do not have their own party this could be an easy way of swindling the masses out of a victory they won on the streets. Faced with such a trick militants should argue not for old-style, normal parliamentary or presidential elections which only the hated and corrupt politicians who caused this crisis can win.

Instead, revolutionaries must argue for the election of recallable deputies to a sovereign constituent assembly. In such elections it would be vital for workers' delegates, delegates of the urban and rural poor, to stand to make sure that it was not dominated by the corrupt politicians of the rival oligarchies.

But even if a constituent assembly were to be elected what sort of sort of government, armed with what sort of programme, should emerge from such an assembly? What does Argentina need today?

First the \$132bn debt to the international financiers must be renounced. Second, banks, factories and other enterprises, need to be put under the control of their workers. Third, an emergency plan must be launched to feed, house and educate the masses and provide them with medical care. This could employ all the unemployed and underemployed thus striking a double blow at poverty and social exclusion. It must all be paid for by expropriating the foreign companies and the riches of the Argentine business and land-owning oligarchy. The main levers of the economy must come into the hands of the workers at all levels.

To carry out such a programme a revolutionary government of the workers and the poor is needed; one based on the democratic councils of delegates. But who is to argue and fight for such a strategy? In the first phase of a revolution the spontaneous militancy of the masses plus the courageous initiatives by the vanguard fighters can achieve miracles. So it has been in Argentina. The working class, leading all the oppressed and exploited, have overthrown a government carrying out the policies of the IMF.

Now the question is, can the masses prevent ANY government from carrying out the next "solution" imperialism comes up with to make the poor pay? More than that, can the working class come up with its own solution? Here the experience of all past revolutions over the last 150 years indicates that spontaneity and improvisation will not be enough to do this. Conscious leadership – an action programme and a party capable of fighting for it inside the working class – are needed for this. These are not easy to improvise. But without them the second, social, working class, phase of the Argentine revolution will not succeed.

● LRCI International Secretariat  
December 21, 2001

Some cuts have been made for reasons of space. The full version can be found at [www.workerspower.com/wpglobal/Argentina-revcrisis.html](http://www.workerspower.com/wpglobal/Argentina-revcrisis.html)



# PTS: the Decem

In Argentina the comrades of the Partido de los Trabajadores por el Socialismo (PTS) played a courageous role in the Battle of the Plaza de Mayo giving out 4,000 copies of the special edition of their newspaper and hundreds of copies of leaflets. They had a heavy responsibility: to chart a programme of action which can lead this struggle to victory and to create a revolution on the events of 19th-20th December from *Emilio Albamonte* and extracts from a leaflet from 24 December.

## Masses defy state of siege

What we saw on the 19 and 20 of December were two great revolutionary days where the workers, the poor and the middle class of the great urban centres, with various but simultaneous methods, joined battle with one of the most exploitative and servile [to imperialism] governments.

These events did not come out of the blue but synthesised more than one year of acute class struggle that included local uprisings with a semi-insurrectionary character, like those of Salta province at the end of 2000, the emergence of a powerful movement of the unemployed (piqueteros), that carried to the national arena the demands of the most oppressed and exploited sectors of society, and, last but not least, eight general strikes, supported by the transport workers, that paralysed the country. These struggles and organisations, waged and built despite the official leaderships of the workers' movement, culminated in the explosion of the December days.

The December events are chronicled in three great episodes. Perhaps the most important was the process of around 600 "lootings" of supermarkets and shops in one week (as against the 800 that happened at the end of the Alfonsín government in 1983 in 52 days). It opened a situation without a reformist solution for the government. Either the looters would link up with other classes in struggle, even though it would be with their own demands, or the bourgeois state would isolate them and eventually crush them.

It couldn't do this because the middle class of the great urban centres and the small business sector of the outskirts of the cities were outraged with the government. With the "corralito" measure (a limit of \$250 per week that could be drawn out of bank deposits including salaries), Cavallo and De La Rúa not only raised the spectre of a confiscation of deposits but also by the same measure "dried up" the country of money in circulation, which is vital to maintain the informal economy.

Throughout the month the most exploited sectors – like those who scavenge through rubbish tips – through to the small business people who operate using cash and to whom it seems ridiculous to demand that they use "credit cards" and thus force them to use the banking system for their business, suffered a brutal fall in living conditions.

This contributed to the looting, and far from transforming itself into a war of poor against poor, it started to direct itself against the big supermarkets, breaking with bourgeois legality and unleashing a process of insubordination of all classes against the government.

The second moment occurred on the



Cavallo: architect of misery



De La Rúa: on his way out

night of the 19th when the middle class was provoked by De La Rúa's speech in which he took no responsibility for the crisis and decreed a state of emergency. This unleashed an impressive simultaneous response from hundreds of thousands of people who started an infernal cacero-lazo (banging of pans), using bombas de estruendo (thunder bombs) where scores of thousands created a human tide in the centres of the principal cities, most in Buenos Aires.

When we arrived in the Plaza (de Mayo) half of it was already occupied and the eight blocks of the Avenida de Mayo, which separates the Plaza from the Houses of Congress, was full of people walking. Meanwhile in all of the city's districts street bonfires were burning with thousands more people gathering together.

In Cordoba, according to our comrades, at 2am 10,000 people marched to the centre. Within five minutes hundreds of thousands of people gathered around the cry "Cavallo, hijo de puta..." and "que boludo, el estado de sitio, se lo meten en el culo" ("what an idiot, stick the state of siege up your arse").

On Thursday 20th, while the cities were covered in smoke from the street bonfires and with looted supermarkets in many districts in the suburbs of the great cities, some people from the mobilisations of the night before stayed on the streets, banging the rubbish bins in front of the Casa Rosada (Presidential Palace). Despite being harassed by the police they stayed in the hope that the multitude of the night before – that had been dispersed with tear gas – would return on hearing the news of the resignation of Cavallo. In a certain sense, the "bridge" between one day and the next was the massive contingent that marched to the Congress after the police repression and stayed there until 3am.

All Thursday morning, their ranks grew with workers (office workers, bank workers, and so on) who had decided to "take a detour" on their way to work as well as with students and activists.

Here the third episode started, what the press has called the Battle of the Plaza de Mayo. The Federal Police tried to stop the Plaza filling up all day. Dozens of attacks by armoured cars,

horse charges, tear gas rounds and rubber bullets were launched at the beginning of the demonstration and then on various occasions the crowds were attacked with live rounds. This repression received the reply of the mixed crowd – a type of guerrilla war. Counter attacks from side streets and avenues that lead the Plaza were launched by demonstrators. All of this was transmitted live by four television stations and various cable channels showing the action from all possible angles.

This allowed the whole nation to follow the events. From midday the participation of young workers increased. Employed and unemployed, as well as students, gained a decisive weight among the leading groups of those in combat. By 4pm De La Rúa's fate was sealed. With five comrades already dead from lead bullets (two more died the following day in hospital) the brief final speech of the ex-president was a last ditch and miserable effort for posterity: offering a government of national unity with the Peronists to share the responsibility for the tragic ending. As the afternoon arrived and at about 7pm the incredible happened: De La Rúa resigned and fled the Casa Rosada by helicopter!

This put a temporary end to the dramatic revolutionary days. The outcome: the city centre full of stones in the streets and with dozens of shops, banks and vans burnt or ransacked. The tragic outcome: 25 dead from different episodes.

As for the official workers' movement, despite being the most backward sector, it participated in two important events on Wednesday 19th: the march headed by the shipyard workers of Astillero Rio Santiago, teachers and state employees of La Plata, and the confrontation of the Cordoba municipal workers.

The comrades in Cordoba inform us "the resistance of the municipal workers was the important thing, first of all by forming a mass presence at the entrance of the national palace and then in that zone." By midday groups of 30-40 municipal workers blockaded certain crossroads and effectively controlled some areas of the city centre.

The police took care of clearing the people with tear gas and rubber bullets. About 70 municipal workers, including the general secretary, took refuge in the office of Luz y Fuerza (the trade union of electricity and power companies).

The police launched tear gas into the

building and sealed the door, as well as blocking the road with police cordons. Dozens of people were surrounded by a cloud of tear gas, even children who were in the building for leisure activities, and they had to be taken away by ambulance. This provoked enormous indignation among workers and was shown on television. As a result 20 people were arrested and a demonstration at the police station was organised, but the prisoners remain in jail.

In general, the bureaucracy of the two CGTs (trade union federations) stopped the workers making their mark by declaring on Thursday midday an overdue general strike starting from Friday. The climate in the factories, of which we know, was one of elation and combativeness. De La Rúa's resignation held back the expression of the class as a whole.

The bureaucracy, immediately after De La Rúa's resignation, demobilised the general strike for Friday despite more than 25 dead, hundreds of injured and thousands of people jailed. The "combative" Moyano [Moyano is the leader of the lorry drivers' union, camioneros and general secretary of the transport federation and has led important industrial action. He is a traditional Peronist] and the "quasiimpresario" bureaucracy of Daer [this section of the bureaucracy is involved in managing industries] had already played their role and were now confident that Peronism would resolve the popular demands.

The social democratic CTA – that had played a pernicious role making the National Picket's Assembly disappear – was absent from all the events without notice and did all it could to avoid getting mixed up with the "revolts". The worst example was the calling off of a mobilisation for the same Thursday 20 December in the Plaza de Mayo by the FTV-CTA and the CCC (the leadership of the Matanza Pickets' Assembly) and D'Elia condemned the lootings with the attitude of an indignant government functionary.

The CCC wing of the pickets' bureaucracy, played no role in the events, ending up supporting spontaneous lootings of small shops (with the large ones having agreed to hand over food). It did not show its face in The Battle of The Plaza de Mayo and under pressure from the rank and file tried to blockade Ruta 3 in La Matanza but were repressed by the Greater Buenos Aires police without organising any resistance. The Pickets' movement, having won authority among the unemployed, was not even an alternative leadership in the widespread phenomena of the lootings, let alone during the events of the Plaza de Mayo. Yet the protagonists in these events were those that the CCC says it represents.

## A NEW S

### FOR A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY UNEMPLOYED TO FIGHT FOR

The ruling classes and their political servants took due notice that on 20 December the masses in the streets imposed a new balance of forces on society. They are now busy trying to swindle the masses out of their victory. But making millions forget that direct mass action is a powerful weapon for achieving their demands is no easy task.

It is now critical for workers to push on and build their own independent organisations, which can then grow into an alternative source of power to that of the ruling classes. If they do not do this it will be the hated bourgeois establishment, the native and foreign exploiters and their subservient union bureaucrats who will remain in charge.

### A WORKERS' AND PEOPLE'S

The development of such bodies is critical so that the demands coming from the most impoverished layers in society are met: no more hunger, bread and work for all, build an alliance with the exploited and the oppressed to overthrow the capitalists' power and usher in a workers' and people's government.

Only a programme which eradicates the bosses' profits and property altogether – expropriating the expropriators – measures up to the task of meeting the burning needs of the masses. The current obscenity – that millions of people starve while supermarkets are stuffed with goods – is a stark reminder of the deep contradiction at the heart of the capitalist regime: the few concentrate in their hands staggering wealth whereas the majority barely survives.

A first emergency measure should be the seizure of the stocks of food in the supermarkets as part of the struggle against hunger. The distribution of food should be organised and controlled by neighbourhood

### FOR A FREE AND SOVEREIGN

Rodríguez Saá's interim government and the call to presidential elections next March with slates bearing multiple candidates are a swindle. Such a multiple-candidate-ticket system has the key purpose of keeping the Peronist Party together and guaranteeing victory for the Peronists in March and then again in the 2003 presidential elections.

At the same time, the deputies and senators that were repudiated by the people and could not even show up at the protests, remain in their posts. These elections are intended to produce a cosmetic change so that nothing really changes. They want the "legitimacy" of millions of votes to keep on governing against the workers.



# December days

revolutionary events in December. The PTS took part in the grades fought against the police. The PTS has shouldered a revolutionary workers' party around this. We print here reflections

## STAGE

### OF WORKERS AND WORKERS' POWER

The PTS, in the widely circulated special issue of its paper La Verdad (Workers Truth) for 20 December, published in the thick of the events, stated that the main task of the party was to convene Assemblies of workers and the unemployed, made up of an elected delegate for every category of workers at a national, provincial and regional level. The Asamblea Obrera leaders are dead set against any measure: they ignored the resolutions decreeing such Assemblies be convened and they ducked the fight during the dramatic days of December 19 and 20.

### SOLUTION

committees and the pickets' organisations. This emergency measure could be directed towards the goal of nationalising the food distribution companies under workers' control. But putting an end to hunger demands an end to mass unemployment. The government's measures do not provide any real solution in this regard. The workers should fight to divide up all the available work among the employed and unemployed with all getting a salary equal to the cost of living for an average family. An emergency public works plan must be implemented to feed, house, educate and provide medical care, all under control of workers and pickets.

All sackings must be stopped right now, and every factory or workplace that declares bankruptcy and sacks its workers should be nationalised under the direct management of its workers. We could start right now with crisis-ridden

### CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Faced with pacts carried out behind the backs of the people, we have to fight for a free and sovereign Constituent Assembly, so that the people can discuss democratically and freely the way out of the crisis. The assembly would have to combine legislative and executive powers, bring an end to the current division of power between Congress, the judiciary and the executive, abolish the Supreme Court - that caste of corrupt judges - and organise the direct election of representatives.

The members of the Constituent Assembly should be elected by the direct vote of everyone aged 16 or older without

The fighting unemployed unions such as the MTR, Neuquén's MDT, or the CTD Anibal Verón; unions such as Neuquén's SOECN (that have called for such an assembly), the miners in Rio Turbio, the shop stewards of Córdoba's electricity workers and the telephone workers' union (FOETRA, Buenos Aires branch), the CGT San Lorenzo, the anti-bureaucratic factory committees in different unions - among others - should champion such an Assembly. The lack of such bodies and the non-existence of a revolutionary party with mass influence helps the government and

companies such as Neuquén's Zanón, Renacer in Tierra del Fuego province, EmFer in the province of Buenos Aires, or the sugar mill La Esperanza in the province of Jujuy.

On top of this, nation-wide control of production by the workers must be implemented, to prevent the bosses from profiting from the crisis.

All privatised utilities should be re-nationalised under the control of customers' committees, as should private pension funds. The task of the hour is not to go for a foreign debt moratorium, a measure the new Rodríguez Saa government has taken out of sheer necessity, but the country should renounce the external debt altogether. Argentina must break away from the IMF and nationalise the banking system to guarantee customers' deposits of up to \$100,000, prevent a massive outflow of funds and provide cheap credits to small

distinction of sex or nationality. Their mandate should be recallable in order to put an end to the "representatives of the people" who swindle their electors. The candidates for deputies to the Constituent Assembly could also be promoted through local assemblies, close to their own city or town, to ensure that they know the needs of the local people and are easier to control. During the term of their mandate they will receive a salary equivalent to that of an average teacher or worker, to put an end to rich politicians and to make government cheaper.

The appointment of Rodríguez Saa



Demonstrators storm parliament

the capitalist factions, making it easier for them to suppress the revolutionary dynamic of the mass actions.

All our efforts have to be aimed at the creation of new centralised bodies that bring together all the demands and methods of struggle. These working class bodies should then co-ordinate with students' organisations, small shopkeepers and poor farmers to forge the people's and workers' alliance, one that should stage a mighty general strike to press our demands.

farmers and ruined shopkeepers. The state monopoly on foreign trade must be brought in to prevent the bosses from manoeuvring with cash flows.

Such are the elementary measures of an emergency plan of workers and the people, one that should be democratically voted for by them, thus doing away with the anarchy of capitalist production. All of this would be a genuinely progressive solution for the majority of people that ousted De la Rúa from the government.

In the fight for their demands the workers, as the dramatic events in these days have once again shown, will come up against the repressive forces of the capitalist state. First, we should demand the release of all those jailed for fighting, and in the name of the 31 brothers and sisters killed, we should demand the police and the repressive forces be disbanded. We must build self-defence pickets that lead to the setting up of a workers' militia.

has made clear that such a way out of the crisis will not be delivered by the ruling cliques. Just to open the road to this kind of democracy it is necessary to sweep away the current regime with a general strike and with a great national uprising that finishes the task begun during the revolutionary days of December 19 and 20.

The fight for a Constituent Assembly might thus trigger the mobilisation of wider mass layers, opening up the way for the only real solution: a socialist workers' revolution, ushering in a workers' and people's government to initiate the transition to socialism.

Stuart McKee of the LRCI examines the prospects for Duhalde's government

## Can the bosses find a way out?



Duhalde: narrow support base

Eduardo Duhalde, the new President of Argentina, has been handed a poisoned chalice. He comes to power as the fifth president in a fortnight. Two of his predecessors, De la Rúa and Rodríguez Saa, were ousted by popular rebellions on the streets.

If Duhalde is not to suffer a similar fate he has to solve the immediate currency and banking crisis and offer the workers, professionals and middle classes some hope of an end to recession, unemployment and poverty. Duhalde is a leading member of the Peronist party. His base is in Buenos Aires, home to a quarter of Argentina's population, where he was governor for

eight years. Before that he was Carlos Menem's vice-president in the early 1990s, helping Menem introduce the first rounds of the neo-liberal experiment in Argentina.

Duhalde led the Peronists in their successful Congressional election campaign last October and was the defeated Presidential candidate in the 1999 elections, which De la Rúa won.

The new President's "election" by Congress couldn't have taken place in less auspicious circumstances. President Saa had been brought down by mass demonstrations against the continuing freeze on bank deposits and his appointment of particularly hated and corrupt officials to the cabinet.

Duhalde insisted that the Peronists and Congress abandon proposals for elections in three months time, demanding that he be appointed to carry out the rest of De la Rúa's term - two more years. The news of this and his appointment brought pot banging demonstrators out onto the streets again demanding immediate elections not backroom deals in the Congress, deals which have put into power the man the electorate had rejected two years before.

But Argentina's rulers from all parties rallied round, showing a bourgeois "united front" against the masses on the streets and their demands for democracy. The Radicals, Frepaso and the Peronists voted Duhalde in amid declarations of the need for a "national salvation government". They knew very well the danger posed by the revolutionary events of the past few weeks - it was a case of hanging together or maybe hanging separately. National unity became their rallying cry.

To enhance his populist image and appeal to the Peronists' mass base, Duhalde made a series of radical speeches, invoking Eva and Juan Peron. He blamed the economic bankruptcy on the US backed "free market model" which he said was "immoral".

He declared: "We need a new model now, one that will lead to the recuperation of national production, jobs, domestic markets and improved distribution of wealth." He promised to carry on with Saa's programme of jobs for the unemployed and an increase in the minimum wage. In a sign of things to come the large numbers of Peronists mobilised in his support clashed with the left in the streets around the Congress building during his election.

But for all his radical talk Duhalde is headed down a cul-de-sac. He has no money to pay for the concessions he is offering the workers and the middle class. Argentina has defaulted on its debt and its source of loans and bonds from abroad has dried up.

Devaluation of the overvalued peso, essential to re-establish the export sector as a source of revenue, will itself exacerbate the crisis. Eighty per cent of ordinary Argentines' loans and debt are denominated in dollars. Devaluing by a third will increase these debts by a similar amount forcing many businesses and individuals into bankruptcy. Mass defaults on debt will plunge the banking sector, already unable to honour existing dollar and peso accounts, into greater crisis.

Duhalde is desperately trying to find a way out of these problems. His administration is in urgent talks with the banks, with Mercosur - a trading bloc which includes Argentina's major trading partners in Latin America - and most importantly with Washington and the IMF.

He clearly hopes that the IMF and Bush will show a flexibility that they have refused so far and restore emergency loans without insisting on new austerity measures which could lead to further explosions on the streets and sweep him from office.

Duhalde's Presidency remains an unstable government of crisis. Already the government of "national unity" has evaporated with the Radicals keeping their distance and Duhalde having to fall back on Peronist bureaucrats from his own circle, like the new Foreign Minister Carlos Ruckauf and Economics Minister Jorge Lenicov.

This government has a narrow base and whole sections of the Argentine population consider it an illegitimate regime foisted on the people by a discredited and corrupt political caste. Its future will be decided on the streets and above all by whether the workers can be broken from their Peronist leaders who will provide the government with its main base of support in the coming weeks and months.

For more on Argentina go to [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com)



A statement by the International Secretariat of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International on the conflict between Pakistan and India over the disputed territory of Kashmir

## Kashmir: India and Pakistan prepare another dirty war

The preparations for war between India and Pakistan dramatically confirm that the United States' victory in Afghanistan has not stabilised the world political situation or finally ushered in the long predicted new world order.

Quite the reverse. It has increased the elements of disorder in international relations as other states now rush to claim the right to "fight terrorism" where and whenever it affects them.

If the unilateral bombing of terrorist training camps is the right of self-defence by the United States, after the attack on the twin towers, then why should this not be the case for India after Pakistani-based Islamists tried to gun down the members of the Indian parliament?

But the underlying reasons for the mounting tension between India and Pakistan go further than this. Both states are faced with the impact of globalisation which is destroying secure jobs for many workers as well as increasing the indebtedness of the small peasants and the urban petit-bourgeoisie. Today 450 million people in India are living below the poverty line. This is sharpening social instability throughout the country.

Globalisation has also increased the dependence of both these semi-colonial countries on the world economy, in terms of trade, foreign investment and foreign debt. The Pakistani government has to use half of its annual budget to repay foreign creditors.

Added to this is the mounting discredit of the political parties and the whole system in the eyes of the people. This led to considerable popular support for Musharraf's military coup d'état in Pakistan two years ago.

Bush's appeals to India and Pakistan to show "restraint" and "work together for peace" are the most brazen hypocrisy. Afghans - still being murdered by US-B52s and helicopter gunships - could ask what restraint the USA showed. In fact Bush is only interested in preserving his "alliance against terrorism". This could be blown sky high if there is a war between two of his key allies.

It is global capitalism - and the USA as the sole superpower - which is principally responsible for the growing tensions in the Indian sub-continent. It is the IMF, the World Bank and WTO who forced these countries to open up their home markets to the US corporations and to squeeze their populations to repay the foreign debt.

It is these multinationals who are taking over the choice cuts of the national economy and on whose backs a new elite has shamelessly enriched itself over the past decade. The advances of global capitalism have massively exacerbated the economic and political crisis on the Indian sub-continent.

The Pakistani ruling class is in a particularly severe crisis. After the disaster of its last military adventure around Kargil in Kashmir (1999) which precipitated the overthrow of Nawaz Sharif's government, Musharraf himself now faces now a similar foreign policy disaster. Only a few months ago the Pakistan military regime had a friendly government in neighbouring Afghanistan - the Taliban. Today forces close to its strategic enemies India and Russia, are controlling Kabul.

The Pakistani ruling class was always prepared to serve as a lackey for US imperialism. In the 1980s it did this by



Indian government has whipped up chauvinism against Pakistan

financing the reactionary Islamist forces against the Soviet-supported Afghan government. Today it is performing the same role by betraying the Taliban and selling it out to their masters in Washington. But imperialism has a cold heart: it does not pay for even the most servile loyalty any longer than is absolutely necessary to get what it wants.

Faced with the rumbling volcanoes of political and social upheaval the ruling classes of both India and Pakistan are whipping up chauvinism. The coalition government in India, headed by the reactionary Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has escalated the national oppression of the Muslim-majority in Indian Kashmir.

It has jumped at the opportunity given it by the Islamist attack on the Indian parliament to utilise the "war on terrorism" to force its regional enemy Pakistan into either a disastrous war or a humiliating climbdown.

Of course socialists condemn the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament. This did not serve the oppressed Kashmiri people's interests in any way and played straight into the hands of the BJP chauvinists. Along with the 11 September attacks it should be put into a text book on individual terrorism as a prime example of the way such actions rebound not only on their perpetrators but on the masses.

We do give critical support to those revolutionary and democratic petit-bourgeois forces which struggle for Kashmiri self-determination. But we also say that only the linking of the Kashmir national struggle with the struggles of the Pakistani and Indian workers and peasants against the ruling classes in both countries - as well as a socialist revolution against the capitalist system - can secure their rights.

Under massive pressure from India and US imperialism, Musharraf has submitted and cracked down on militant Kashmiri Islamist organisations - particularly Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad.

These organisations are reactionary petit-bourgeois forces with links to the notorious Pakistani security service (ISI) but they have some support in the Kashmiri population.

We have no political sympathy whatsoever for these forces, who are enemies of any authentic liberation of the Kashmiri people, but we oppose the present crackdown by the Pakistan regime. This state repression does not help the interests of the workers and peasants but rather strengthens the grip of the rulers against any kind of dissent and will help the Islamists to present themselves as "authentic defenders of the Kashmiri people".

But the national rights of the Kashmiris would not be the real issue in any war. The Pakistani and Indian military are concerned not with the rights of the Kashmir people but with the aggrandisement of their respective states. Any war, therefore - despite the Kashmir question being its ostensible cause - would have a reactionary character on both sides.

It would be a reactionary war between two equally reactionary ruling classes. The rulers of India and Pakistan are the direct enemies of their own people. A war between them would not be for the defence of the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people nor for the defence of Indian bourgeois democracy against a Pakistani dictatorship.

It would be a war for the defence of the power and luxury of the two bourgeois classes. It would be a war to enhance their regional status. The only real losers would be the impoverished masses on both sides: especially if the war-mad generals use their nuclear bombs when things were going badly for them.

The League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) calls on the workers and poor peasants in both countries to do all they can to stop their ruling classes from starting a bloody war.

We call for mass demonstrations, up to and including a general strike, to stop the impending war. Should war break out socialists should work in the ranks of the armies to undermine the will to continue the war and agitate against soldiers being used as cannon fodder for the ruling classes. Revolutionaries should say to the rank and file of the armies: you have the guns, you have the power to stop the war! Fraternise with your brothers in the "enemy" ranks and turn your guns against Musharraf and Vajpai!

Workers and peasants in Pakistan and India can stop the corrupt bloodsuckers and war-mad generals and political rulers. Kick them out!

While revolutionary socialists should critically support the actions of the petit-bourgeois peace movement that is campaigning against the war, there should be no political illusions in its strategy. While its actions reflect both moral courage and the best of intentions for many rank and file activists the PR-stunts, with no orientation to the class struggle, cannot stop a war.

The reformists like the Communist party of India (CPI and CPI-M) and the centrists like the Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP) continue their opportunist policy which has already helped imperialism in its reactionary war drive against Afghanistan. During the Afghanistan war they avoided a consistent break with the bourgeois order by refusing to mobilise for the defence of Afghanistan and the defeat of the imperialist powers.

Their neutral and pacifist stand in this important confrontation between the biggest imperialist superpower and the poorest semi-colony was criminal and - despite their intentions - actually helped the reactionary Islamist forces to present themselves as the only defenders of the Afghan people.

Today the LPP limits itself to pacifist appeals. But the CPI joins the chauvinist chorus about "our martyrs fallen against the intruders" when speaking about Indian soldiers who died in the clashes with Pakistani forces. The CPI-M acts as an adviser to the right-wing BJP government on how to punish "the terrorists" with the help of the "international community".

While socialists in both countries must oppose the war the struggle of the Kashmiri people for their right for national self-determination continues to deserve our fullest support. The LRCI therefore calls for:

- The immediate and total withdrawal of all Indian and Pakistan forces from Kashmir.
- The right of national self-determination for the people of Kashmir including the right to form an independent state, or to fuse with Pakistan.
- For the election of a sovereign constituent assembly to decide on the future of Kashmir.
- For the release of all the political prisoners of the Kashmir struggle.
- For the right to return to their homes of all Kashmiris driven out by terrorist attacks or attacks by the Indian or Pakistani security forces.
- For working class power in India, Pakistan and Kashmir.
- For a socialist federation of south Asia.

LRCI International Secretariat,  
2 January 2002



# How Israel helps settlers steal Palestinian land

Among the many reasons for the start of the second Palestinian intifada in September 2000, the massive expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza must count as the most important.

The 1993 Oslo Accords signed by the PLO and Israel were meant to reconcile Palestinian aspirations for self-determination and statehood and the existence of Israel. In fact, an aggressive policy of settlement expansion and consolidation took place over the following seven years. More Arab land was taken over and more Palestinian homes were bulldozed, more exclusively Jewish roads were built through Palestinian areas and more natural resources, such as water, were seized for the exclusive use of settlers.

In addition the existence of more and more settlers led to more and more restrictions being placed on the movement of Palestinians in adjacent areas. Incidents of provocative and violent actions by Jewish settlers towards their Arab "neighbours" increased throughout this period.

At the same time the areas placed under the full or partial control of the new Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank and Gaza strip were small, isolated and cut off from Jerusalem, a political and cultural centre for Palestinians.

When Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin shook hands on the White House lawn in September 1993 there were about 115,000 Jewish settlers in West Bank and Gaza. By the time of the second intifada seven years later there were more than 200,000 of them. Reports suggest another 1,500 families (17,000 people) have been added to this total during 2001, more than the 400 settler families that have moved back to Israel under the impact of the intifada.

The 145 settlements and their adjoining territory now cover large parts of the West Bank. Currently 59 per cent of the West Bank is officially under Israeli civil and security control. Another 23 per cent of it is under Palestinian civil control, but Israeli security control. The remainder of the territory is governed by the Palestinian National Authority.

Gaza, one of the most densely populated tracts of land in the world, is home to 1,178,000 Palestinians, 33 per cent of whom live in United Nations-funded refugee camps.

Gaza is also home to 6,900 Jewish settlers. Yet the Israeli-controlled areas and settlements take up about 40 per cent of Gaza's land. Israel controls all external borders, crossing points and major roads in Gaza.

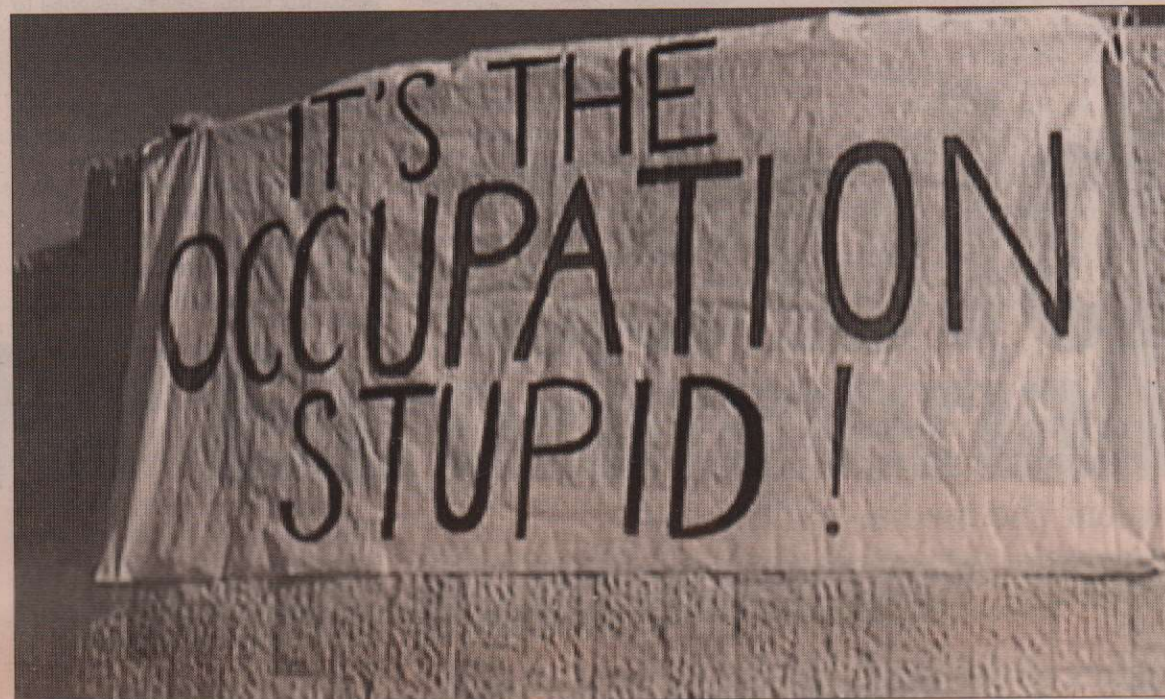
This has all happened despite the "peace process", despite the fact that UN resolutions call for the withdrawal of Israel from areas occupied in 1967 and that settlements are against international law and formally opposed by virtually all other governments, including the US administration and the European Union.

Most recently, a US-backed fact finding committee led by former US Senator George Mitchell set up to consider the causes of the intifada recommended in May 2001 that the Israeli government freeze all settlement activity, including the natural growth of existing settlements because of their provocative character and oppressive results.

The massive and accelerated expansion of the settlements is no accident

One of the key planks of the Oslo accords was the cessation by Israel of building on Palestinian land. Since the accords, however, building and settlement have proceeded unchecked.

**Mark Abram** argues that the sure way to stop continuing settlement is for an international campaign of opposition



## "It doesn't work. It can't work."

"The other day I drove south from Jerusalem towards Hebron. David Ben Gurion must have flown over this stretch of land in 1967, but many of the rocky, open hillsides he saw have disappeared under new Israeli settlements.

Instead there are row after row of concrete houses with red-tiled roofs - suburban sprawl comes to the Holy Land. Solar panels glint in the sun. Volvo estate wagons - the quintessential settlers' car - stand in the forecourts.

Even the road was new. It skirted round Palestinian areas and linked the settlements to each other and to Jerusalem.

Palestinian drivers usually get turned back at the Israeli road-blocks. It adds to the passionate bitterness on the Palestinian side, worse than anything I can remember in 20 years of reporting here.

There, people aren't so afraid of the Israelis any more. As Israel has swung back and forth between conciliation and toughness, it has made a classic error.

First it gave the Palestinians limited self-government and weapons to defend themselves with, and then tried to clamp down on them again. It doesn't work. It can't work."

John Simpson BBC World Affairs Editor June 2001

but rather was deliberately left out of reach of the Oslo process by Israel. When he presented the Oslo 2 accords before the Knesset on October 5, 1995, the then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stated, "I wish to remind you, we made a commitment, meaning we reached an agreement, we made a commitment to the Knesset not to uproot any settlement in the framework of the Interim Agreement, nor to freeze construction and natural growth."

Although the PNA insists that under the agreement Israel was not to facilitate the building of any more Jewish settlements in the occupied territories in fact their fate was left to "final status" negotiations to be conducted at a later stage. The fact that Arafat agreed to this is just one of the many fatal flaws in the Oslo agreement.

The two major Zionist parties are agreed in practice on settlement expansion because Jewish immigration is at the heart of the Zionist state. Ever since it was established by force of arms in 1947-48 Israel has only been able to sustain its colonial project by drawing in a constant supply of Jews from around the world; hence the right of all Jews to become citizens of Israel (while all Palestinians expelled from their land to make

room for them have no such right).

But Israel itself offers only limited opportunities to satisfy the aspirations of the immigrants. In order to prevent the break-up of the Zionist bloc into fractious classes and warring ethnic groups, the state promotes settlements as a way of forestalling civil discontent. Jewish settlers are given privileges at the expense of the Palestinians.

Under the Labour government of Peres and Rabin up to 1996 there was a 43 per cent increase. When Likud were in office between 1996 and 1998 the process continued. Prime Minister Netanyahu lifted curbs on expansion of Jewish settlements, saying that it was meeting their needs for natural growth. This gave rise to a burst of illegal settlements over the next two years as settlers established over 42 unofficial settlements, less than ten of which were subsequently dismantled.

Netanyahu made over \$200 million available to make it more financially attractive for Israelis to move to the settlements. Settlers pay less income tax, and business people receive grants equal to at least 20 percent of their investments.

Netanyahu also accelerated the

legalised theft of Arab homes and land in East Jerusalem and the expansion of settlements there as a way of creating facts on the ground and thereby undermining the "final status" discussions on the future of Jerusalem.

Although both Labour and Likud have promoted settlement expansion Likud is more openly in favour of them, since its electoral base lies, in part, among the many thousands of recent immigrants from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union who are induced to move into the Occupied Territories due to the lack of available work inside Israel itself.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, a staunch supporter of the settlers for decades, has said Jewish settlements will expand to accommodate "natural population growth".

More than 6,000 houses have government approval or are already under construction in the West Bank and Gaza, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics. However, US and Israeli human rights investigators have found that there are more than 3,000 empty housing units already in the settlements, more than enough for "natural growth" for years ahead.

Since Sharon came to office, 15

informal outposts have sprung up near established settlements. Many of these are made up of religious zealots (many from the USA) who see themselves as front line Zionist warriors "claiming back" biblical land that they believe was "stolen" from Jews thousands of years ago and who will not be happy until all Palestinians on "their" land are pushed out.

It is no surprise then that settlers and settlements have come to be seen as legitimate targets for many Palestinians during the intifada. While officially Fatah, and the PLO more generally, does not target settlers, but rather Israeli Defence Forces, Hamas and Islamic Jihad have seen them as the front line Zionist occupation forces; indeed, many of the settlers are armed to the teeth and have killed a dozen Palestinians on surrounding Arab farms during the intifada.

Hamas has ambushed settlers on the roads to and from work and school. Twenty of the 85 Israelis killed in the uprising were settlers. In recent months the Islamic guerrillas have been able to launch raids on settlements themselves, even penetrating their security fences and killing some settlers. More recently Fatah has co-operated in attacks on the settlers.

Marwan Barghouti leader of Fatah's Tanzim in the West Bank has said, "We have succeeded in making the lives of the settlers very difficult. Their settlements have become military bunkers rather than homes. Our message is simple: the Israeli people will not feel secure for as long as they continue to occupy our territory."

Revolutionary socialists believe there is an urgent need for armed defence of the Palestinians against the Jewish settlers. Suicide bomb attacks on civilians inside Israel are reactionary and counter-productive, not least because they set back the necessary attempt to promote a militant, democratic and socialist opposition to Zionism within the Jewish working class itself. There can be no justification for attacks on innocent civilians in this way. However, the settlers can and do make themselves legitimate targets because of the role they play in the Occupied Territories.

But an offensive campaign of action by small guerrilla units as the key way to defeat Zionist occupation forces is self-defeating. The military might of Israel and the general lack of self-defence organisations within the Palestinian towns and villages means that such actions inevitably prompt massive attacks on the Palestinian population.

Already a small majority inside Israel favour a freeze on settlement expansion as a price for peace; a smaller number want to see them reduced or removed entirely. International campaigns exist to try to boycott the goods produced in Jewish settlements and sold abroad as "Israeli goods". Many human rights activists regularly protest against land evictions and settlement construction.

A mass united movement involving Palestinian unions, community and human rights groups, that embraces strikes, demonstrations, land occupations and an international boycott should be built to force the dismantling of settlements.

Without a reversal of Israel's settlement policy Palestinian self-determination cannot become a reality and further intifadas are guaranteed.



Interwoven with the history of the anti-capitalist movement is the history of the black bloc. The black bloc first came to international prominence on 30 November 1999 at the protest against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle, USA, though its appearance on demonstrations earlier than then should be recognised.

According to the black bloc's own website: "A black bloc is a collection of anarchists and anarchist affinity groups that get together for a particular protest action. The flavour of the black bloc changes from action to action, but the main goals are to provide solidarity in the face of a repressive police state and to convey an anarchist critique of whatever is being protested that day. Some people are under the mistaken impression that one can join the 'black bloc organisation'. There is no standing black bloc organisation between protests ... You can think of the black bloc as just a temporary collection of anarchists that represent a contingent in a protest march."

The black bloc's distinctiveness is that all the participants dress in black and mask up to conceal their identity from the police and to facilitate attacks on the police lines and property - usually banks, McDonalds, Starbucks and Nike.

The black bloc never participates in wider organising or mobilising committees. It wasn't involved in INPEG for the Prague S26 action, nor in the Gothenburg Globalisation from Below collective last summer, nor in the Genoa Social Forum. By absenting itself from these wider forums, it retains the freedom to do exactly what it wants, without being accountable to any wider campaigns or forces.

For 18 months after Seattle the capitalists and their international organisations like the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Federation and the WTO felt under siege. They could not meet or conclude their gatherings without being attacked. The Seattle meeting of the WTO was abandoned, the World Bank/IMF meeting in Prague, September 2000 was also cut short. Fear led to cancellations of or massive fences being erected around the meetings of rich and powerful.

The media presented all of this as the result of the black bloc. This was wide of the mark, though clearly the black bloc played an important role in these battles. But the coverage meant that the black bloc attracted some of the most militant anti-capitalist youth. As an anonymous contributor to *On Fire*, a recent publication of eyewitness accounts from Genoa, many of which are written by members of the black bloc, says:

"One of the best things had been simply spending five days in Genoa living politics, meeting people, Discussing ideas, just being there, smelling the tear-gas, feeling the adrenalin, watching the banks burn, being part of a militant and huge gathering ... and lastly a feeling that we are at the centre of what is rising, not at the fringe of what is dying."

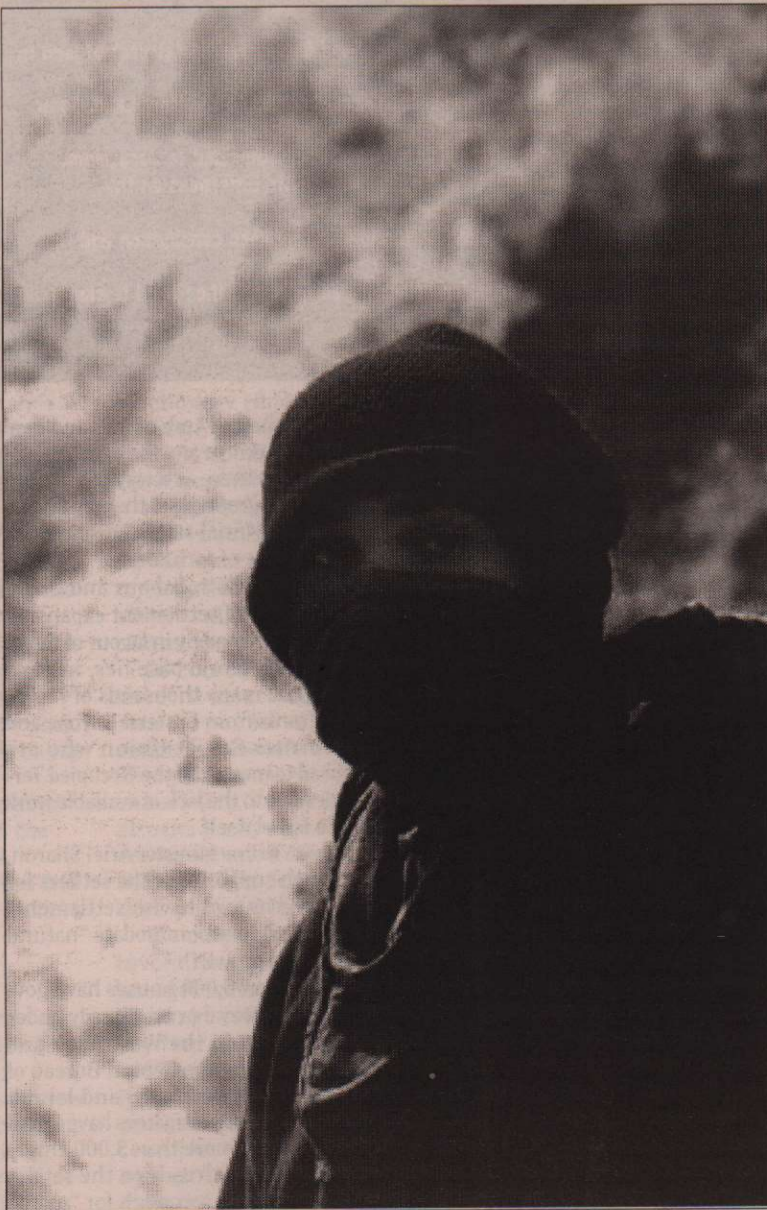
Of course, not only those in the black bloc have felt these emotions. Nor was the black bloc alone in inspiring fear among the capitalists, taking on the police and attacking palaces where the globalisers gathered. Many thousands of reds (trade unionists, socialists, Trotskyists and communists), whites (Ya Basta, Wombles) and pinks (Reclaim the Streets, Peoples Global Action) have also heroically fought the police, torn down fences and liberated fellow protesters.

At two of the most successful offensive demonstrations against global capitalism the black bloc were largely absent. In Melbourne, September 2000, two days of vicious street fighting led by the organised ranks of militant trade unionists led to the successful surrounding of the WTF's conference centre - only a third of the delegates got in, and they had to use helicopters!

And in Naples in March 2001, the white overalls successfully engaged the police in a mass confrontation. Nev-

# Black bloc blues

When anti-capitalist protests become violent the media, and the fluffy reformists, blame the anarchist "black bloc". They're wrong - but the elitism and tactics of the black bloc are a dead end, write *John Yorke and Jeremy Dewar*



ertheless, the capitalist media and police have chosen to present the black bloc as the "dangerous" wing of the anti-capitalist movement, and the black bloc has grown as a result of this notoriety.

The price for its success has been that the state has wised up. Sometime early last year an international meeting of police forces met to hammer out a counter-strategy for the anti-capitalist movement. Aiming to drive a wedge between the reformist, "respectable" wing of the movement (ATTAC in Europe, Global Exchange in the USA) and its more militant activists, the state upped the ante with increased repression.

Looking back at the major anti-capitalist demonstrations of last year from May Day, through Gothenburg to Genoa, a pattern emerges.

First, each event is preceded by ever more fanciful and blood-curdling descriptions of what a hard-core minority of the anti-capitalist movement is preparing to do. This is designed to frighten many people off the streets and soften up the public for severe repression.

Next, convergence centres are busted up, demonstrators surrounded for hours using the notorious Section 60 law in Britain and its equivalents abroad. Then tear gas and bullets are used - in Gothenburg at least three protesters were shot by the Swedish police, and in Genoa Carlo Giuliani was shot dead by Carabinieri officers.

Part of this strategy has also been police infiltration of the black bloc. Both in Gothenburg and Genoa people dressed as black bloc members were seen planning tactics with the police and later arresting protesters.

All this has forced the black bloc to debate the way forward. Indeed, it was noticeable in Brussels last month that the black bloc did not attack the police nor destroy property on a significant scale. What is at the root of the black bloc's dilemma?

Although the black bloc does not have a unifying ideology and is made up of disparate forces, they all agree that violence against capitalist property and the state is key to changing the world.

John Zerzan, the leader of the Eugene anarchists based in Oregon, USA, is one of the most extreme proponents of "trashing". He believes that technology inevitably, and regardless of the social system under which it is used, is the cause of alienation. Therefore the destruction of all property - even workers' personal property - is necessary for human liberation. Only a return to hunter-and-gatherer society can restore humanity to a state where it is at one with itself and the natural world.

This reactionary theory would of course mean the (voluntary?) reduction of the world's population to, at most, several million and lay humans open to the ravages of nature and the idiocy of isolated existence.

However, Zerzan represents only a tiny minority of opinion within the black bloc even in America, let alone Europe. More representative is the view articulated by the ACME Collective who organised for the Seattle demonstrations:

"When we smash a window, we aim to destroy the thin veneer of legitimacy that surrounds property rights. At the same time, we exorcise that set of violent and destructive social relationships which has been imbued in almost everything around us. By 'destroying' private property, we convert its limited exchange value into an expanded use value ... After N30 [Seattle 1999], many people will not see a shop window or a hammer in the same way again. The potential uses of an entire cityscape have increased a thousand-fold. The number of broken windows pales in comparison to the number of broken spells - spells cast by a corporate hegemony to lull us into forgetfulness of all the violence committed in the name of private property rights and of all of the potential of a society without them. Broken windows can be

boarded up (with yet more waste of our forests) and eventually replaced, but the shattering of assumptions will hopefully persist for some time to come." (December 1999)

The problem with this analysis is that it assumes that the capitalist state will do no more than mend broken windows - and it assumes that the "spell" of broken windows will rouse the masses to action. Neither is the case.

The state will launch a propaganda offensive against the demonstrators, it will increase its surveillance and repression, infiltrate, disorganise and divide the movement and incarcerate its leading activists.

As for the masses they will remain at best indifferent and at worse hostile, to bouts of rioting that bring them no material gains whatsoever. Broken windows cast no spells. Magic is not a revolutionary weapon!

The state can get away with repression against a minority that is isolated from the masses - and in the case of the black bloc keeps itself isolated in a sectarian fashion from the masses for and indeed from any campaign or united front - because time and again it works!

The Black Panthers inspired several generations of class fighters to challenge the capitalist state, but their movement was isolated and then crushed mercilessly. The same fate has befallen many would-be self selected elites committed to violence as a strategy.

In certain situations rioting can lead to a real paralysis of the capitalist state and an empowering of thousands and millions of people. The recent events in Argentina have revealed that. But these situations are when the masses of people are taking to the streets, refusing to accept the rule of the bosses and demanding real and immediate changes; when the capitalists are divided among themselves and unable to carry on with yesterday's methods of ruling and fooling the people.

Rioting, in the context of revolutionary situations, forms part of a generalised struggle against the ruling class. Outside of such a context it has no magical ability to bring down the bosses and their state. It is not a strategy for making the revolution, as the black bloc think.

The black bloc believe they can, by their own actions alone, create such situations. They think they can shock the masses into seeing beyond the surface and breaking the "thin veneer of legitimacy that surrounds private property rights".

But capitalism is not reliant on a thin veneer. It has survived because it is remarkably adept at dividing the oppressed, at providing enough crumbs from the bosses' table to keep key sections of the working class content, at changing its method of accumulation so as to prolong its regime of profit.

The masses cannot be shocked or stirred into revolution by the actions of a handful of trashers. Worse, they will frequently regard such people as their enemies, especially if every demonstration is seen as - and turned into - an occasion for violence. And they would be right. For there is nothing inherently wrong about a peaceful demonstration - as the recent mass anti-war demos in Italy and Britain showed. Violence is not the only - and is often not the best - way to mobilise people to fight for change.

That is why revolutionary politics involves a series of tactics aimed at winning reformist workers to revolutionary action: the united front with reformist organisations, organising rank and file trade unionists against their leaders, building picket and demonstration defence guards, fighting for workers' control over the means of production and, crucially, constructing a new international party of workers' revolution.

So long as the black bloc reject this range of tactics they will be ever more isolated, their actions ever less effective and they will slump from short-lived fame to relative obscurity.



# 150,000 march on Brussels

Alison Hudson reports on a demo that brought workers from across Europe onto the streets of Belgium

On Thursday 13 December 120,000 workers descended on Brussels – the capital of the European Union.

Called by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Belgian trade union confederation around the weak slogan, "Europe is US", they marched in huge contingents from the Place Bockstael to the Heysel stadium.

There was a mass turnout by the French union federations the CFDT and, even more, the CGT – as well as the smaller federations SUD and FO.

The big battalions came from Belgium and France. Germany sent sizeable groups, dominated by IG Metal. Portugal too sent a large delegation and there were small but lively contingents from as far away as Italy, Greece and Poland (both Solidarnosc and NPZZ).

However the British official labour movement disgraced itself once again. The "once mighty" British TUC were represented by a couple of dozen bureaucrats!

The most lively and militant contingents were those who had recently been or were in struggle. The Belgian Sabena airline workers were at the front of the march and were present next day too after the vast majority of the other trade unionists had been bussed home by their leaders.

There were detachments from the railworkers of the CGT-Cheminots and SUDRail burning their signal-flares. There were workers from Moulinex, Danone, Air France, and other groups who have fought closures, mass redundancies or privatisation.

But the speeches of the ETUC leaders were vacuous. There were no calls to action despite the fact that Europe's workers are facing massive job cuts and a deepening recession. When whole industries face lay-offs or shutdown, when airline workers in Sabena and Swissair face the chop there is plainly a need for Europe-wide co-ordinated strike action in their support.

As in Nice last year the demo was

called one day before the EU leaders turned up. The Belgian union leaders gave as their reason that they did not want the workers to mix with the "throwers of cobblestones". Their aim was to bus (or train) their members in for a nice short demo and then quickly get them away again. As in Nice, a year ago, they largely succeeded.

But reports of the death of the anti-capitalist movement are not merely exaggerated but outright lies. At least 25,000 people – braving sub-zero temperatures – packed the streets of Brussels on 14 December to prove this. This was five times the number on the anti-capitalist demo in Nice a year ago.

Members of the League for a Revolutionary International and REVOLUTION from Austria, Britain, France, Germany and Sweden made up a lively contingent, chanting anti-capitalist, anti-war slogans all the way.

The demonstration was called under the woolly ATTAC-USFI style slogan "Another Europe For Another World".

But the slogans of most of the demonstrators were much more militant, more anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist.

They condemned capitalist globalisation, and the racist scapegoating of immigrants in "Fortress Europe"; they condemned the "war against terrorism"; they proclaimed their solidarity with the Palestinians against Sharon and his backer Bush.

The demonstration was led by a large bloc from ATTAC and from the more radical NGOs like the Belgian Oxfam. There were contingents from ecologists and students organisations.

It must be said that the Black Bloc – on the march at least – was self-disciplined. Only a few "symbols of property" were trashed – one or two bank windows and an empty police garage. No local shops, passers-by or other demonstrators suffered attack or harassment.

True, a short confrontation occurred with the riot police after the march had got back to the convergence centre – some people were arrested and then

released. But compared to Genoa and Gothenburg it was all very peaceful. This was clearly a triumph for ATTAC, which had organised teams of "peace keepers" along the route of the march.

A price had to be paid for this "order". The march did not attempt to approach the palace where the EU leaders were gathered – this had been explicitly ruled out by the police. The result was that the two huge, peaceful demonstrations of D13 and D14 got the usual reward – they were completely ignored by the media.

More than 150,000 demonstrators didn't merit any coverage compared with fifteen leaders in a royal palace agreeing to initiate "a Europe-wide discussion on the future of Europe amongst its citizens". Clearly only the silent majority need apply to take part!

But the march was a real success. It showed that the anti-capitalist movement has not faded away – indeed it has become more anti-imperialist in its objectives, thanks to the anti-war mobilisations.

## Now for Euro-imperialism?

**Three hundred million people are in the process of abandoning their national currencies and adopting a new one. By the end of January it will be all over bar the shouting, writes Frank Kellermann.**

The Euro has arrived – and no amount of scare stories from the Sun and the Daily Mail can hide the fact that, from the Euro-bosses' point of view, it's a massive success.

But in Britain it's a different story. The right wing opponents of the Euro are setting the agenda: "saving the pound" is about the only issue on which the Tories can still get a hearing among working class people.

There are two parts to Tory euroscepticism: symbolism and self-interest. When they talk about Sterling "symbolising Britain's greatness" they are kidding themselves.

Sterling was a world currency in the 19th century, when Britain had no major rivals for world domination. But the real fuss about the "Sterling area" took place during Britain's long decline as an imperial power in the first 45 years of the 20th century, when Britain could not – and the USA would not – assume the role of the leading imperialist power.

Sterling was kicked from pillar to post by the USA in the post-war period and then devalued by Harold Wilson's Labour government. Sterling's "greatness" will only come back if you are prepared to accept wooden ships and steam trains with it.

In fact, adopting the pound as a symbol of right-wing politics is symbolic mainly of the bankruptcy of Toryism faced with globalisation. In one respect the Tory position is a triumph of ideology over class interest – a fact that has gone a long way towards making Blair's New Labour a more natural party of bourgeois government for those who run Britain's big businesses.

But there is a rational element of ruling class self interest involved in Euroscepticism. It is couched in terms of "controlling our own economy". But, since many British firms are owned partly or wholly by American, Japanese, German and French bosses, you have to look

at the wider context to understand this. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 laid the basis for the Euro. It involved crucially giving up economic control of monetary policy – which sets interest rates and inflation targets – completely. It also involves strict limits on the amount governments can spend and borrow: 60 per cent and 3 per cent of GDP respectively, with stiff penalties for those who break the rules.

The Euro-bosses have been willing to do this because, with the emergence of the single market in the 1980s, the currencies were converging anyway around the strongest one, the German D-Mark. What they lose in terms of control, the core imperialist countries gain back again at the level of Eurozone economic policy. The Maastricht Treaty was a profoundly neo-liberal document: advocating and requiring the systematic break up of nationalised industries and "national" economic policies and making the European Central Bank attack inflation as single-mindedly, if necessary, as Maggie Thatcher in the 1980s.

Britain's bosses are divided about the benefits of this. Manufacturers and bankers are generally in favour; but those who make money out of the big "service" sectors – everything from hospital cleaning to private railways – have tended to oppose the Euro.

Because of its neo-liberal strictures, socialists oppose the Maastricht Treaty. A socialist government would certainly not have signed it. However we also oppose as utopian the little England (and even overtly pro-American) economic stance of Maastricht's right wing opponents.

However, since 1992 a majority has emerged in the labour movement in favour of the Euro: most union leaderships back the Euro – and all wings of the cabinet now say they are in favour in principle.

Why has the Euro conquered the hearts and minds of the reformist leaders? Quite simply because of the compromises forced out of the European ruling class in practice during the creation of Economic and Monetary Union. The unwritten deal is this: the bosses will



Blair and Chirac: Euro founded on neo-liberal economic policies

privatise what's left of the state sector – or deregulate it. But they will protect jobs where possible and at all times work through "social partnership" – with works councils and consultation the order of the day.

The Maastricht Treaty also had a "social chapter". No guarantee, certainly, of any actual social gains but an outline of a general stance in favour of welfare and social inclusion that marks the Euro-capitalists out from those in the USA and Japan.

Of course partnership and consultation have in practice worked to weaken working class independent forms of organisation – and in countries where the far right is growing, the collusion of the official workers' movement with the

bosses' Euro project, in all its undemocratic labour aristocratic glory, has been a factor in alienating a section of the working class.

So far, the Euro-project has not had to deal with a recession. If it does it will cause cracks and fissures in the Euro ruling classes. A regime designed to bear down on inflation is not needed when deflation threatens. But if you want to boost the economy rather than damp it down, you have to have a struggle over who gets what.

Marxists' attitude to the Euro starts from our goal of a Socialist United States of Europe. So why don't we just advocate accepting the Euro as a step along the way? In the first place because the Euro does not unite "Europe" – only the

western, imperialist half of it. Secondly, because it has been built on an overtly anti-working class treaty, which is an obstacle to state ownership, high public spending and working class self-organisation. Thirdly because the Euro project is a far sighted political project by the centre-left of the bourgeoisie to create a pan-European imperialism.

But socialists won't join or take part in a campaign against the Euro based on nationalism or economic isolation. The argument that "to get socialism we need control of the economy" is correct: but the economy in Britain is part of the European economy. The socialist transformation of Britain in isolation from Europe is 10 times more an illusion today than it was in the 1950s and 60s, when most of the left were anti-EU.

So now the Euro is a reality, and New Labour is getting ready for a "yes" campaign, what should socialists say? Our position is that if the bosses want a single currency we will fight to make sure it is not adopted at our expense. In a straight yes or no vote in a referendum we would argue for workers to abstain. But we would use the run up to the Euro-referendum to campaign for a socialist Euro action programme in the Eurozone. Around the 2004 Inter-Governmental Conference, which is set to lash up an undemocratic quasi-constitution for the EU, we will argue for a Euro-wide constituent assembly with the Euro-governmental bodies accountable only to elected representatives.

The Euro means there is a pressing need for a pan-European labour movement organisation. The European TUC has done nothing as jobs have been slashed: it is addicted to "social partnership" at the expense of the working class living standards. We need a militant pan European Labour movement.

For millions of young people and progressive people in mainland Europe, the Euro symbolises, however vaguely, the idea of internationalism and progress. But as the months drag on after the Euro-launch, as recession deepens, the shine will come off the new money. When you've got no money, it doesn't matter whether it's a Euro a yen a dollar or a pound.



**workers  
power**

**Renationalise the railways!  
Support the rail strikes!**

# Bosses to blame for railway crisis

**C**ommuter anguish; rail chaos; passengers punished... This rubbish poured out of the media during the South West Trains (SWT) strike that opened the New Year.

Never mind that the privatisation of British Rail and its break up have caused mayhem, death, delays on a daily basis and real anguish for millions. A strike by rail workers was used to whip up anti-union hostility and divert attention from the strategic problem at the heart of Britain's transport system - that trains now run for profit instead of as a service to meet people's needs.

The strike by SWT workers is one that should be supported across the labour movement. The two day strike is set to be followed with a further series of two day actions. The dispute is over two related issues: first the company's refusal to pay non-drivers a living wage. Drivers have been offered a 7.6 per cent rise, but non-drivers only 3.8 per cent; second the company's abuse of disciplinary procedures and its victimisation of staff.

Greg Tucker, formerly a driver, was demoted to ticket checker - with a huge cut in pay from £33,000 pa to £15,000 - because the company found him guilty of driving at 96 mph for a few seconds in a 90mph zone. This was a minor offence and would normally warrant a warning.

The company went much further. The reason? Greg is a leading union activist, has a long record of fighting the management and was a prominent candidate for the Socialist Alliance in the last general election. In the election campaign he was repeatedly witch-hunted by London's *Evening Standard*. Quite simply,



Greg Tucker, victimised train driver, on strike

management were out to get him on whatever pretext they could.

Behind the immediate issues of the strike, however, lies the problem of a rail network in chaos. A recent report from John Curley, manager of Railtrack's Great Western zone, revealed that the system is in a worse state than before the Hatfield tragedy. He wrote that around 10 per cent of track is worn out and a further 30 per cent will become so in the immediate years ahead.

While Railtrack has now been effectively taken out of private hands by the government there is no sign that the money is available to carry out the necessary repairs to restore the system to safe working order. The administration process - enmeshed in skeins of capitalist legality as accountants and lawyers run up millions of pounds worth of fees - guarantees there can be no radical decisions or solutions on the railways.

And it is not just Railtrack that is failing. The train operating companies - like Connex South Eastern, which plans to get rid of toilets on trains and cram passengers in by making standing room only the norm - get a £1.2 billion annual subsidy. Yet according to the House of Commons transport select committee chair, Gwyneth Dunwoody, they are in as bad a state as Railtrack. She stated: "The train operating companies, in comparative terms, are failing as badly as Railtrack."

The problems caused by the track and operating companies are the real sources of passenger anguish. The workers defending themselves against cowboy managements are the ones who are fighting for a more efficient and safer railway.

The answer to this is simple. A railway designed to make transport easy across a country needs to be integrated and run as a service not a profit source. To get this it needs to be renationalised in its entirety with no compensation to the big shareholders.

The funds necessary to make the track safe and the trains comfortable must come from public investment. We can get this money by taxing the rich - the likes of Jonson Cox, sacked former boss at Railtrack who is still being paid £300,000 a year for his contribution towards the destruct of the rail network.

But old style nationalisation will not produce the network we need. So long as the workers who run the industry and the passengers who use it are excluded from decision making over timetables, hours worked, staff numbers needed, routes and so on, we will not get a rational network. But with a state run railway controlled by its workforce and its users we can.

And that is what we must fight for if we are to end the commuter anguish, chaos and punishment of passengers. The strikers at SWT, by standing up to a bullying management who are dividing and demoralising the workforce by victimisations and lousy pay offers, are doing a lot more to help get us such a system than the sad TV interviewers who hang around station platforms looking for an angry commuter to give them an anti-union soundbite.

- Support the SWT strike - reinstate Greg Tucker as a driver
- Renationalise the rail network under workers' and passengers' control.

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