

Afghanistan ● IMF ● Railways ● TGWU ● Free Satish!

# Socialist Appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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## New world order:

# WAR

# SLUMP

Oppose imperialist aggression!

Defend our rights, jobs and services



For workers internationalism



Fight for socialist policies

Eyewitness reports from  
**USA**  
and  
**Pakistan**

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 Pakistan-Afghan border. By Lal Khan, editor of the Pakistani  
 Marxist paper Jeddo Judh (Class Struggle)



# 'World will never be the same again'

**The tragic events in New York and Washington can only be described as a turning point in world history, which will have dramatic political, economic and military repercussions. "What is certain is that we have entered a new world", comments the Financial Times. "Nothing will be the same."**

**N**ot so long ago, capitalist commentators were saying that the world would avoid a slump. Not any more. Even before this outrage, the world economy was on the brink of a crisis. The Economist (25/8/01) had already announced "Welcome to the first global recession of the 21st century". The US economy, the dynamo of the global economy in the past period, has barely grown, with exports, imports and consumer spending turning downwards in recent months. Japan, the world's second biggest economy, is in recession. The events in America now threaten to tip the whole world over the edge into a deep slump.

Already the stock markets are in turmoil. According to the Financial Times, "This is now one of the worst bear markets in history. In early trading yesterday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average had fallen 31 per cent from its January 2000 peak, one of the worst 10 declines the US market has experienced since the first world war." Again it states: "US investors averted a headlong decline in equities, but the Dow Jones Industrial Average still recorded a 12.4 per cent decline over the week - the worst performance by the blue-chip index since 1933." (22/23 September). With over 50 million Americans owning shares, this will inevitably have a profound effect on the real economy. \$1.3 trillion was wiped off the value of shares on Wall Street, and economists like those at Deutsche Asset Management predict two million job losses in the next six months.

What an answer to all those who attempted to ridicule Marxism as "out of date". All those who kneeled down before the market economy as a solution to society's problems. Socialist Appeal has long ago argued that the laws of capitalism had not changed. There was no "end of history". What we are seeing now is a classical capitalist crisis of over-production as explained by Marx 150 years ago. The figures for "over investment" and "excess capacity" are

evidence of this. From computers to steel, the world market is facing a glut. Already an avalanche of redundancies has been announced across the board, and there is worse to come. Britain will not escape the economic devastation. On the contrary, the weakness of the British economy will be exposed and we will be asked to pay the bill.

We have entered a period of enormous instability on all fronts. It is characterised by wars and economic crises not seen since the inter-war period. In reality, the last 50 years has been an exception to the norm of capitalist development. The scene is being set for revolutionary upheavals throughout the world. Globalisation will mean global crisis and global conflagration.

The Blair government has slavishly followed the Bush administration, like some lapdog. They have chained themselves to an imperialist foreign policy that will intensify the contradictions worldwide. The imperialist powers are using the cover of a fight against terrorism to pursue gunboat diplomacy in an attempt to terrify the ex-colonial world into accepting their rule without question - or else.

At home, the "fight against terrorism" is being used to rush through legislation to curtail democratic rights. Increased state powers, including the introduction of identity cards, are being drawn up, which will be used against the labour movement in the future. The revelations of Stella Rimmington about M15's subversive activities against the labour and trade union movement are a warning of how the state will use its new found powers in the future.

The reactionary consequences of individual terrorism - always opposed by Marxists - mean their actions have played into the hands of the most reactionary sections of the ruling class. They have been used by the right wing to dampen criticism of the Blair's pro-market policies of privatisation etc. This is evident with the suspension of the TUC and the curtailment of the Labour Party conference. Typically, the

trade union leaders have run for cover, abandoning their weak opposition to Blairism at the first opportunity. But this will not last.

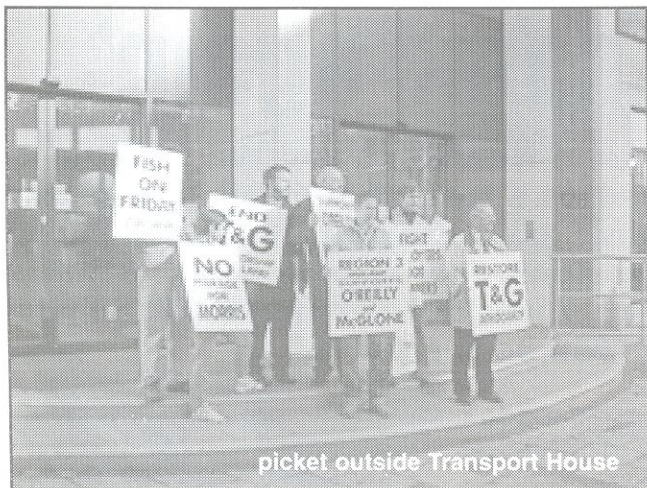
Even if temporarily they can hold back the opposition mood in the ranks, this cannot go on indefinitely. In fact the mood of discontent which already exists will combine with the impact of economic recession and the consequences of imperialist aggression abroad and inevitably break through with a vengeance. Events, events, events will create enormous turmoil within the working class and consequently within the mass organisations. There will be a massive rejection of pro-market policies and a search for a real solution to their problems.

Socialist Appeal has consistently fought against the right wing domination of the Labour Party and trade unions. We have explained that there is no solution to the problems of the working class on a capitalist basis. The new situation in Britain and internationally will forcefully underline this point. All that capitalism can offer is collapsing living standards, growing unemployment, economic crisis and war.

It is more urgent than ever to put forward the real socialist alternative to economic crisis and an internationalist opposition to imperialist war. Only by taking over the banks, insurance companies and the 150 major monopolies that dominate the economy can we break the stranglehold of big business over our lives. The greatest assistance we can give to the masses of Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere facing unendurable hardship and a new phase of imperialist aggression is to step up our struggle for socialism at home.

- Oppose Imperialist Aggression
- Defend Democratic Rights
- For Militant Action to Defend Jobs and Services
- For a Socialist Programme - Break with the anarchy of the market

# Stop TGWU witch-hunt



picket outside Transport House

T&GWU Executive members meeting at the union's Transport House HQ in Holborn, central London, this morning (Monday September 17) were greeted by a delegation of their own members from Belfast and Dublin protesting at the continued suspension of the Irish Regional Secretary and Regional Organiser. The two officials, Mick O'Reilly and Eugene McGlone have been suspended without any consultation. The delegation distributed a leaflet demanding O'Reilly and McGlone's immediate reinstatement. A considerable number of Executive members were prepared to support them. Before travelling back to Ireland, three of the protestors, Dawn Stuart and Flo Stevenson from Belfast and Des Bonass from Dublin spoke to us.

Flo, a Belfast pharmaceutical worker, began by telling us that the leadership of the union were playing into the hands of the bosses. "This is undermining everything we as a union are supposed to be doing in terms of defending people's employment rights. We wouldn't let employers get away with treating our members like this."

Dawn agreed, "we are here today to demand the immediate reinstatement of Mick O'Reilly and Eugene McGlone. Our union should be representing the interests of our members not attacking them."

Des from Dublin explained. "We were making big headway before this, membership was growing, there was healthy debate in the union in Ireland about the way forward, about the social contract and so on. This couldn't have come at a worse time. Now everything's on hold. The bosses must be laughing, they are envious of the disciplinary procedures they are seeing in our union. This will set back industrial relations - when they attack workers the bosses will just say 'well, that's the way you do it in your union.' Mick O'Reilly and Eugene McGlone have a lot of support amongst our members and if they are not reinstated there will be more demos and pickets."

Socialist Appeal calls on all trade unionists, especially T&GWU members to:-  
send letters of protest to

Bill Morris, General Secretary, Transport and General Workers Union, Transport House, 128 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8TN  
e-mail: [tgwu@tgwu.org.uk](mailto:tgwu@tgwu.org.uk)

## William Cook Dispute: Oppose Union Busting!

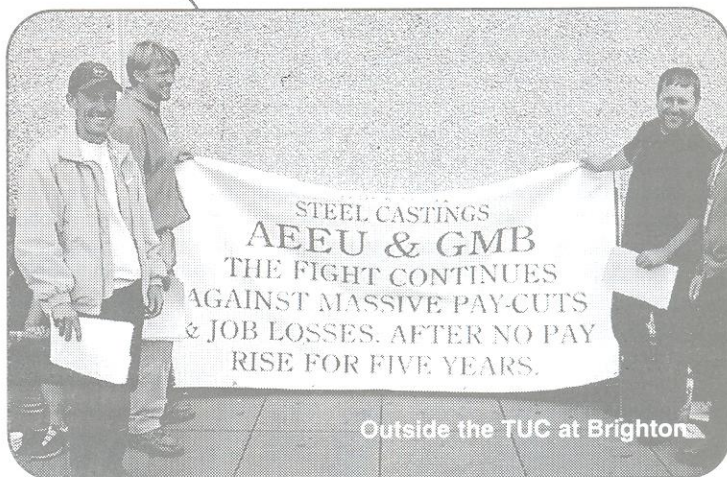
After five years of no pay rises and a pay-cut in August this year, we were asked to take a further pay-cut of £100 plus per week. For some men this was their third pay-cut in eighteen months!

We came out on strike because we wanted to continue working to our latest contract. We did not want to be forced into signing for £4.25 an hour, or give up our union rights.

After an official one-day stoppage on April 12th the management has prevented us from entering our place\* of employment. We voted 100% for strike action, and have now all been dismissed within our eight weeks protection period. The company has illegally employed people to take our jobs. We are now all unemployed. This should not be happening under the new labour employment laws. The AEEU along with the government must act now to stop this injustice.

After five months we need your support more than ever.

by the Wm Cook Strike Committee



Outside the TUC at Brighton

## JOINT MSF UNITY LEFT/AEEU UNITY GAZETTE NATIONAL RALLY

Saturday 13th October, 1PM to 4PM

at The Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham

Over the past few months, Sighthill has been the latest area, after Oldham and Burnley, to witness racially motivated violence. However, residents have turned out to protest against these attacks.

by Colin Rice

# Sighthill Unites Against Racism

**A**round 500 residents of the working class Sighthill estate in Glasgow marched through the city in protest at the racist murder of the Kurdish asylum seeker, Firsat Dag. Asylum seekers and refugees marched together with Sighthill residents and anti racists from all over Glasgow. Children marched at the front of the demonstration, holding placards, which read 'Asylum Seekers welcome here', and 'Against Poverty'. This was the first time that a demonstration had been called by working class people, who knew that the many problems that faced them -poverty, unemployment etc- were not the fault of asylum seekers, but of the Labour controlled council which has neglected the needs of Sighthill and other working class estates in Glasgow and instead has pursued pro-business policies.

There was a strong trade union presence, with Glasgow City Unison, the FBU and the GMB all represented. Bill Spiers of the STUC had urged trade unionists in Glasgow to show solidarity for the people of Sighthill, saying, "We call on working people across Glasgow and beyond to support the Sighthill residents in this initiative."

The march to the city centre started in the middle of Sighthill and held a minute's silence for Firsat Dag at the place of his murder. It ended with a rally outside the City Chambers. The reason for the protesters holding the rally outside the City Chambers could be found in the anger that residents of Sighthill felt against the Labour controlled city council. The Council has repeatedly refused to listen to the complaints and arguments of the residents about the poor quality housing, and lack of facilities on the estate. Norrie Gower, of the Fountainwell Tenants Association had commented earlier: 'The City Chambers will be closed on Saturday - but the City Chambers has been closed to us for 3 to 4 years.'

It was only after the murder of Firsat Dag in July that the Scottish First Minister, Henry Mcleish, asked the Scottish Executive to 'look at devolved aspects

relating to asylum seekers, like health, education and social services, to see if changes are needed'.

Outside the City Chambers, speeches were made by local community activists, anti-racist campaigners and Tommy Sheridan MSP. Messages of support were also passed on from, amongst others, the SNP leader John Swinney.

Aamer Anwar, a Glasgow lawyer and Human Rights Campaigner, made a powerful speech, attacking the Voucher System. Asylum Seekers are given vouchers instead of hard cash to buy food. Even then, the amount they are given is still 2/3rds that of benefits given to the unemployed. Mr Anwar saw this system as discriminatory and singled out Asylum Seekers, in much the same way as the way Jews in Nazi Germany were forced to wear a Star of David.

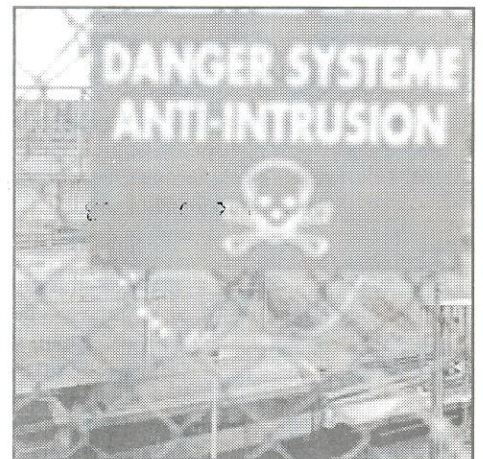
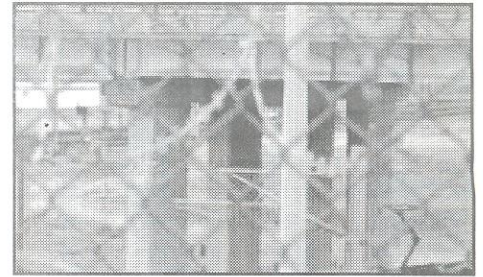
Other speakers raised the issue of the media's portrayal of asylum seekers. The *Daily Record*, a tabloid with the largest newspaper circulation in Scotland, was identified as one of the worst perpetrators of the 'scapegoating' of asylum seekers. This newspaper has claimed that Mr Dag had 'conned his way into Britain' and was not, in fact, an asylum seeker at all.

However, the real facts are that Mr Dag was a Kurdish Nationalist escaping the brutal regime in Turkey. It is quite probable that the attention his family in Turkey has received from journalists in Britain has put them at considerable risk.

Tommy Sheridan of the SSP was the final speaker. He spoke of the poverty and deprivation in Sighthill that has laid the foundations for racial tension to take place. However he was pleased at the way that Sighthill residents had united to show their 'complete rejection of racism'.

While these sentiments were reasonably well received by the demonstrators, it is a complete U-turn on the SSP's previous statements.

At the time of the racial tensions in Oldham and Burnley, the SSP had said that such similar events could not happen north of the border. It was 'unlikely'. The problems in the North East of England



were 'specific' to that area.

In reality in any place where poverty, high unemployment and social deprivation exists, racial tension can easily be whipped up. It is indeed under these conditions that racial hatred can fester and, as happened, explode with the murder of innocent people, who are fleeing persecution in their own country. In Oldham and Burnley, the perception amongst many working people was that the Asian community was being given more spending by the Labour council, while they were being ignored.

The right wing Labour leaders have failed to solve the problems of asylum seekers and refugees fleeing persecution. In Glasgow and other working class areas in Britain, their policies of privatisation of council services have led to a feeling of anger and bitterness amongst many people who vote Labour hoping they will improve their lives. Asylum seekers and refugees have been put up as easy targets of blame. The lack of leadership from the Labour Party and trade unions has played into the hands of the racists.

However, the people of Sighthill have shown that they are ready and willing to fight alongside asylum seekers in the fight for better conditions. The community leaders should be given full support for their demands and the campaign to defend asylum seekers should be raised in trade union branches throughout the country. ●

# seafarers face waves of injustice

**Dover is one of the busiest ports in Britain. Everyday ships of all sizes and types arrive and leave carrying passengers and freight to Europe and beyond. Ferry boats are often so numerous that they seem to be stacked up like buses waiting in a high street queue. Yet during the summer anyone watching this maritime procession would have eventually noticed that one ship was resolutely not going anywhere.**

by *Steve Jones*

**T**he cruiseship *Ocean Glory 1* was all set to take 600 holidaymakers on a week long cruise at the beginning of July when port authorities paid it a little visit. What they found so shocked them that the 51 year old ship was promptly impounded and prevented from sailing. As NUMAST, the union responsible for the professional and officer grades in the merchant navy (RMT organise the Ratings) subsequently reported, over 35 "deficiencies" on the ship were identified and called it "a tragedy waiting to happen."

The list was staggering: from poor hygiene in the galley up to faulty radio equipment. The staff were lacking in training and showed clear evidence of being unable to communicate in English with each other or the passengers. *Ocean Glory 1* had a troubled history already, even before this impounding. Its owners had switched the ships flag from Greece to Panama, a so-called flag of convenience, a month before hand. Other port authorities before Dover had also held the ship up for inspection in Greece and Portugal during its previous trip out, such was the concern over it.

Was this just a one off case or are there more 'coffin-ships' out on the high seas? For NUMAST and the other seafarer unions in Britain and around the world the answer is the latter. According to the annual report of the Paris Memorandum of Understanding, which covers port state control in 19 countries, the proportion of unseaworthy ships detained in ports has risen to 9.5% with the number of onboard deficiencies identified up by 12% on the previous year. At the NUMAST conference this year, national secretary Allan Graveson summed up the merchant sailors lot in a single sentence: Profits before safety. Sadly a life on the sea is just as cheap as it was a century ago. Long hours, poor safety standards, crews purchased on the cheap and more. These are the problems which exist and largely go unreported. Owners seem quite happy to underman their vessels, cut back on training and generally work their employees into the ground.

After all, if all else fails they can always claim on the insurance! Last year 24 ships were reported as being lost at sea, one - the *Leader L* - involved the loss of 19 lives.

The latest annual report from the head of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) only serves to confirm this finding. The report warns of a 'tragic reluctance' on the part of owners to deal with safety failings and clearly warns that the 'root cause of safety standards is the length that some shippers will go to make a profit.' The report lists a chilling catalogue of accidents during the last year: 621 involving ships and 631 involving people. Sadly, most of these have gone uninvestigated by the MAIB due to financial and staff constraints which the MAIB chief inspector, Rear Admiral John Lang called "a relentless drive" on cost cutting. Again we see the real regard with which safety is treated in the industry. In the modern world it is just as easy as it has ever been to avoid being caught out and brought to account.

## Piracy

The life of a seafarer remains a dangerous one. Even, believe it or not, piracy remains a serious problem. For most people the word piracy summons up images of 18th century buccaneers and a long ago world of eyepatches and cutlasses. But for those at sea today, especially in the seas of the Far East, piracy is most certainly not the stuff of fiction. According to the deputy director of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) attacks on ships have increased by 57% last year with a 220% increase in cases where crews were actually threatened. NUMAST have been campaigning on this question for some time, noting that the first half of this year has already seen over 150 incidents, involving the killing of 17 seafarers. Over the last 10 years this has added up to a total of 260 seafarers killed and 1850 held hostage. Piracy can vary from the boarding and robbing of ships at night without the crew being aware up to the armed hijacking of ships with violence. This frequently can involve the crew being abandoned in liferafts or just thrown overboard. Even the boarding of ships by people in official looking uniforms are often not what they seem. The levels of such incidents of piracy and armed robbery, in port and on the high seas, have risen from under 100 in the late 1980s up to the current level of just under 500, according to data from the IMB. Most attacks involve ships carrying cargo but be warned, attacks on passenger ferries now account for 1% of the total!

Needless to say the pirates can count on the cost cutting of the owners to help them out. NUMAST have warned that running ships with the



minimum manning levels possible means that watches and patrols will not always take place to the required degree. This situation must now be considered the

norm on the vast majority of ships at sea. All the maritime unions both here and around the world have long argued for measures to be taken to combat piracy. New technology can certainly help but needless to say few ship owners will invest in it.

The growing threat from piracy represents just one of most extreme examples of the life facing the modern day seafarer. The world of merchant shipping should be as safe as anything can be today. Modern ships should be able to withstand anything the elements throw at them and if the worst happens then it should be quite possible to save all the crew without loss. But unfortunately the need for profit cuts across that. This can involve small fishing ships setting out into dangerous seas in order to make ends meet. It can involve ancient rustbuckets carrying excessive cargoes on the cheap. It can even involve ships being deliberately sunk in order to claim on the insurance, usually with

the cargo being secretly removed beforehand.

The profits from merchant shipping remain massive. After all, how often do

you ever hear of the word 'magnate' not being preceded by the word 'shipping'. But it is wealth created on the backs of the crews who service and sail on these ships. Paid a pittance and often away from their families for months at a time, they are usually fated to be "out of sight, out of mind." Yet they need the solidarity of the labour and trade union movement just as much as their comrades on land. Unions such as NUMAST, the RMT and the other transport unions worldwide, together with bodies such as the International Transport Workers Federation, need to work together and take up a fighting programme which challenges the bosses and those who make millions on the backs of workers at sea. As is the case on land, ownership and control of the means of production and distribution remain extremely relevant to the fates of those who either sail the seven seas or just the few miles from Dover to Calais. >●

## Seafarers treated as second class

Andy Gordon, chairman of the Aberdeen RMT branch, and a union representative on P&O Scottish Ferries spoke to *Socialist Appeal*

### SA: What are the main problems facing seafarers?

AG: We in the shipping side have got inferior working rights straight across the board. For instance we don't have the protection of the EU working time directive. I work myself an 84 hour week, and there are people working a lot more than that. We get no holidays or annual leave, nothing like that. I condense a month's work into two weeks, in order to get two weeks off. This is a rest period and not holidays.

### SA: Has there been no improvement?

AG: This government has done nothing for us. They introduced a new tonnage tax, but it has not benefited one single RMT member. In fact, our jobs are in decline. Many jobs are at risk. For example, DSND Shipping served notices on our members saying they were out of

work, they were now going to employ cheaper Philippino workers. The Labour government has done nothing to help seamen. When I came to sea in 1977, there were some 80,000 seamen and now we are down to 20,000, and declining. I can't see no light from this Labour government.

### SA: How far have conditions deteriorated?

AG: Well, put it this way, twenty years ago I was working an eight hour day. Now I am working a twelve hour day. We have been exempt from laws protecting working conditions. We feel like second class citizens. My 12-hour day is a broken shift. That is to say I work from midnight to four in the morning, up again at quarter to seven in the morning and work until ten, then back again at midday until four in the afternoon. Then I'm on again at six o'clock.

And that's my pattern of work. Then when I get home I find it very difficult to get into a normal sleeping pattern. This is definitely detrimental to your health. You can really feel the effects of these long hours and broken shifts. Something must be done soon.

We are not superhuman.

### SA: This must explain the accidents that occur?

AG: Sure. It is unsafe. I'm expected to go on the bridge and keep a look out for other ships, to steer the ship in close waters, to land the vessel. How can I do this effectively if I'm absolutely shattered. All I can think of is how desperately I need my bed. Can you blame me?

*Andy Gordon spoke to Socialist Appeal in a personal capacity*

# Labour Party Conference: **Defend Jobs and Rights** **Oppose WAR**

**Tony Blair's speech to the TUC was billed as *The One Where Union Leaders Oppose Privatisation of Public Services.***

by **Phil Mitchinson**

It was due to be delivered on the afternoon of September 11. We all know the reason it didn't go ahead. Nonetheless the text was distributed in written form - so we can't say we haven't been warned. The events in the US have dramatically changed everything, but even from this speech we get an idea of the attacks already planned before the terrorists struck, and the world's stockmarkets collapsed.

Four and a half years into a Labour government Blair should have been getting an ovation for all the Labour administration has done in the interests of working people. Instead because the Labour government has stuck to the market and pro-big business policies, he would have faced vocal opposition from union delegates and union leaders feeling the pressure of their members bitterly disappointed by Blair's record and aghast at the latest proposals for yet more privatisation.

The debate thus postponed should have been carried over into a very lively Labour Party conference. Instead it seems behind the din of 'war preparations' Millbank officials have 'done deals' with the union leaders to prevent opposition from surfacing.

This is an outrage. The TUC is cut short and now the party conference too. There is no chance of the bosses putting their attacks on us on hold, the privatisation of the tube isn't being delayed, thousands of workers continue to lose their jobs. Hundreds of thousands more will be facing the axe in the coming months.

There is much talk about 'defending democracy'. Inside the labour movement it seems democracy can just be turned off like a tap. The 'democratic' right of the

bosses to hire and fire remains, however. As the economy dips into recession and quite possibly severe slump, city economists are predicting half a million jobs will be destroyed in Britain by next Spring. Now more than ever, both in relation to war and slump, the labour movement needs to decide on a plan of action to defend public services and jobs.

Other democratic rights are under threat here too. Even before the recent events, Blair spelled out his intention to reform the asylum system to counter supposed "pressure" from migration. Doubtless the war against terrorism will serve as further justification for keeping those unable to pay a premium out of the country. Those events will be used too as the reason for a further erosion of our civil liberties, with proposals mooted once again to introduce Identity Cards. How this would prevent terrorism is as clear as mud, but many of these curbs on our rights will turn out to have serious implications for the labour movement. Blunkett has already warned that they will break the Human Rights Act if necessary. We have warned previously of the consequences of the Prevention of Terrorism legislation, and how many of these laws can be used against the labour movement. Now it is proposed to tighten this legislation still further.

We condemn these terrorist atrocities not solely because of the tragic loss of lives, but also because of their consequences. British troops will now join US forces in a display of power meant to terrify the world into acquiescence. Meanwhile reactionary legislation is introduced at home, in the name of fighting terrorism, which will have wider repercussions. We



will be asked to pay for an economic crisis which was inherent in the system anyway, but now the loss of our jobs and the erosion of our rights will be the 'price for fighting terrorism.' We must fight against the method of individual terrorism because time and again it has proven counter productive. It has nothing to do with the methods of the labour movement. This is dealt with in more detail on other pages.

## **Imperialist carnage**

We must oppose the imperialist carnage meant to stamp the authority of US imperialism on the world, we must fight too against the attack on our rights and our jobs which follows. The labour movement cannot allow the smoke of war to cover up the crisis of the system, appeals for national unity amount to a cover behind which we will be made to pay for the bosses crisis.

Even before these events Blair was asking the TUC to defend the bosses profits rather than their members jobs and conditions, calling for the unions to help improve the country's productivity. He doesn't lecture the bosses on the need for investment, higher wages and better conditions. It isn't efficiency and safety that Blair and the bosses (whose interests he is representing) are concerned about, but profitability, making money. How are the unions to help?



Through partnership, of course. The partnership between a horse and its rider - and we're in for another whipping to make us work faster and harder. Remember this was before the recent events and the subsequent speeding up of the world economy's lurch into recession.

Once again we are told that "education should be the passion of every government because I believe every child is of equal worth." Watch out, when we were told that "education, education, education" was the priority of Blair's government it was a precursor to the introduction of tuition fees.

Now Blair assures us "nobody is talking about privatising the NHS or schools." Well, I'm afraid a lot of people are talking about precisely that. We remember the pledge that air traffic control would not be sold off, and yet it is. What about the Post Office and the Tube? They promised to take the railways back into public ownership. They didn't, and there has been one disaster after another. Their latest privatisation plans are preparing new disasters too. We can't trust them. In fact their language is almost Orwellian doublespeak. Whenever they promise that something is safe, you had better take cover. Or more accurately you had better get ready to fight back.

Blair admits that the private sector hasn't worked on the railways (which is a phenomenal understatement) yet does not propose, as the overwhelming majority of the population demand, that the railways be taken back into public ownership. Worse he intends to pursue the insane policy of privatising the tube, and bringing the private sector into other public services.

There is much talk of being practical and not taking decisions on ideological grounds - in reality they are completely wedded to the market, otherwise why not renationalise rail? We have no qualms about saying private sector bad - and public sector good, except where the public sector is run like a private business, and the fact that these public services are not married together with the finances, the industry and the democratic participation necessary to plan the use of all our resources in all our interests. That is ideology, socialist ideology, it is also practical for the majority. However it is not practical for the tiny minority whose concern is not providing a service but making a profit. Practicality is used here as a cover for profitmaking and the ideology of capitalism.

Even the language used grates not just on labour activists ears but on the majority of ordinary working people. Blair says the NHS "shrieks out for change; changes in working practices, changes in technology, changes in co-ordination between social services and the NHS, changes in the way we treat the patient as a customer." (my emphasis)

When I go to hospital I am a patient not

a customer. With the length of waiting lists I need to be patient, too. What the NHS shrieks out for is resources. The only limits placed on those resources are the limits of public spending, ie the limits imposed by the market economy and the choices of the government.

Pledges to increase public spending have been made dependent on economic

abject crisis. A recovery now would be the greatest since Lazarus. There are none so blind as those who refuse to see. What they are ideologically blinkered from seeing is that the reason the Tories are in such crisis is that they are split over how capitalism should best proceed and because their years of privatisation and sleaze have been decisively rejected by the mass of working

**Blair admits that the private sector hasn't worked on the railways (which is a phenomenal understatement) yet does not propose, as the overwhelming majority of the population demand, that the railways be taken back into public ownership.**

growth. Growth at figures which never looked realistic before the recent acceleration towards world recession. Now they, and the government revenue that would accompany them, will not arrive. The demand of big business will be for cuts, for measures in the interests of the bosses. Unions and party members must exert even greater pressure on the party to abandon these plans and the outdated ideology from which they spring. We must fight inside the party, to reclaim it, but also organise to fight back against the government and the bosses to defend jobs and services.

**Spending increases**

The meagre spending increases carried out till now were the best this government was willing to offer during an economic boom. To maintain current spending increases at 3.8% pa with growth in the economy at the predicted level of 2.25% pa would still have required raising an extra £5bn through taxes, borrowing and cuts elsewhere. Now, instead of the economy growing by 2.25%, we will face half a million job losses. In the days before this issue was published £135 billion was wiped off the value of shares traded in London. In reality, even before events in the US, the world economy and the British economy were heading for recession. With pledges to increase defence spending and to underwrite airline companies insurance already given, a Labour government which has followed big business demands in a boom will doubtless carry out their dictats during a recession. That will mean a programme of cuts and attacks on our conditions and wages, and a massive growth in unemployment.

Against this background it is quite absurd of Blair to wag his finger at us to warn that if we don't accept his pro-market policies then we'll get the Tories back. Yet he tries, "Be under no illusion. If we fail in this task, the Conservative Party stands ready with an alternative." The Tories are in

class and middle class people in Britain. However, their position is not yet irretrievable. In one sense Blair is right, though not in the way he means. The failure of a Labour government which pursues a policy of privatisation and sticks to a big business agenda will see growing disillusionment with Labour, still lower turnouts and even a recovery for the Tories in the long run.

The only way to prevent that would be to inspire people to vote Labour, to join Labour, to see the labour movement as the vehicle by which their lives can be improved. That isn't going to happen under the leadership and with the policies of Tony Blair. But the unions and party members can transform the labour movement by adopting a socialist programme for real change.

Not setting targets like halving child poverty in a decade - but eradicating it. Not education where students become customers mortgaging their futures with student loans while they are trained in the interests of their future employers, but life-long learning, free, and with a living grant. Not training or we'll stop you're dole, but training that leads to a proper job with proper wages, union rights and health and safety conditions.

If you want something done right you'd better do it yourself. No-one else is going to change the Labour Party and the unions for us. No-one else is going to save our jobs or our public services. We'll all have to fight for them, fight for socialist change ourselves.

- **No to Imperialist Aggression**
- **For militant action to defend Jobs and Services**
- **Defend democratic rights**
- **No privatisation. Keep the profiteers out of public services**
- **Reclaim the Party fight for socialist policies.**

# Railworkers fight to protect terms and conditions

**Phil Boston, President of the RMT and Brendon Kelly, RMT delegate to the TUC, spoke to Socialist Appeal in a personal capacity.**

**SA:** *There have been many changes in the rail industry over the last 5 or 6 years. How have these affected the position of rail workers?*

**PB:** I have been 29 years in the railway industry and at present I am a lay official of the union. I feel I am very much in touch with the ordinary rail worker and their problems. I must say since the introduction of privatisation of the railways, this has been the worst time in the industry. They now have 25 train operating companies, let alone Railtrack and the engineering side. Now you have profit before the staff and the travelling public. The industry is owned by big transport conglomerates with no interest who are only interested in their net profits at the end of the day. Investment has not been undertaken in equipment or staff. As long as you wear your hat and badge, no matter how late the trains are, then that's all they care about. As a result, the morale on the shop floor has never been lower.

**SA:** *What are the key issues facing the union at this point?*

**PB:** There have been many problems with the companies. The issue of retaining the position of guard is linked to the general question of safety on the trains. Over the past period the union has been in dispute on several occasions over this issue. We, together with our sister union, ASLEF, believe driver-only trains are obsolete. We have done an independent survey which showed that some 92% of the travelling public want the guard on the train. Our action has led to successes, where 23 out of 25 companies have agreed to this without us having to take industrial action.

**BK:** Regarding the guard dispute, what the train operating companies have done over the last few years via the back door is to get the rule book changed to accommodate the changes they want to bring into the industry. They wanted to reduce the guard's role to a more commercial role, and also undermine their industrial strength. With the drivers, they saw the guards as a key section of the union. So they were prepared to make these changes to jeopardise safety. They used Railtrack to pursue these changes, but the union realised what they

were up to and acted accordingly to resist these rule changes. Now we have managed to bring the vast bulk of the companies to heel. One by one they had to traipse into 'Unity House', union headquarters, and sign up for a deal otherwise face strike action.

**SA:** *How has the RMT changed and coped since privatisation was introduced?*

**BK:** Well it has been particularly difficult on the infrastructure side of things. It has always been a difficult section of workers to organise. So to maintain the membership and links with these groups has been quite difficult really. The strikes that took place, although difficult, showed we could take on the new employers. With employers like Tarmac and Balfour Beatty, with their record in the building industry, they were like predatory employers. The struggle has been very difficult, but has been quite successful in the end. It has now put us in a fairly strong position.

**PB:** We have at present a dispute on the C2C line, which is the old London-Southeast line. We have a dispute on our own line, First Western. We have been accused of being ballot happy, but the point is we are a membership-led union. Our Executive does not tell the membership when to ballot, it is the membership through the branches that demand a ballot if negotiations break down, and we sanction that ballot.

We get behind our people, which is something I am very proud of.

Our union has developed, and with the shipping side coming in, we have gone from strength to strength. At a time of all this fragmentation of the industry, there have been drawbacks. For instance, with colleagues in different sectors, we can't support them because of the laws against secondary action. It is very difficult to keep up, but we do get round it and we do generally win. We are a moderately sized union

of 58 - 60,000 members and we have gained respect in the trade union movement for our stance.

**BK:** Yes, industrially we are still quite strong really.

**SA:** *What about politically? How do you see your links with the Labour Party?*

**PB:** Most definitely, our union policy is to be

affiliated to the Labour Party. But at this years AGM of the union a resolution was passed still maintaining our affiliation, but - as a shot across the bow - if the Labour government doesn't radically change its policies, and listen to what we are saying, then the union may have to reconsider the size of its financial commitment in the future. Certainly a lot of transport workers voted Labour and they are expecting something this term, if they don't do something very soon, then there will be repercussions.

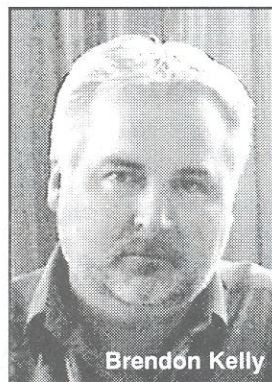
**SA:** *With the sudden death of Jimmy Knapp, the union will be looking to elect a new general secretary of the next period. It seems clear that Bob Crow is going to stand. What is your personal view of this?*

**BK:** Yes, without doubt, Bob Crow will be the best candidate. There are two distinct views of where we want to take the union, and Bob represents one side of that. He's got to make sure he gets out and speaks to people and makes clear the issues he stands on. He's still got a job of work to do to convince the members.

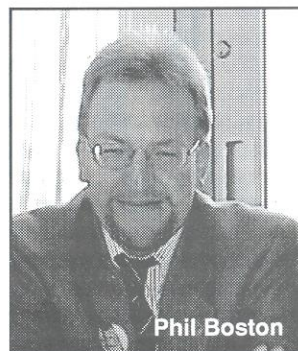
And there will be a big group of members in the middle who are undecided.

**PB:** I served on the union executive with Bob and I support him. We have been socialists all our lives.

And working with him as President. I have done many many meetings with him on the London Underground, South West Trains, the guard's situation, and other disputes, I found him to be a grafter like myself. He doesn't see himself as general secretary stuck in the office. He leads by example. He's an ordinary working bloke. He hasn't forgotten his roots, and has no pretensions about a career in the union. Of course we do have our disagreements, but we discuss them out in a comradely way. ●



Brendon Kelly



Phil Boston

# Free Satish Kumar!

YFIS and supporters of Satish Kumar gathered at 1pm on September 18 outside the Indian High Commission in London and handed in a letter of protest signed amongst others by Jeremy Dear, national newspaper organiser of National Union of Journalists, Tim Gopsill, editor of The Journalist (magazine of the NUJ), Nigel Pearce, (Member of the National Executive Committee of the National Union of Miners), Phil Waker (National Executive Committee of the Communication Workers Union), and dozens of other trade union and Labour Party activists. John McDonnell, Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington also expressed his support for Satish Kumar's cause and promised to contact the Indian High Commission.

**The text of the letter is reproduced here and we appeal to all readers to urgently take up Satish's case:**

"We are outraged to learn of the arrest by Indian state authorities in Faridabad, near Delhi, of Mr. Satish Kumar, well-known publisher of the independent campaigning daily newspaper 'Mazdoor Morcha'."

"Satish was arrested by plainclothes policemen on the morning of August 18th 2001 on wholly trumped up charges relating to the circulation figures of his newspaper."

"The authorities concerned had no right to make any arrest as this matter comes under the sole jurisdiction of the registrar of newspapers not the state. This action, in

reality, is in response to Satish's ongoing campaign against corruption inside all levels of the state machine - a campaign which has earned him many enemies. Clearly those enemies now wish to silence Satish and his newspaper."

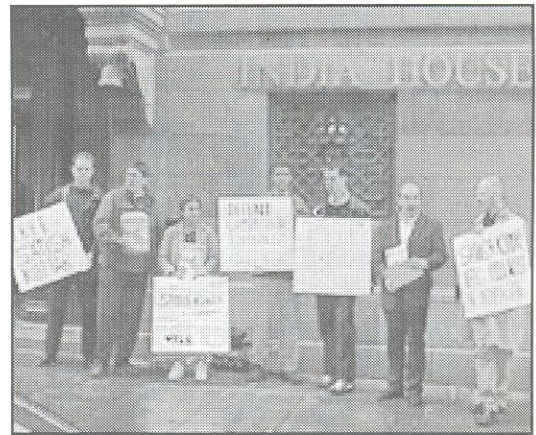
"After his arrest, Satish was brought to court in chains and informed that his bail application, although not rejected, would be heard sometime in December! In the meantime he must remain in prison.

This shows the real face of Indian 'democracy'. In a clear case of political victimization, the state is determined to silence this thorn in the side of the ruling establishment. This must not be allowed to happen."

"We also note with anger that the Federal Information and Broadcasting Ministry in India is abusing its position to censor all comment in the press and media over the case. We call for an end to all Indian governmental censorship against the free and independent press in that country."

"We declare our full international solidarity with Satish Kumar and call for the Indian state to release him immediately and drop all charges."

"We further resolve to add our names to the growing international protest by forwarding these demands to the addresses below and sending a message of support to Satish."



**Protests should be sent by email to**

Mr. L. K. Advani,  
Minister of Faridabad,  
Faridabad,  
Nr. Delhi, India.

The protests should be sent to:  
advanilk@sansad.nic.in

**and to the Indian government:**

vajpayee@sansad.nic.in

**Messages of solidarity to Satish Kumar**

**should be sent to Vinod Malik at:**  
gazalcaterers@mantraonline.com

**Send copies of all protests to this e-mail**

address also: struggle@nexlinx.net.pk

## Come to the YFIS School

Events internationally are moving at great speed. All summer the news has been dominated by economic gloom, war in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the impending crisis in Ireland. As if these events and the attendant suffering were not bad enough, they have been pushed into the centre pages by the attack on the world trade centre, one of the greatest icons of the capitalist world.

The shake of the disaster in the world's premier financial district has had a profound effect on world politics, and world economy. The most reactionary elements of the governments of the west; one eye on the stockexchange; one eye on the popularity ratings, are racing blindly into another bloodbath, and millions more dead and impoverished.

The disaster has raised questions in the minds of people throughout the world. Some of whom have until now been only passively viewing the situation. Events might still seem remote but as people feel the effects, they will be more compelled to draw their own conclusions. The ideas of Marxism are the only answer for workers and students looking for an alternative to war, unemployment, social deprivation and economic collapse.

**Kris Lawrie**

Saturday 10:30-6:00

- What do we mean by Marxism?
- Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks
- A World of Wars and Slumps

Venue: King's College, Franklin Wilkins Building, Stamford St. London. Nearest tube: Waterloo

Sunday 10:30-3:00

- How do we organise?
- Can Britain go Socialist?
- Can we change the world?

Venue: ULU, Malet St, London, WC1  
Nearest tube: Euston

**Price: £5 (£3 unwaged)**

**To book a ticket phone 0207 515 7675  
or e-mail espe@newyouth.com**

# The tipping point

**The world economy was already slowing down before disaster struck New York and Washington. However, these events could act to push things over the edge.**

**by Michael Roberts  
our economics  
correspondent**

**T**wo great messages have come from the horrific and tragic events of Tuesday 11 September and the subsequent days.

First is the wonderful solidarity of working people in New York, America, Europe and around the world, their courage and fortitude in the crisis and their skill, ability and endurance in trying to save people in the dark smoke-filled debris of Lower Manhattan.

The other message is the ineptitude and crassness of America's leaders and callous actions of big business. While ordinary people lost their lives when they barehandedly fought armed and fanatical terrorists on one of the planes so that it would not be used to destroy more thousands, President Bush scurried off in Air Force One to a bunker in Omaha, Nebraska thousands of miles away. While emergency staff worked night and day to save lives and help the injured in New York, Bush stayed in Washington and incoherently talked of 'whipping terrorism'.

And immediately after the disaster, big business acted. Even though thousands of financial workers had died in New York, they wasted no time in selling off the dollar and selling their investments through European markets. Undoubtedly, they would have sold shares in the US market if it had been open. So much for patriotism.

Working people were the victims of this vicious terrorist attack by religious fanatics. But these reactionary religious bigots gained sufficient support to do this terrible thing precisely because of US and NATO policy in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. America has backed Israeli militarists in their suppression of Palestinians and the Bush administration has felt arrogantly confident that it could do so with impunity. After all, isn't it the most militarily powerful nation in the world with massive financial and armed might?

Well, in just an hour of nightmarish mayhem, a gang of men armed only with knives and carton cutters inflicted more casualties than Japan's entire Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Lacking long-range bombers, they improvised. They made bombers out of commercial airliners and drove them straight into the world's financial centre and then the nerve centre of US military might, the Pentagon.

And, suddenly, it seems a different world. And yet it is also unchanged. That's because, even as the hijacked airlines flew mercilessly toward their targets, a flood of red ink had already wiped out over six years of total accumulated profits of all companies listed on the NASDAQ exchange. Even as the upper floors of the World Trade Centre burst into flames,

America's largest money centre had already the greatest exposure ever to derivatives (high-risk bets) that are notoriously vulnerable to unexpected events (according to the latest reports by U.S. General Accounting Office).

Even as the 110-storey twin towers imploded into a great cloud of dust and debris, the world's stock markets had already been tumbling for 18 months or more. The NASDAQ had lost about two-thirds of its peak value, with over \$5 trillion in wealth destroyed. The German Neuer Markt, the equivalent of the NASDAQ, had lost roughly 90% of its value. The German DAX, the counterpart of the US stock market index, the Dow, was down about 45%, the Japanese Nikkei down close to 75%.

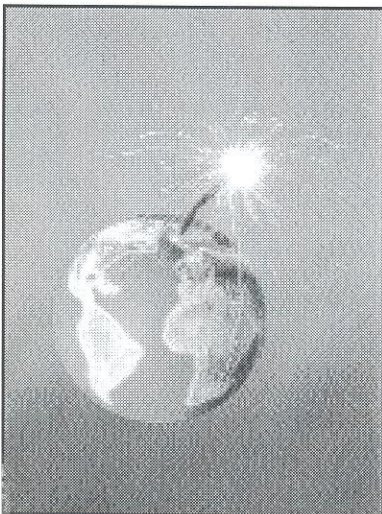
But now, for the first time, the fragility and vulnerability of US capitalism has been exposed to the entire world. People will now say all sorts of mad things: that stock prices will go up because Americans will see it as their patriotic duty, or that they'll go up because wars always make stocks go up, or that the economy was ready to turnaround anyway. But these are words of faith, not reason.

## Capitalist myth

The great new capitalist myth of the 'New Economy', supposedly freeing capitalism from eternal boom and slump by the new technology, has been exposed. At the Pentagon, the promises of new technology have turned out to be gruesomely hollow. Despite billions spent on information technology, and a team of thousands of highly paid specialists on the job - no one seemed to know anything. At least, they did not know what they needed to know.

What was built up in the US during the past few years was a grossly unreasonable confidence in non-existing 'new paradigm' miracles. It was upon this pad of "new paradigm" mush that American capitalists and their investors constructed their hopes for the future. The US was the only world superpower - and thus faced no serious threat. Stock markets would rise, over the long term, because that's what stocks always seem to do, they reasoned. Property prices, too, were destined to keep on going up - for who, except in isolated instances, had ever seen it go down? Incomes would rise year after year in an economy that - thanks to leadership from the Federal Reserve Bank - never suffered a serious setback.

As confidence grew, dangers grew too. The Pentagon came to rely more and more on high-tech gadgetry - like spy satellites.



Financial institutions placed more and more faith in sophisticated derivative contracts, which they used to replace actual cash reserves as a source of security. And consumers turned away from savings, putting more and more trust in credit, which was eagerly supplied by credit card mongers and mortgage lenders.

American capitalism was already tottering before this carnage. The American media and its politicians will pour out the propaganda of their faith in the system. They will stand with moist eyes, waving the flag and reciting their newfound sense of national unity. They will affirm their belief in American capitalism and their commitment to invest.

But confidence has been irrevocably dented by this disaster. Americans will stop buying new cars and stop taking holidays. Amid the images of the dead and dying and mass destruction at the very heart of American capitalism, getting and spending, at the margin, suddenly seems less important. Spending money has suddenly gone out of fashion.

Fed Chairman, Alan Greenspan has already blamed the economic downturn on what he called a "breach of confidence." For him, the challenge in America was merely to maintain consumer spending. As long as consumers continued to spend, they reasoned, the economy would continue to grow.

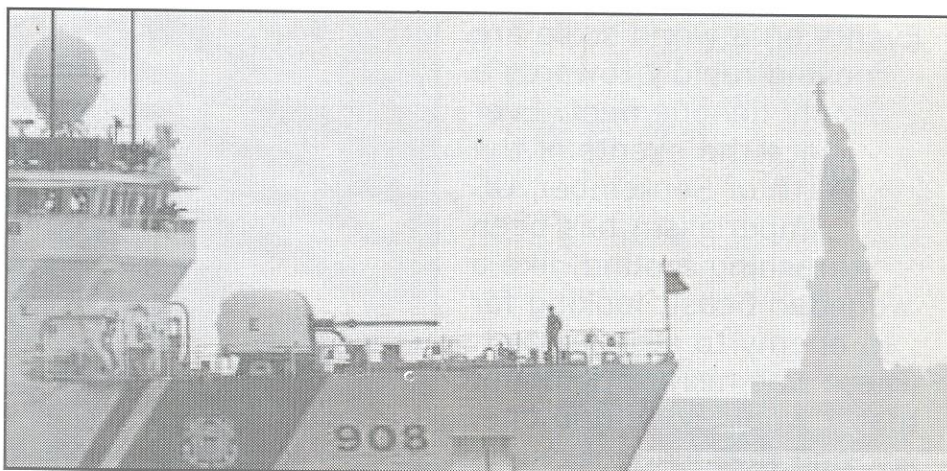
But the reality is that the more the economy boomed, the more confident consumers and investors became, and the more money they borrowed and spent. Even as they felt more and more confident, debt loads piled up like skyscrapers, leaving them more and more vulnerable to shocks. Now that they've felt the earth shake, can there be any doubt that they will turn more cautious?

Even before Tuesday's attacks, corporate profits and corporate spending were down. Layoffs were up, as new jobless claims hit their highest level since July. Unemployment is now at 4.9%. You can't spend if you don't have a job. This, combined with lower business spending, was leading to a full-blown recession.

The Fed has vowed to open the money spigots to help banks and financial institutions. But in the long run, this won't work. Fed governor Robert McTeer is now telling consumers that it would be unpatriotic to cut spending now. The health of the entire economy, he points out, depends on the willingness of consumers to continue doing the "irrational" - spending money they don't have.

But if the capitalists put the US on a war footing, will that enable the economy to recover through huge 'defence' spending boosting incomes and jobs? That very question is a matter of great debate among capitalist economists now.

There are those that argue that, after



the initial shock and uncertainty of the beginnings of both World Wars, Korea, the Cuban missile crisis, the US economy surged back. But this time around, that's unlikely. The difference between now and other crisis events is not just the severity of the event itself. This time there is an underlying weakness in the capitalist economy. Long before the planes cracked the glass and steel of the Trade Centre towers, the US economy was headed for trouble. Long before Tuesday, the largest credit-financed bubble in history was about to pop.

### Economic growth

Economic growth in the US was about to collapse. And America's economic dominance of the globalised world was already in question. Tuesday's tragedy only compounds the effect. Debt burdens are at record highs. Jobs are disappearing. The American consumer has a very slender reed to lean on.

And this "war" that George W Bush and his Cabinet want to fight is unlike any other the US has fought. Apparently, this is a war against terrorism everywhere: the first war of the 21st century. But terrorism has been around throughout the 20th century and the US capitalists did not always oppose terrorism if it was in their interests. Were the Mujahaddin in Afghanistan terrorists when they indiscriminately killed thousands in Kabul with their missiles and bombs, or were they 'liberation fighters' against Russian 'imperialism'? The CIA financed Bin Laden and other terrorists in that war. Are the IRA terrorists and should those who finance and support them be arrested and killed; or should they continue to be invited to the White House for talks? After all, NORAD, the Sinn Fein organisation in the US, operates with impunity. Clearly, the definition of terrorism is really just any action against US capitalist interests.

In this war, the Bush administration is fighting an enemy without borders, an enemy that cannot be invaded, an enemy

who does not distinguish between combatants and civilians. The US is essentially declaring war on thousands of private citizens of dozens of different nations. This will prove a difficult war to fight and to win.

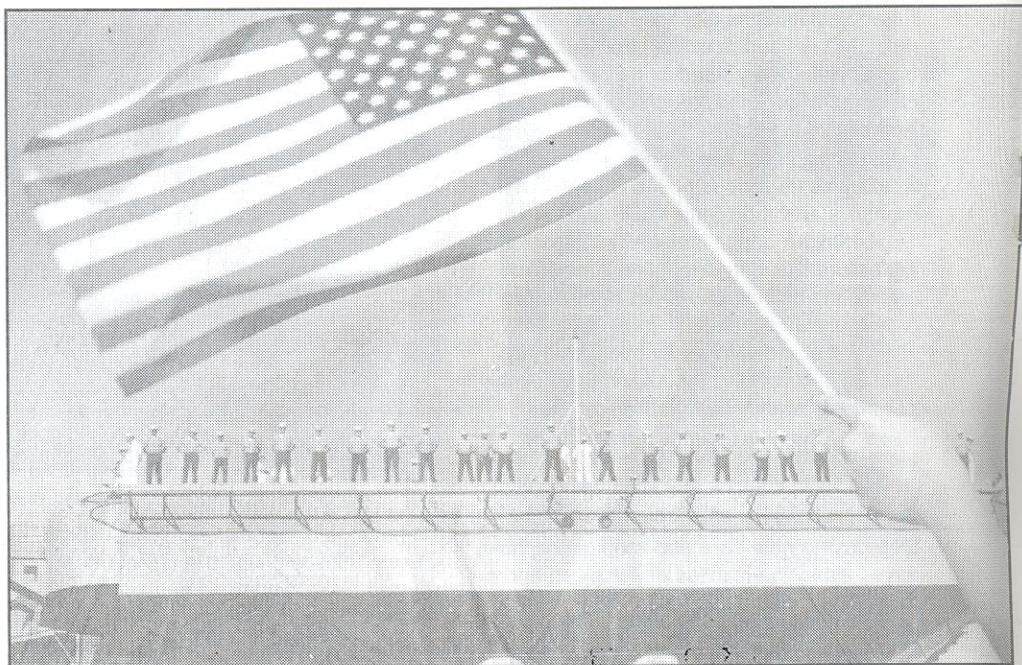
Public sentiment is strong for 'war' right now. Americans are understandably in favour of a decisive military response. But commanding this war, winning it, or even fighting in it will be more difficult than many people around the world expect. This prolonged uncertainty will prove a drag on confidence. And a war without clear results will only heighten investor anxiety, reveal America's increasing vulnerability and frustrate the recovery of the stock market.

What's more, war or no war, America's economy will still be left to work out the imbalances built up during the economic boom of the 1990s. In short, no amount of military action can repair the decade-long damage done to America's balance sheets. During the 1960s and 1970s, the industrial economies experienced rising inflation - widespread increases in prices. During the 1980s and 1990s, disinflation - declining levels of inflation - was the trend. In the 2000s, it will be deflation - widespread decreases in prices.

As a leading capitalist economist, Stephen Roach of Morgan Stanley, put it: "the negative shock to consumer confidence could well be the transforming event of this economic cycle. It takes the fundamentals of an already weakened US economy from bad to worse. Before the shock of 11 September, America had moved to the very brink of [recession]. This tragedy could well be the tipping point. This shock seals the fate of the American consumer, who was already beginning to labour under the pressures of depleted saving, record debt burdens, negative wealth effects and rising unemployment. And now a devastating shock produces a lethal combination for the American consumer. The US and global economy is likely to be the victim of the staggering events of 11 September." ●

Events on a world scale are moving rapidly towards a deadly dénouement. Ever since the events of the 11th of September, US imperialism has been thrashing around, like a wounded beast, looking for an enemy to strike out at. There was never any doubt that it would soon find one, and that when it did its response would be devastating.

by Alan Woods and  
Ted Grant



# 'The first war of the 21st century'

Washington lost no time in blaming Osama Bin Laden and his organisation Al'Qaida for the terrorist atrocities. We have already pointed out that the recent attacks were exactly in line with the aims and methods of this group, although the Americans have been remarkably slow to produce any solid evidence of its involvement. The USA's reply is a crushing display of force and a declaration of war against unspecified enemies on a world scale. They have moreover warned that this war will be both prolonged in time and bloody in its methods.

By the time this article appears in print, the full weight of the American military machine will have been brought to bear on Afghanistan, and possibly other countries.

## Hypocrisy of imperialists

The hypocrisy of the American ruling class is truly breathtaking. They warn the world that no country can assist a terrorist force to kill American citizens, destroy American property and sabotage the American economy with impunity. But it was the United States that organised, armed and financed the Contras in Nicaragua to conduct bloody acts of terrorism, sabotage and mass murder in order to bring down a

regime they disapproved of. That, apparently, was OK. So was the US backing of Noriega in Panama, and of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, when he launched his attack against Iran.

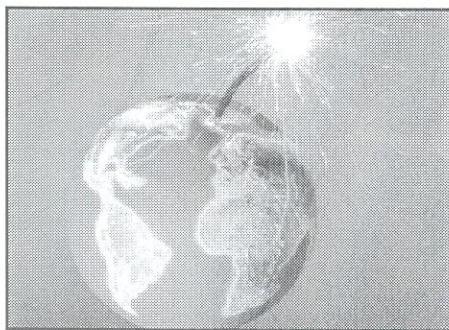
Tony Blair - who is a practising Christian, and a most enthusiastic advocate of wars of all sorts - claimed to have an "ethical foreign policy", yet the British sell arms to Israel, when the latter is killing and maiming Palestinians every day. Before that they sold arms to the monstrous regime of Suharto who slaughtered one and a half million Communists in Indonesia with the active involvement of the CIA, which provided lists of prospective victims to the death squads of Suharto, and then ticked them off as they were murdered.

The USA waged a merciless war against the people of Vietnam, destabilised the democratically elected government of Chile, and backed the bloody Argentine dictatorship. At present it is organising an illegal blockade against Cuba. Near to one million innocent civilians - 600,00 of them children - have died as a result of the monstrous sanctions levelled by the Christian, civilised West against the people of Iraq. Yet these ladies and gentlemen have the effrontery to speak in the name of civilisation!

It is true that the Taliban regime is a monstrous and reactionary government, and that Bin Laden is a vicious counter-revolutionary and a murderer. No self-respecting socialist or member of the Labour movement would have anything to do with such movements. But we have long memories and remember that it was US imperialism, the CIA and its Pakistani stooges, who created, organised, armed, financed and trained these monsters, as a key element in their struggle against the USSR, just as they armed and supported Saddam Hussein and egged him on to attack Iran. Not long ago, the governments of Britain and America ranted about the "terrorist regime" in Teheran. Now the same hypocrites want to get the support of Iran for their attack on Afghanistan, on the cynical principle: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

## Afghanistan

The USA has in its hands the most terrifying weapons of destruction known to mankind. There is absolutely no doubt about their potential for destruction of life and property on a massive scale. Unhappy Kabul, already wrecked by decades of war, would swiftly be reduced to rubble. But the problem is that this would solve precisely



nothing for the Americans. The military significance of such a target is nil. The Taliban will have utilised the delay to withdraw all their forces from Kabul. When the Americans and their allies finally decide to strike, they will find that they are bombing an empty city, where the only victims will be those too poor, old or sick to flee. They would have the satisfaction of blowing up the buildings of the Taliban and destroying some of Bin Laden's bases, but only at the cost of generating new bitterness and rage against the United States in Afghanistan and throughout the region.

By bombing alone, Washington cannot realise its objectives in Afghanistan. But the prospect of being sucked into a war on the ground in the most difficult conditions against an enemy accustomed to guerrilla warfare, gives them reason for serious thought. The Afghans have repelled virtually every invader since Alexander the Great.

True, the Taliban is an assortment of groups and individuals which can easily fall to pieces when confronted by a serious enemy. They have maintained themselves in power, partly because of the inertia and exhaustion of the masses, but mainly because of the support of Pakistan. Once this support is withdrawn, they will collapse like a pack of cards. This is the calculation of Washington, and it is probably fairly accurate.

However, there are a number of complications in this equation. Even if Washington succeeds in installing a puppet regime in Kabul, based on the king and the Northern Alliance, they would be seen - correctly - as the open agents of US imperialism, which would, behind the scenes, run the country in its own interests. Such a regime would be unstable and probably not long-lasting. The opponents of the regime could wage a guerrilla war from the moun-

tains which can go on for years, with financial help from reactionary circles and fundamentalists in Pakistan. Also, Moscow will not be pleased to see the USA taking control of Afghanistan and strengthening its influence in Central Asia, where there are powerful interests, connected with oil and gas.

This conflict will lead to new and even more bloody wars in the future. For the people of this unhappy region there will be no respite.

The effects in Pakistan of any attack on Afghanistan will be immediate and dramatic. The ferment reflects a widespread mood of discontent that can spill over onto the streets in the event of a US attack. The situation is extremely fragile. It is even possible the government of Musharraf could be overthrown.

Not satisfied with attacking Afghanistan, US imperialism is already casting its eye around for another victim. Reports have already been put in circulation, which purport to associate Iraq with the terrorist attack. However, a new onslaught against Iraq would plunge the whole of the Middle East into turmoil. The price of oil would go through the roof, further exacerbating the world economic crisis. The enraged Arab masses would take to the streets, threatening to destabilise one Arab regime after another. American embassies and economic interests would be open to attack everywhere. It is not excluded that even the pro-American Saudi regime might be overthrown. The USA would be sucked inexorably into an even greater military involvement. Under such circumstances, new terrorist outrages - including inside the USA - would be inescapable.

Marxists condemned the terrorist attacks on the USA in the most vehement terms. Now we condemn with equal vigour the state terrorism that seeks to take vengeance on innocent men, women and children. On this road, only more blood and tears can be expected. The losers, as always, will be the poor people. The human catastrophe that must ensue will have an effect on the conscience of the world - including the USA. Questions will be asked. Minds, attitudes and opinions will begin to change.

## The world faced with recession

Everywhere there is a growing nervousness, which translates itself in steep falls on the stock markets of the whole world, beginning in the USA. Like a huge stone suddenly dropped into a lake, the crisis in the USA has made waves. It has reverberated across the globe, precipitating further falls in the stock markets in other countries.

This is not at all surprising, since the only thing holding up the world economy in the recent period has been the consumer boom in the States. This is what gave a temporary respite to the economies of Asia after the slump of 1997. America saved them by absorbing their exports, particularly those related to the new technology: microchips, computers, etc. Now this process has reached its limits. Hit simultaneously by a falling stock exchange, rising unemployment and accumulated debts, consumer confidence in the USA will not survive the shock. Falling demand in the USA will hit all exporting countries - whether in Asia or in Europe.

The fall-out has been particularly severe in the so-called emerging markets in Asia and Latin America. The Brazilian currency - the Real - experienced a new fall, which, in turn, will put more pressure on Argentina, already teetering on the brink of default. Japan's recession has been still further aggravated, with no solution in sight. A new wave of bankruptcies is being predicted, with further stresses and strains on Japan's fragile financial sector.

The Dow Jones has fallen 12 percent since the 11th of September, and now stands at its lowest level for three years, with the prospect of further falls to come. And nobody knows where the bottom lies. One economic commentator observed that "if you had purchased \$1000 worth of Nortel Networks stock one year ago, it would now be worth \$49. If you bought \$1000 worth of Budweiser (the beer, not the stock, at \$3.80 per six-pack) one year ago, drank all the beer and traded in the cans for the nickel deposit, you would have \$79."

Nor is the crisis confined to the stock market. Already Virgin Atlantic has

announced the loss of 1,200 jobs, and British Airways is contemplating the sack for a further 6,000. But this is nothing compared to the catastrophe in the US civil aviation industry, which faces at least 50,000 job losses immediately. The total may well reach 100,000. The cumulative effects of this will produce a sharp decline in business activity, profits and investment.

Faced with a general collapse in business confidence, the Federal Reserve has reacted by delivering yet another cut in interest rates - the eighth this year. The new cut of half a percent was designed to head off a crisis on Wall Street when the stock market re-opened. But to no avail. Alan Greenspan looked like a man attempting to bail out the ocean with a teaspoon. This crisis is not confined to the stock exchange. The whole world is moving into recession simultaneously - for the first time since the 1930s. The mood has changed from "irrational exuberance" to deep pessimism. Instead of talk about the "peace dividend" and the new economic paradigm, the talk is now of just two topics: war and economic recession. Globalisation has revealed its true nature: as the global crisis of capitalism.

### How to defend 'civilisation'

As always, individual terrorism has had the most negative consequences, throwing back consciousness. The action on September 11th was simply insane. Apart from killing a lot of innocent civilians, what did this action achieve? Only to provide an excuse for US imperialism to go on the rampage everywhere and to push a large part of the American population behind Bush and the most reactionary and aggressive circles of the ruling class and the military.

George W. Bush, the right-wing Republican who was so unpopular that he only managed to scrape in to the White Office on the basis of a rigged vote, is now riding high in the opinion polls. The mood in the United States before these atrocities was generally opposed to the USA getting involved in military adventures abroad. Now all that will change. There will be little opposition to the idea of attacking Afghanistan, or to the renewal of the bombing of Iraq. If the aim of the terrorists was to help the Palestinians, then they have achieved the exact opposite. The most reactionary circles in Israel have been strengthened, and the Palestinians placed in the greatest danger.

It is true that temporarily Washington is putting pressure on Tel Aviv to stop pulverising the Palestinians, since these actions are making Washington's Arab allies nervous at a time when the USA is striving to put together a "grand coalition" in support of an attack against



Afghanistan. In such a coalition, a few tame Arab "moderates" are very useful, and it is not politic to upset them. But in reality, the dependence of the USA on Israeli support is greater than ever, and therefore the power of Israel has increased dramatically at the expense of the Palestinians. The worried look on the face of Yassir Arafat (who also wants to join the US's "anti-terrorist coalition!") is a graphic expression of the real position.

In reward for having displayed the most unbelievable incompetence, the CIA and FBI will be given access to unlimited funds and powers. Since this cash award is being made at a time of economic crisis, cuts will have to be made in other items which are not considered essential to civilisation, namely, education, health and culture. The population of the USA - they imagine - will be more than willing to shoulder these "small sacrifices" as part of the war-effort. In this way, using the excuse of the "war against terrorism", the American ruling class will try to place the burden of the economic crisis firmly on the shoulders of the working class.

The essence of the matter has nothing whatsoever to do with religion, or the "clash of two cultures" or "the struggle between Good and Evil" or any of the other nonsense churned out by superficial commentators or people interested in deliberately sowing confusion and spreading reactionary and racist ideas. The problem is that the capitalist system - the untrammelled power of the big multinational companies, backed by imperialism has caused chaos, mass unemployment and misery everywhere, resulting in universal instability. And it is the masses, the ordinary people, whether in Manhattan, Karachi or Kabul, who pay the price.

### NATO and UN

Tony Blair and the other right wing European Social Democratic leaders, immediately pledged full support for America and backed NATO's declaration of war against an unnamed enemy. NATO is

the armed bloc of international imperialism, dominated by the USA. After the fall of the USSR its power has grown enormously. At the present time, it has only 12 percent of the world's population, but accounts for 40 percent of the planet's conventional weapons; 45 percent of all nuclear weapons, 56 percent of all military spending and a staggering 90 percent of all expenditure on military research and investigation.

Despite all the talk about a "grand coalition" against terrorism, there is no real solidarity between Europe and America. With the exception of Tony Blair, who never loses an opportunity to display his slavish attachment to American imperialism (which reflects the real position of Britain as a second-rate world power and a satellite of Washington), the other European powers have given only muted support to the USA, and every day display greater reticence towards the idea of military retaliation. This applies especially to France, which, is pursuing its own interests in the Middle east.

For their part, the left reformists have also shown themselves to be hopelessly inadequate. In Spain the United Left has appealed to US imperialism to show moderation, which is like trying to persuade a man-eating tiger to eat lettuce instead of meat. In Britain, Tony Benn, the most intelligent of the Labour Lefts, has talked of the need for Christian values (!) and demanded the intervention of the United Nations. Similar statements have been made by the representative of the French Greens (the German Greens seem to be backing the Americans!) and others. This is a hopeless and short-sighted position.

The (dis) United Nations will only back US imperialism, as they did at the time of the Gulf War, providing it with a convenient legal excuse for aggression against Afghanistan and other countries. After the terrorist attack in the USA, the UN Security Council immediately passed Resolution No. 1638 which calls on all states to bring to justice the perpetrators, organisers and collaborators of the attacks, and in practice



gives the USA a free hand to carry out any actions it sees fit. And we can take it for granted that the UN will back the USA in everything it does. The UN is now a complete irrelevance. Everybody is waiting to hear what the US will say or do, but nobody pays any attention to what the UN is doing - which is, basically, nothing.

### The new world disorder

Before the Second World war, Leon Trotsky predicted that the USA would emerge as the main imperialist power, and would dominate the world, but that it would have dynamite built into its foundations. This remarkable prediction has now been vindicated with the force of a shattering explosion.

When the Soviet Union collapsed exactly ten years ago, the bourgeois were ecstatic. They boasted that they would bring about a new world order, with universal peace, stability, democracy and prosperity, thanks to the wonders of the market economy. All of this was to be underpinned by the United States - the only world super power. A decade later, all these dreams have ended in a pile of smoking rubble. The vision has turned into a nightmare for the peoples of the entire world.

The real message of the "new world order" was this: that any country which tried to resist the USA would be subject to an armed onslaught of massive proportions. However, today, ten years later, the USA has not achieved its essential war aims in Iraq, and Saddam Hussein still sits firmly in his place. Later on, the adventure in Kosovo ended in a messy solution which created many more problems than it solved in the Balkans, which are threatened by new wars, conflicts and instability. All this shows the limits of the power of the USA.

Bush has made it clear that he will not distinguish between the terrorists and the states that allegedly protect them. This means that the USA now abrogates to itself the right to intervene militarily in any country where it perceives its interests to be threatened. Now this concept of how to conduct US foreign policy has been deepened and extended in an unprecedented way.

There is no lack of combustible material on a world scale today. By lashing out in all directions, Bush and co. will set all this material ablaze, further disrupt the world economy making a slump inevitable, and in passing create many more Osama Bin Ladens, who will be eager and willing to organise new outrages against the people of the United States.

Far from the soothing picture of peace and prosperity, we have entered the most turbulent and convulsive period in human history. The turbulence is not limited to



**Hundreds of people, protesting against the U.S. war on terrorism, Sept. 24, 2001, Chicago.**

one country or even to one continent: it is truly global. The US imperialists imagine that they can base themselves on the present mood of the American public, still reeling and disoriented after the recent bombings. But this will not last. The mood of the American masses will change into its opposite, especially when the body bags begin to be flown home. People will begin to ask: what was the point of this?

In the short run, the tide in the USA is flowing strongly in the direction of reaction. But this tide, like all others, will eventually turn. The masses have been violently shaken out of their lethargy and routine. In the workplaces, the main item of discussion is no longer football but world politics.

Peoples' attention is being focused on world events and the conduct of their government in a way that was not previously the case. Sooner or later, they will come to understand that the present policies bring nothing but new tragedies and disasters for the people of the whole world, that nothing good can come from a diseased system which puts the profits of a few super-rich individuals and big corporations before the lives, jobs and living standards of the many.

The long period of relative peace and stability that characterised the history of the western world for half a century after 1945 has definitely terminated.

The capitalist system is heading for one shock after another. The crisis of capitalism expresses itself in universal instability: instability on the stock market and in the economy, instability in relations between the nations and instability in the relations between the classes. This must sooner or later be reflected in a profound change in the psychology of the masses, who will come to understand the need for a radical change in society. The labour movement will be transformed from top to bottom. Its organisations, armed with the ideas of Marxism, will become genuine vehicles of struggle, ready and willing to lead the working people to the transformation of society and a socialist world order. ●

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# IMF, WTO, World Bank: enforcers of capitalism

**All around the world anti-capitalist protestors have made the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation the focus of their anger. What are they protesting about? Mick Brooks examines the question.**

The World Bank, IMF and the WTO are the three pillars of the global capitalist economic order. They argue that problems like world poverty, the destruction of the environment and poisoning of our food just happen. Actually these things are imposed by the giant multinationals that control the world's economic resources. And these three institutions are their enforcers.

Let's take a look at the WTO first. It emerged out of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) in 1994. It sees itself as a sort of court that ensures there are 'level playing fields' in the arena of world trade. It's a free trade gendarme. Oxfam was set up to help poor countries. What does it think of free trade for them? It thinks it would be a good idea. The fact is that farming in all the advanced countries is carried out by agribusiness that gets huge subsidies from the public purse. That is a hidden form of protection for the industry. The rich farmers then dump their surpluses on the poor countries, destroying the livelihood of the local peasants in unfair competition and enforcing dependence on imports for food upon these nations. The WTO does nothing about this. So much for 'level playing fields!'

Clare Short, who has undergone a dramatic conversion to neoliberal economics since becoming Minister for International Development, argues that we need 'rules-based' organisations like the WTO. The only alternative is global anarchy in trade, with the rich imposing their will on the poor. The problem with this analysis is that the WTO, World Bank and IMF are dominated by the wealthy countries and set out rules that are just a way of defending rich big business as it imposes its will on the poor.

Gregory Palast, in a 2000 issue of the 'Big Issue', gave us a glimpse of what the WTO really gets up to. Earlier last year a young woman of thirty died of breast cancer in London. Maude could have been cured, but her local Health Authority decided they couldn't afford the drug Taxol. Taxol is expensive. It is manufactured by Bristol-Myers Squibb, who sell it with a 900% markup. The firm can charge so much because they are a monopoly. If any other company or country tries to produce Taxol at a price Health Authorities can afford, Bristol-Myers Squibb will hunt them down through the courts. They can take a case to the WTO under its TRIPS (Trade in Intellectual



Property Rights clauses). The World Trade Organisation thinks it's much more important to protect multinationals' monopoly rights than save the lives of 'little people'.

How can they justify this? The WTO argues that firms like Bristol-Myers Squibb spend a great deal of money on developing successful drugs like Taxol. If they can be ripped off by any Tom, Dick or Harry then why should they bother? Protecting their 'intellectual property rights' is the only way to stimulate progress. It's hard on Maude, but that's the way of the world.

Actually firms don't do research and come up with bright ideas. Workers do. But any worker who joins an outfit like Bristol-Myers Squibb signs away *their* intellectual property rights over to the firm that pays them. And anyway this drug company didn't invent Taxol. US government researchers did. All Bristol-Myers did was patent the size of the dose. Now they can hold the world to ransom. And the WTO will help them do it with every power at its disposal. Who killed Maude? It was the WTO.

## AIDS epidemic

Maude's story is not a one-off. South Africa is threatened with an AIDS epidemic more serious than anything we've experienced in Europe since the Black Death. Life expectancy is expected to dip below forty. Although they haven't got it completely licked, drugs can help AIDS sufferers. Glaxo produces a medicine called AZT. It doesn't come cheap, partly because Glaxo can mark it up by 400% because of their patent monopoly. South Africa needs plenty of it, but can't afford Glaxo's prices. Argentina offered to produce AZT at a price the South African health service could afford. The response from big business and the rich countries' governments that back global big business was immediate and fierce. Al Gore, then US Vice President and self-appointed muscle man for big business, took Argentina to the WTO. In matters of intellectual property rights the WTO is a hanging judge. Argentina was forced to back down. Millions could suffer and die unnecessarily in South Africa as a result of this decision. Thanks a lot, WTO.

Is the WTO protecting innovation? What rubbish! AZT was dreamed up in US government labs, twenty years before the AIDS virus was identified. All Glaxo Wellcome did



was patent the results of others' research - doing what your mum explained to you was theft when you were little. Glaxo management obviously believe the public sector should shoulder the losses of doing basic research while the 'wealth creators' trouser the proceeds as a reward for their entrepreneurship.

The most extreme example of this is the American firm Rice Tec which claims it owns basmati rice, and has the patents to prove it. The only problem with that claim is that basmati rice has a documented existence for hundreds of years past. It was developed by unknown peasants on the Indian subcontinent who would have been scandalised and amazed to find out that centuries later capitalist corporations could lay claim to life forms at all; let alone life forms they could have had no responsibility for developing.

### GM food

The first economics lesson you get at school is about consumer sovereignty. It's about how in the market place capitalists vie in giving us exactly what we want. The WTO has moved beyond that first lesson. If we don't want genetically modified organisms in our food (and surveys all show we don't) then the WTO is determined that big business is going to stuff it down our gullets whether we like it or not. They allow the grain barons to mix GM

The IMF and the World Bank, like the GATT which transmuted into the WTO, were set up after the second world war to regulate world capitalism. Though the distinction is not entirely clear, the World Bank is supposed to be responsible for long term development finance, while the IMF goes in for crisis management - the writer Anthony Sampson called it the 'financial sheriff'. In fact both institutions share a hard-nosed neoliberal agenda, using their loans as a crowbar to open up vulnerable countries to the looting and depredations of the multinationals. In part they act as an insurance system for first world bankers. During the 1980s and early 1990s lending to less developed countries' governments was seen as a licence to print money. Accordingly the advanced capitalist countries' financial institutions saw it as a duty to dive in - in the interests of 'enterprise'. With the Mexican crisis in 1994 and the East Asian collapse in 1997 it was brown trousers time for the bankers. The World Bank took up the slack while the IMF steamed in and wiggled off countries for economic mismanagement that had only weeks before been held before us as miracle economies. In effect the

ations with due regard to the effect of international investment on business conditions in the territories of members'. Clear enough!

### Structural Adjustment

What does structural adjustment do for the poor in the poorest countries? Here's a balance sheet from Africa in the 1980s.

"Between 1980 and 1989 some thirty-three African countries received 241 structural adjustment loans. During that same period average GDP per capita in those countries fell 1.1 per cent a year, while per-capita food production also experienced steady decline. The real value of the minimum wage dropped by over twenty-five per cent, government expenditure on education fell from \$11 billion to \$7 billion and primary school enrolments dropped from eighty per cent in 1980 to sixty-nine per cent in 1990. The number of poor people in these countries rose from 184 million in 1985 to 216 million in 1990, an increase of seventeen per cent." (*The other side of the story: the real impact of the World Bank and IMF structural adjustment programmes*)

OK, the medicine tastes nasty. Does it work? Well between 1980 and 1997 the debt of low income countries rose by 544% and that of middle income nations by 481%. The loans turn into debts, and dependency increases. It doesn't work. On the contrary, 'structural adjustment' is part of the process by which poor countries are squeezed for the benefit of rich financial institutions in the West. Thanks a lot, fellers.

Last year Gordon Brown was crowing because he said he had got the advanced capitalist counties via the World Bank to embark on a very limited programme of debt forgiveness for a handful of the very poorest countries provided they were pre-

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foodstuffs with unmodified crops and forbid clear labelling so that the consumer can buy what they want. After the listeria, salmonella and BSE scandals the WTO is determined to let big agribusiness keep poisoning us in the cause of profit. This is not encouraging enterprise or guaranteeing 'level playing fields' in world trade. This is lining up with the multinationals against workers and consumers. That's what the WTO is for.

World Bank has 'nationalised' non-performing third world debt to get banks in the old imperialist countries off the hook.

Both the World Bank and the Fund go in for 'structural adjustment programmes' as a condition for their loans. In effect they demand open house for big business. In fact Article 1 of the World Bank's charter lays down the five objectives of the organisation. One is 'to promote private foreign investment'; another is to 'conduct its oper-

pared to be good boys and girls in the eyes of world capitalism. \$100 billion was to be written off. Since then, the scheme seems to have run into the ground. Oxfam is furious at the broken promises. They say, "the World Bank and its board continue to fail to deliver on its mandate and its vision, most visibly on debt relief." Yet debt is an insupportable burden for poor countries. Take the example of Guinea-Bissau. Their main export is cashew nuts. The country's debt is over ten times its total exports. Just to stop the debt from spiralling further out of control, the country needs to export two and a half times the cashew nuts they can produce at present.

The World Bank says it exists to help poor countries. Well, it hasn't been making a very good job of it. According to its own Operations Evaluation Department, "poverty trends have worsened....Excluding China, there are 100 million more poor people in developing countries than a decade ago."

In reality World Bank loans are not a solution for the world's poor - they are part of the problem. Most of the money mobilised by the Bank comes from financial markets in the West. And the Bank actually makes \$1 billion a year on its loans - a straight transfer of resources from poor to rich.

### Privatisation

What are the conditions imposed by structural adjustment policies? In Zambia they demanded cuts in state spending and privatisation. Parents now have to pay to send their kids to school. Of course many can't afford it, so the education system is in meltdown. Thanks in part to the guidance and help of the Bank, infant mortality has increased by 25%.

In Bolivia the Fund and the Bank demanded the government privatise water. The system was sold off to a consortium of American and British utilities, including our Northwest Water. Fortunes made by fat cats who ripped off

British consumers were turned to impoverishing the Bolivian people. In the City of Cochabamba the ordinary folk rose in revolt against their outrageous new water bills - some poor people had to pay up to 20% of their income over to the water company for something which is a basic requirement of life. The Bolivian military responded to the rebellion by shooting five of the demonstrators dead to protect the profits of imperialist business. While the Bolivian army fired on their own citizens, the World Bank's President verbally backed the repression and argued the case for privatisation. They say, "In our view, shutting the private sector out of water services altogether is not only unrealistic, but will actually prevent solutions that give the poor access to water. That's why the World Bank is working with governments to mobilise private initiative and resources." That's not the way it looks in Cochabamba.

### Vultures

The WTO is now chipping in as well. In the interests of 'level playing fields', you see, they think trade in services should be free, just as they aim to impose it on trade in goods. That means that any service - education, health, water, energy, you name it - should be up for grabs by commercial profiteers. Now vultures from the States can swoop on the services of the unfortunate people of Bolivia. There is no firm in Bolivia with the economic muscle to bid for services in California or Illinois. The WTO Agreement on Trade in Services is a passport for big business in the imperialist heartlands to plunder the world's poor. Not a 'level playing field' in sight!

Apart from cuts in government spending and privatisation the Fund and the Bank imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes insist on tearing up pro-union laws and health and safety legislation; they want decent pension and welfare schemes to go; and they want every country opened up to the rule of the multinationals. It's not just in the 'third world' that the malign programme of structural adjustment impoverishes working people. Readers will remember the riots that took place at the Prague summit. At the time the meeting was taking place it was revealed that the host country where the gathering was taking place, the Czech Republic, had to go cap in hand to the IMF and the Bank for loans of \$3.9 billion. They have had to pay the price in return. The social welfare system has been 'reformed' almost out of existence. Benefits have fallen by 44% since 1997 at the behest of the terrible two. They are less than half the level they were in 1991.

Millions have protested and will carry on protesting against the consequences of capitalism for the globe. It's time for the system, and its enforcers, to go. ●



# "Fast Food Nation"

by Eric Schlosser

reviewed by  
Barbara Humphries

The announcement that McDonald's is paying £15,000 to sponsor a reception for 450 guests at this year's Labour Party conference has aroused disgust amongst Labour supporters. How much lower could the Labour leadership sink? McDonald's is seen by many to be one of main symbols of US capitalism, with its corporate values that are exported around the globe. It should have no place at a conference of a movement which was set up to represent working people.

The anger generated by this announcement gave me an added incentive to review Eric Schlosser's book entitled "Fast Food Nation". This excellent book gives an insight into the way in which McDonald's and other large corporations operate. The story is written from the view point of individuals who have been affected by these companies, be they victors or victims. Through the lives of these people the story of how corporate America was created is unveiled. McDonald's, the company at the focus of this book is shown to have been responsible for large scale changes in the US economy and society. The writer does not attack the company from a vegetarian point of view, nor is he against the fast food culture. He is out to demonstrate the power of multinational corporations and the way that they have changed people's lives. It is a brilliant illustration of the way capitalism operates in the modern age.

Americans spent \$110 billion on fast food in 2000, compared to \$6 billion in 1970. 25% of Americans visit a fast food restaurant every day. More is spent on fast food than on books, films, newspapers and videos put together. The fast food industry is big business dominated by large companies such as McDonalds. Changes in life styles have brought about this change in eating habits - people have less time, they have access to cars, children are treated as consumers to be targeted for advertising. Fast food chains rely on the "homogenizing" impact. Everything must taste the same and be predictable. It must be cheap. The preparation of food is reduced to a technological exercise, rather than a culinary skill. In order to perfect that process the supply chain which provides the raw material to be assembled - frozen beef mince and pre-prepared potatoes must also be controlled.

McDonald's is the largest buyer of beef in the USA and this has had an impact on agriculture. Mergers and acquisitions, the drive to cut down prices through new assembly line methods and cutting wages

has led to the domination of the US cattle market by several large companies, such as Conagra, Iowa Beef Packers, Excel and National Beef. Some of these companies even control beef production in other countries such as Canada and run poultry operations in Thailand, China and Indonesia. The same process is at work in the supply of potatoes for "french fries". Small farmers and traditional ranchers have been driven off the land. The Chicago meat packing industry has faced extinction as it has been replaced by new plants in rural areas such as Greeley, Colorado. The gains won by the meatpackers, made famous in Upton Sinclair's novel "The Jungle" have been wiped out, as new working practices have meant that a skilled workforce can be replaced by unskilled migrant labour. Needless to say effective trades unions are not recognised in these new plants. Wages are low and safety conditions poor. Loss of skills in meat preparation has also led to dangers of food poisoning on a large scale.

Firms like McDonalds thrive on the exploitation of the young, both as consumers and workers. Most of their workforce are young and casual. As with the other large companies in this food chain it has a notorious anti-union record, sending in scores of managers to deal with unions and finally closing shops, rather than negotiate with a union. Staff turn-over is estimated to be around 400% per annum. Fast food chains are about the lowest payers - their 3.5 million workers are amongst the largest group of minimum wage earners in the USA. To silence opposition the company was prepared to spend millions on a libel case against two London Greenpeace activists - Morris and Steel (the Mlibel case) for handing out leaflets criticising the company. During the trial it came to light that the company had sent spies into London Greenpeace meetings.

As a symbol of corporate America, McDonald's has exported its franchises and methods all over the world. In many cases traditional restaurants in these countries have been under threat, particularly in Germany, where the bratwurst and beer restaurants are being replaced by American hamburger chains. Health problems associated with the US population, such as obesity and heart disease are being exported to countries like Japan, whose population traditionally enjoyed a low fat diet.

But the author of this book says that we do have an alternative. He cites the case in his last chapter of a hamburger chain which uses traditional methods, pays its staff above the minimum wage, provides health



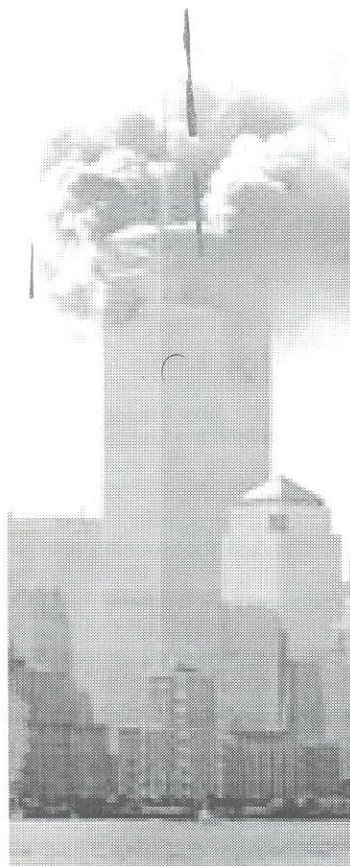
insurance and uses fresh, rather than frozen or pre-prepared raw ingredients. The cost of the hamburgers is only marginally higher. So we do have the choice to eat better food and boycott the fast food chains. Many of us already do. But that does not solve the problem, outlined in the book, of the power of large corporations to control and exploit. The fast food chains prey on the most vulnerable people in society, the young, the poor, migrant workers. Fast food is after all addictive! Many young people will grow up not knowing what proper food should taste like. This is a political problem which requires a political solution, not just an individual consumer boycott.

At the present time the fast food chains get support from governments - in spite of their alleged commitment to the "free market", they benefit from concessions on the minimum wage being lowered for teenagers (both in the USA under Nixon and in Britain under New Labour!). They also benefit from so-called job creation under schemes like the Work Opportunity Credit in the USA. They benefit from anti-union legislation and libel laws which are on their side. McDonalds must have felt confident in their support of New Labour if they were to pay for a reception at the Party's annual conference. So government is currently on the side of the big corporations. This could and should be reversed.

**Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser is published by Penguin Press, at £9.99 and available from Wellred Books (add 20% p&p).**

**The spirit of unity American workers is not shared by the profiteering of their bosses, writes *John Peterson* of the US 'Socialist Appeal' ([www.socialistappeal.org](http://www.socialistappeal.org))**

# What sort of Unity?



**T**he repercussions of the terrorist attacks in the US will be much wider than anyone could have imagined.

Now that the shattering impact of these events is beginning to seep into people's minds, the far-ranging implications for the world economy, the class struggle, national and international politics and world relations are becoming more and more clear.

We explained on numerous occasions that we have entered the most unstable period in history - a period of wars, revolutions, and counter-revolutions. We predicted that economically, politically and socially, the world would be turned upside down. But nothing could have prepared us for the suddenness and trauma of these events. The dramatic crashes into the Pentagon and World Trade Center not only destroyed lives, material wealth, and symbols of imperialist power, they also dealt a severe psychological blow to the US working and ruling classes. So while the reaction of the American public has been to universally condemn these attacks, the question on everyone's mind is what next?

The vulnerability and fragility of the entire capitalist system was dramatically revealed. No longer does the US ruling class have a feeling of invincibility. Like the sinking of the Titanic, the realization that the "unsinkable" has been dangerously and relatively easily wounded has thrown the capitalist class into fear and confusion. No longer can they appease the working masses by saying that "those things don't happen in America - America is different from the rest of the world." The reality of the world today - a world of "horror without end" as Lenin described life under capitalism - has come to the very heart of capitalism itself.

Even more significantly, the sleeping giant of the American working class has now been awakened to social and political awareness. At the moment they are enraged, grieving, and in shock. They are reaching out for solutions that are familiar to them - military aggression, religion, abstract "unity" and so on. And they are looking for guidance from their national "leaders". But these capitalist leaders can offer no real solution to the problems facing the working class. In fact it was their policies and money which created the conditions for the rise of terrorism and these horrific events in the first place. But sooner or later the masses will turn towards

the only ideas which can offer a lasting solution - the ideas of Marxism and socialism. In the meantime we must use these events to explain our ideas and perspectives. We must keep our heads and analyze events from a class standpoint.

The thundering cries for war and revenge are one of the most visible effects of the attacks. Overnight, the country has been gripped by war fever and nationalist hysteria. Sales of American flags have gone through the roof, and there is hardly a fast food store or church without a variant of "God Bless America" displayed. Religious invocation has also reached unheard of levels as people look for answers in a world apparently gone mad. To hear the politicians and news anchors, one would not imagine that there is a separation of Church and State in this country. The calls for national unity are nearly universal and all the superficial political differences between the Republicans and Democrats have been drowned out by the beating of the drums of war. Arabs and many other American citizens and recent immigrants have been targeted for attack based on their appearance or religion. A few mosques have been vandalized and many Arab children are afraid to go to school. But in light of the scale of these events, there is a surprising sense of calm and appeals to reason among broad layers of society. Not everyone is bloodthirsty - many see this as only the beginning of an endless cycle of violence which will just be perpetuated if the US reacts with more violence.

George W. Bush would have us believe that the USA is a "peace loving" nation. But a brief look at the tens of thousands of US troops stationed around the world, the massive arms export industry, the various trade embargoes and sanctions, the harsh austerity measures imposed on the world's poorest nations by the US-dominated World Bank, IMF, NAFTA, WTO, and the recent bombings of Iraq, Yugoslavia, Sudan, and Afghanistan shows just how "peaceful" US imperialism is! The foreign and economic policy of the US ruling class has resulted in the death and degradation of millions of humans around the world. But this has absolutely nothing to do with the workers of the USA. It is therefore vital that we are clear as to what GW Bush means by "national unity". What he is calling for is for the working class to subordinate itself to the inter-



ests of the ruling class. This is always the situation under capitalism, but in times of crisis, war, and revolution, the importance of keeping the millions of newly conscious workers "on the side" of the bosses takes on even greater importance. Especially when the very "leaders" who are supposed to be protecting "our nation" have proven completely inept at doing so, the spontaneous outrage of the working class must be channeled into "safe" means - against an external enemy.

So what exactly is the target of this outrage on behalf of the working class? To be sure they are horrified and frustrated at the loss of life and property, and rightly so. They are also saddened at the unnecessary deaths of fellow workers and inspired by the heroism of the NYC firefighters and others. But ultimately they are enraged at the fact that these things can and do happen. The recent events are qualitatively different from what occurred after the Oklahoma City bombing. This has paralyzed and galvanized the entire country to a degree not seen since World War II. And although the immediate reaction of many has been to rally around the flag in the interests of "national unity", what they really strive for is the unity of humanity and an end to these terrible events. The fundamental effect of the attacks has been to give workers a shocking wake up call as to the cruelties of this world. Millions of people in the US now know what it feels like to live in uncertainty and fear - and they don't like it. They have been awakened to the fact that they cannot simply ignore the outside world - the problems of the rest of the world are also the problems of the American working class. And it is precisely the lack of stability of life under capitalism which will force millions of people to take their lives and futures into their own hands.

For many years now, the masses of workers have had their heads down. They

have been worried about the problems of everyday life - bills, jobs, family, healthcare, education, and so on. But the events of the past week have had an effect on their consciousness similar to that of throwing a bucket of ice water on someone dozing in the sunshine on a lazy Saturday afternoon. Things are fundamentally different now for millions of people. Whether on television or in the bars, in the churches or in the schools, working people are suddenly acutely

ly aware that there is more to life than that. An event like this violently shakes people out of their day to day patterns of life; overnight it sweeps away many of the mental cobwebs of routinism and forces them to take a long hard look at the real world around them. It signifies a dramatic change in their outlook on life.

We are completely opposed to having any illusions in "national unity" in the bourgeois sense. The interests of the ruling class and of the working class are diametrically opposed. But a very important result of these calls for national unity is the following - the average working person actually believes that he or she is in fact as important or vital to the situation as any other person in society. Working people are standing up tall for perhaps the first time and feel a part of a community. Strangers engage in discussions with each other, and thousands of people get to have their point of view heard on television. Thousands participate in the gruelling work

The need for class distinctions as well as leaders and enforcers standing above the rest of society melts away in practice. The whole community comes together to ensure there is enough food, clothing, water, and even shoes for the rescue and clean up effort. Many people worried about riots or vandalism when the attacks first occurred, but in practice the working class remained calm and on a small scale made itself the master of the situation. American workers have always had a pioneering, "can-do" spirit, and these revived experiences of empowerment will not be soon forgotten and will be important in the future.

But this new awareness has not yet reached the point of class consciousness. At this stage the working class identifies itself more than ever with the ruling class and with the capitalist system it represents. This is a decisive answer to the defenders and supporters of individual terrorism as a method of political struggle. Far from inspiring the working class to fight for its emancipation from wage slavery it has driven the proletariat into the arms of the bourgeoisie. It has also snuffed out much of the sympathy US workers may have felt for those in whose name these acts were committed. While the capitalists' grip on the situation is not as firm as it was just a week ago, the workers are nowhere near even posing the question of taking political and economic control over their lives into their own hands. The lines between the classes have been blurred in people's minds, and instead of seeing "capitalists vs. workers", they see the situation as one of "us vs. them", with "them" being a shadowy, unknown foreign and domestic enemy. These attacks will give the ruling class an excuse to increase its repression here and abroad; will retard the rising tide of independent trade union and working class

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of searching for survivors while millions of others around the country help support that effort. And while they still look to their "leaders" for guidance, they begin in actual practice to feel the strength and power of their united activity in the interest of the common good. They must make lightning quick decisions and collectively find the most safe and efficient ways of getting things organized. Even some of the hated NY police officers lose their character as repressors and are seen individually as just another worker in the bucket brigades.

political activity; will allow them to raid social security and increase funding for the intelligence services and the military, and worse. The trade union bureaucrats will rally around the bosses and call off strike actions in the name of national unity, and the recession will be blamed on terrorism instead of the system itself.

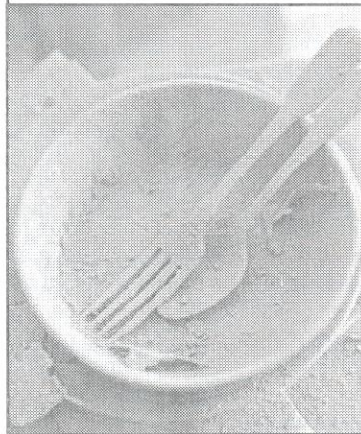
The attacks also make a mockery of the claims of the anarchists who imagine that fighting a few cops or smashing the windows of McDonald's will somehow make a dent on the capitalist system.

These attacks were a massive physical attack on the property and police of the capitalists, and yet the supposedly "irrelevant" state apparatus is now reinforcing itself as we explained above. The mobilizations of the National Guard are not so much to provide security, but to re-instill confidence in, and reverence for, the repressive arm of the capitalists, and to accustom Americans to having troops on the streets. It took three years of blood, sweat and tears on behalf of the working class to build the WTC, and only moments to destroy - not to mention the thousands of lives that were lost. This is the result of "direct action" on a massive scale! We do not want to destroy these magnificent buildings, created by human ingenuity and labor! We do not want to smash the windows of one or even one thousand McDonald's - but to place the entire multinational corporation and the entire economy under the democratic control of the workers who do all the productive work in society! That is the ultimate in direct action!

The grim events of last week only confirm our perspective that we have entered a period of crisis and instability on a world scale. Since as long ago as WWI, the capitalist class has been unfit to rule in the name of the rest of humanity. All it can guarantee is war, poverty, hunger, ignorance, racism, and violence for 90% of the world's population. Now more than ever we must maintain our conviction that socialism is the only way forward. Marx explained that human society had two choices facing it - socialism or barbarism. We have often used the appalling conditions in Afghanistan to illustrate what we mean by barbarism. Now that barbaric reality has shown its face in the heart of the most powerful country on earth.

In many ways, the recent turn of events will make the task of explaining the ideas of Marxism to the masses of workers more difficult. But we must always maintain a clear class

While there is no "final crisis" of capitalism - it will continue to exist on the bones of the working class until it is replaced by the mass action of the workers themselves



position when explaining these events to the ones and twos who can already see through the hypocrisy of the ruling class. The ongoing crisis will only sharpen and accelerate the process of capitalist decline in the coming period. While there is no "final crisis" of capitalism - it will continue to exist on the bones of the working class until it is replaced by the mass action of the workers themselves - the economic blow of these attacks has sent the entire system reeling. The already weakened economy was abruptly put under tremendous additional strain. While it will certainly stabilize at a certain point, it can only do so by further squeezing and exploiting the world working class. This, combined with the uncertain future and unpredictable nature of war and retaliation will inevitably lead to a questioning of the system itself at a certain stage. We will have many opportunities to explain the Marxist position on terrorism, on the need for independent working class political action to fight against militarism, imperialism, and the restrictions on civil liberties here at home, on the real reasons for the economic crisis, and so on. But we must consistently emphasize the need for working class unity here and internationally. No faith in the capitalist class and its representatives!

The consequences of last week's attack will be far and wide, and we can only begin to appreciate the effects it will have on a world scale. It is still impossible to say at this point whether it will lead to an all out war, how deeply it will affect the world economy, its lasting effects on the class struggle, the anti-globalization movement, civil liberties, military spending, and so on. Over the coming weeks, months, and years we will have to follow and analyze these events carefully. But most importantly we must build the forces of genuine Marxism in the US and internationally. The need to provide a clear socialist alternative to capitalist barbarism is more urgent than ever! ●

## The IMF from the inside

"They'll say the IMF is arrogant. They'll say the IMF doesn't really listen to the developing countries it is supposed to help. They'll say the IMF is insulated from democratic accountability. They'll say the IMF's economic 'remedies' often make things worse - turning slowdowns into recessions and recessions into depressions. And they'll have a point. I was Chief Economist at the World Bank from 1996 until last November (1998), during the gravest global economic crisis in a half-century. I saw how the IMF, in tandem with the US Treasury Department, responded. And I was appalled....

When the IMF decides to assist a country, it despatches a 'mission' of economists. These economists frequently lack extensive experience in the country; they are more likely to have firsthand knowledge of its five star hotels than of the villages that dot its countryside. They work

hard, poring over numbers deep into the night. But their task is impossible. In a period of days or, at most, weeks, they are charged with developing a coherent program sensitive to the needs of the country....

Critics accuse the institution of taking a cookie-cutter approach to economics, and they're right. Country teams have been known to compose draft reports before visiting. I heard stories of one unfortunate incident when team members copied large parts of the text for one country's report and transferred them wholesale to another. They might have gotten away with it, except the 'search and replace' function on the word processor didn't work properly, leaving the original country's name in a few places. Oops." (Joseph Stiglitz in 'Ecologist' September 2000)

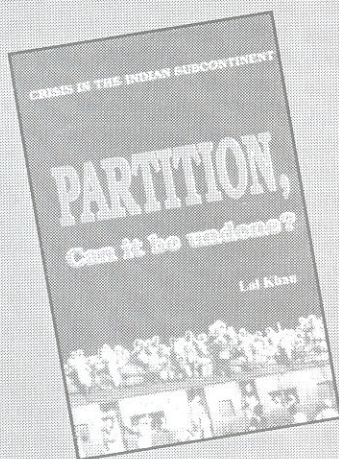


# Build the forces of Socialism

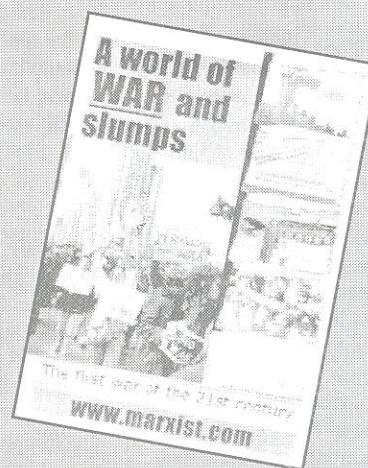
**F**or millions of people both here and abroad, the world has just become a more uncertain place. Youth in particular must be wondering what the future holds with all the talk of war and retribution. After all when Blair and Bush and all the rest of the Great Coalition Against Terrorism (as they are starting to call themselves) talk about war and fighting and sacrifice, they do not mean themselves, of course. No, they mean you! For many workers and youth the problem is to make sense of all this. What is needed is a voice which cuts across the hype and hypocrisy of our all knowing world leaders. A voice which explains why these things have happened, what is the class basis of it and what can be done. Marxism is both an analysis and a programme. We don't just want to understand the world, we want to change it. This is the real task facing the workers of the world, a task made more urgent by the political chaos we see around us. *Socialist Appeal* is just such a voice for change. However it remains a small one at present, strong in will and determination but weak in resources as against the powerful clarions of big business. So two questions are posed: the need for increased

sales and the need for increased donations to our fighting fund. You can help in both. Why not take out a regular bulk order of *Socialist Appeal* to sell, in your Labour Party or union branch or just to the people you know and talk to at work or at college. Even just taking a few copies to sell each month can help spread the word. Ring or write now for details. The other matter is the call for donations. Last month we had a number of excellent donations including nearly £100 from readers in the Eastern region who collected money at a summer social and also at the Burston School Strike Rally. A similar amount also came from a London discussion meeting held following the bombing in the USA. But this needs to be kept up and improved on, especially as we need to pay for additional material, pamphlets and leaflets etc., over the next month as things hot up. Please send what you can to us at *Socialist Appeal*, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ.

Steve Jones



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# Bracing for a new Afghan war

## Report from Pakistan

The dark clouds of war and destruction loom large over Afghanistan and Pakistan. Tensions have mounted on the Pakistan-Afghan border. By *Lal Khan*, editor of the Pakistani Marxist paper *Jeddo Judh* (Class Struggle)

For the first time since the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, the Pakistani and Taliban border forces have taken up positions against each other. The rising tension however did not deter the ruling Taliban elite from sending their families to safe sanctuary in Pakistan amid fears of US strikes on Afghanistan. But the ordinary people in Kabul and other towns and cities devastated by wars, drought, hunger and repression are suffering in extreme destitution.

Out of a total Afghan population of 23 million, more than a million perished in the ongoing conflict in the last two decades. Five million of them are rotting in the refugee camps and countryside of Iran and Pakistan. Apart from a tiny privileged ruling clique, the overwhelming population of Afghanistan is devoid of sanitation, health facilities, safe drinking water and other basic facilities of human existence. The literacy rate has fallen below 25 percent. There are 200,000 widows in Kabul who are not allowed to go outdoors and hence cannot work. They have no other income or any means of subsistence. The girls are barred from schools and education. There has never been a railway line in Afghanistan, one of the most rugged landscapes in the world. Afghanistan is also the most mined country in the world. In case of a US assault it will be, as always, the poor, the weak and the destitute who will suffer. Prices in Kabul are already soaring. Fuel prices have risen by 20 percent in just three days.

The reactionary impact of the terrorist attack has also exposed the vicious and brutal nature of the US state. In this reactionary binge -- where they do not even claim to have solid proof of Osama Bin Laden's involvement--they are vowing to destroy Afghanistan. But this is not the Gulf war, with its targeting of reinforced bunkers, factories, bridges and the palaces of Saddam Hussain. Afghanistan cannot be bombed back to the pre-industrial age,

because it is already there. What little infrastructure Afghanistan had before it descended into political chaos has long since disappeared into rubble. Even the roads have been obliterated.

The American attack will initially be from aerial bombing and cruise missiles from its battleships in the Gulf. There will be massive carpet-bombing, which will further devastate Afghanistan, if that is possible any more. The main targets of the military strikes would include Taliban headquarters in Kandhar, government and Arab residential blocks in Kabul, some government-related structures in Jalalabad and 18 airports and bridges in all the major cities in Afghanistan.

### Ground assault

These "softened-up targets" would then be attacked through hit-and-run missions. This ground assault would be conducted by special US forces, marines and elements from the 82 and 101 airborne divisions of the US army. It is not ruled out that the Pakistan army SSG (Special Services group, Commando units) - who have been carrying out joint exercises with the 82 and 101 airborne US army divisions - might be ordered to carry out the job.

Although the Taliban arsenal is no match for the colossal military might of the USA, still it will not be a simple affair for the Americans. Even a hit-and-run commando operation will not be without casualties and a protracted guerrilla war can ensue. The Americans themselves have trained most of the Taliban's military strategists in this guerrilla warfare

Osama bin Laden was recruited by Turki Al Faisal, the Saudi intelligence Chief way back in the late 1970s or early 1980s, together with Gulbadin Hekmatyar, the CIA's favourite and a puppet of Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami. Bin Laden became the CIA's chief organiser of the insurgency

against the left wing government of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Ever since the fall of the Najibullah government in Kabul the feuding Islamicist factions have created chaos that endangered the interests of those who had sponsored the so-called Afghan Jihad.

With anarchy prevailing in post "communist" Afghanistan and spilling into Pakistan, the CIA along with ISI (Inter Services Intelligence) started propping up the Taliban in 1994. Ironically this was taking place under Benazir Bhutto's so-called progressive regime in Pakistan. The financial backing of this operation - apart from Saudi Arabia and the CIA - mainly came from UNOCAL and the big US oil conglomerates. They had their own vested interests in getting oil and gas pipelines from Central Asian republics - mainly Turkmenistan - through Afghanistan down to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. The deal was struck under the auspices of the then US under-secretary of state Ms. Robyn Raphael. Another US foreign office senior bureaucrat, Robert Oakley had become one of the directors of the UNICOL, as a result of his experience in the region. The ISI also persuaded the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) military faction led by Shahnawaz Tanai to join the Taliban forces and used his pilots to fly MIG 23 and Sakoi fighters and drive sophisticated Russian Tanks.

The Taliban captured Kabul in 1996. US \$30 million was paid by UNICOL alone for the completion of this operation. The Americans were not at all disturbed by the ruthless and barbaric acts perpetrated by the Taliban upon the poor Afghan populace. They had no complaints about the repression of women by these monsters. In fact, after coming to power the Taliban started playing with various oil multinationals who were trying to strike deals on oil and gas pipe lines with them. In 1997 the Taliban sent two delegations to the two competing bidders, UNICOL and Bidas (an

Argentinian oil giant) to Texas and Buenos Aires. At the headquarters of Bidas in Buenos Aires, all the female staff were asked not to wear skirts, but to put on long trousers and cover their heads with scarves. Similar instructions were issued in Texas, USA. The Taliban, however, deceived both: they took the advantages and then ditched the deals.

But in all this the Pakistani regime is in the most precarious position. In spite of being a nuclear power the Pakistani regime is trembling in its shoes. This US assault on Afghanistan can have devastating consequences for Pakistan.

Pakistan's economy is a shambles. US sanctions have further debilitated the economy. The growth rate has gone down from an annual average of 6.9 percent in the 1980s, and 4 percent in the 1990s to about 2.1 percent in the last two years. Pakistan would have defaulted, had the IMF not rescheduled its debt in the last few months. But the new loans are to continue the debt-servicing process. No major new projects are in the offing.

## Pakistan elite

A major section of the Pakistan ruling class is in favour of outright subservience to US Imperialism. Some are talking about getting a debt relief of 3 billion dollars through outright subservience to US dictates. Most of the generals, top bureaucrats, judges and other members of the elite have enormous personal interests at stake. According to one report 28 individuals in the Pakistan elite have financial assets worth US \$82 billion in the West. Pakistan has a total of \$39.2bn foreign debt and \$40.4bn domestic debt. Pakistan GNP has shrunk to \$67bn in the last few years. So the loot of the generals is at stake if they dare to defy US Imperialism.

Pakistan's desperate efforts to convince the Taliban to show flexibility and hand over Osama reflect the dilemma this state is in. In reality the state is being asked to disarm and crush those very organisations, which it created and with which it is in close contact to the present moment. It is an impossible riddle for the ISI and the Pakistan state to solve. This situation is creating enormous strains on the already tense relations between different factions of the state. Although most generals are "united" in spite of deep hatreds and clashes of interests (loot), mainly because they see their survival by clinging on to this last edifice of a decaying state apparatus. Still, a coup against Musharraf and his pro-US cohorts cannot be totally ruled out.

Pakistani officials also believe that there is a real danger of sectarian terrorism erupting in the wake of the strikes because the Taliban continue to harbour some of the most wanted Pakistani sectarian criminals

in Afghanistan.

Although the mainstream political parties, intellectuals, journalists and other sections of the ruling stratum have fallen into line with the US dictates, the situation on the ground is very different. At the moment there have been sporadic demonstrations and the anti-American movement has not taken a mass base. This could change very rapidly.

At present the main stalwarts of the "defence of Afghanistan" are the fundamentalists and Islamicist parties. The main support of these reactionary elements and the Taliban are the "Madrassas" or religious seminaries spread in the length and breadth of the country. The young students aged between 5-15 in these seminaries are mainly there because their parents cannot feed, clothe or educate them. They are chained at night in shackles, live in atrocious conditions and are indoctrinated in fanaticism and religious bigotry. The black money barons and the drug Mafia that are closely linked to the Taliban and the Islamic fundamentalists fund these seminaries.

Once the US aggression begins, the anti-American movement will start to expand and gather a mass base. The wider and the larger it gets, the weaker the control of Islamic fundamentalism will become. Whether Osama bin Laden is apprehended or not, the US attack will unleash such social unrest that it will become uncontrollable for the present military regime. A number of scenarios can open up. Another military ruler a new change of face with a civilian puppet or severe repression can ensue.

In any case, the main victims of the US operation will be the poor, the innocent and the weak that have nothing to do with terrorism, both in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Hence the US aggression has to be fervently opposed by the Marxists and the working class of Pakistan.

The leadership of the PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party) the main mass party in Pakistan is once again playing a treacherous role. In the last local elections they formed alliances with Islamic parties. Now when the same Jamaat-e-Islami called an All Parties Conference, to discuss the impending attack on Afghanistan the PPP leadership refused to participate on the pretext that "there will be talk against America, hence we cannot participate in any such a conference". This has made the situation for the workers and youth more complicated and confusing. But once the movement erupts and the working class enters the struggle, the whole character of the movement will be changed. A revolutionary programme and slogans will gain a mass base and give a clear direction to this movement.



## Revolutionary Programme

The US Imperialist aggression must be condemned - so should terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, represented by the monstrous Taliban regime and other Islamist outfits. An independent class position must be put forward with a clear revolutionary programme and strategy.

In this epoch of capitalist decay, Islamic fundamentalism and US Imperialism are two sides of the same coin.

As long as capitalism continues to dominate the planet, the horrors of imperialist aggression and fundamentalist terrorism will continue to torture and traumatise humankind. The only way out of this misery, suffering and barbarism is the overthrow of capitalism through the socialist revolution. ●

In 1986 at the invitation of the British Foreign Office Afghan 'rebel' leader Abdul Haq visited London to meet Thatcher. According to The Guardian of March 5, 1986, Mr. Haq admitted "ordering the bombing of Kabul airport in 1984 in which at least 28 people are reported to have died." The purpose of the bombing was "to warn people not to send their children to the Soviet Union."

A year earlier this is what one of George W. Bush's predecessors had to say about these terrorists: "Throughout the world the Soviet Union and its agents...are on the defensive...Freedom movements arise and assert themselves. They're doing so on almost every continent populated by man - in the hills of Afghanistan, in Angola, in Kampuchea, in Central America. In making mention of freedom fighters, all of us are privileged to have in our midst tonight one of the brave commanders who lead the Afghan freedom fighters - Abdul Haq. Abdul Haq, we are with you." (Ronald Reagan, March 8, 1985)

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☆ **The outlawing of all forms of discrimination.** Equal pay for equal work. Invest in quality child-care facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act.

☆ **The reversal of the Tories' cuts in the health service.** Abolish private health care. For a National Health Service, free to all at the point of need, based on the nationalisation of the big drug companies that squeeze their profits out of the health of working people.

☆ **Reclaim the Labour Party!** Defeat Blairism! Fight for Party democracy and socialist policies. For workers' MPs on workers' wages.

☆ **The abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.** Full economic powers for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, enabling them to introduce socialist measures in the interests of working people. ☆ No to sectarianism. For a Socialist United Ireland linked by a voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain.

☆ **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.

☆ **Socialist internationalism.** No to the bosses European Union. Yes to a socialist united states of Europe, as part of a world socialist federation.

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