IV335 - November 2001

Behind the ‘war on terrorism’

16 November 2001, by Phil Hearse

For prior to September 11, the administration had been under siege diplomatically and politically. Now, quite logically from their own point of view, the Bush-Cheney team has seized on the crisis to turn the tables on all its critics, forcefully reasserting American leadership internationally. The scale of US global offensive is breathtaking. It amounts to a decisive attempt to push world politics to the right under US hegemony, and to crush all opposition to absolute US world political and economic domination. It thus throws down an enormous challenge to the left and the global justice movement, which have to understand and confront this new situation or face the possibility of devastating defeats.

Since Bush came to office his administration, the key figure in which is Dick Cheney - more a co-president than a vice-president - has been determined to push through its hard-right reactionary agenda. This has led to one conflict after another, notably:-

- international fury at the proposed missile defence system, leading to clashes especially with the European Union (EU), China, Russia and the Democrats in Congress.

- isolation internationally over withdrawal from the Kyoto agreement on world climate change

- criticism of the ‘do nothing’ policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which in effect gave the Israelis a free hand to terrorise the Palestinians.

- the stand-off with China over the spy-plane incident, a reflection of the Bush regime’s hardening stance against China and stepped-up support for Taiwan.

- clashes with the Democrats, who threatened to use their Senate majority to veto the administration’s defence spending plans in Congress.

- continual conflict with the EU over ’free trade’ and the plans for a European Rapid Reaction Force.

In addition to this list, of course, the American government and corporations have been a prime target for the rapidly expanding global justice movement. Now the reactionary massacre of September 11th has thrown all the cards in the air. Bush and Cheney have launched an all-embracing political offensive, aimed particularly at throwing back the global justice movement, whipping the EU into line, targeting the third world and national liberation movements, defeating domestic opposition, crushing civil liberties in the US and internationally (while strengthening international police, military and intelligence cooperation), establishing harsher methods of dealing with immigration and asylum seekers, reasserting the US diplomatic and economic dominance in the Middle East, politically subordinating Canada, establishing the right of the US to station military forces in the former Soviet republics and isolating China. All this takes place within the overall framework of using this offensive to push forward key US economic objectives, particularly in relation to so-called ’free trade’ - ie the right of entry for US corporations everywhere.

The obstacles to global American success and formidable; the very scope and importance of what has been undertaken has created huge tensions within the Bush team, and with other sections of the US of political and, especially, financial elite, which are discussed below.

Reactionary mobilisation

The first payoff for the Bush administration has been at home. The weeks following the attacks have seen the biggest reactionary mobilisation in the United States since the McCarthy period in the 1950s. National TV networks gave non-stop coverage 24 hours a day, whipping up a frenzy of patriotism, often with racist overtones. Natural human sympathy with the victims and their families, and feelings of solidarity with, especially, the more than 300 firefighters who died, were shamelessly plundered by the administration and by an enormously powerful (and unanimous) mass media to create a nationalist wave. Here of course they were aided by the fact that these were all-too-visible deaths; the 200,000 who died in Iraq during

the US Gulf war bombing, and those who have died in subsequent bombing and missile attacks (and during the sanctions blockade) were not on every TV channel 24 hours a day. This creates, as campaigning left wing journalist John Pilger pointed out, the "worthy dead" and the "unworthy dead".

In the US and Canada there were ceremonies, often with military participation, in virtually every town. The first baseball and football games to be held after the attacks started with the parading of the flag and 'God Bless America'. Congress rushed to give Bush carte blanche for military attacks, with only one person voting against in either House. As a result, Bush saw his approval rating soar to 88%; by contrast, Clinton, who oversaw a period of economic boom, never got above 73%. All questions of the legitimacy of the administration, which only nine months ago was ushered in on the back of barely-concealed electoral fraud in Florida, were buried. The Democrats have signalled very clearly that they intend to drop previous objections to using social security funds for military spending, doubts about the WTO and objections to the cost of missile defence. Former vice-president Al Gore said it all: "The President is my Commander in Chief".

The US was not alone in being subject to this reactionary frenzy. With some honourable exceptions, the mass media in Britain chimed in behind the US, preparing the ground for British participation in the war, and for the passing of even more draconian attacks on civil liberties, particularly those of asylum seekers and refugees. And this reactionary mobilisation has been spurred by creating panic about the possibility of further terrorist attacks, including perhaps poisonous gas attacks, and paranoia about the possible existence of 'terrorist cells' on every street corner.

Global US objectives

American capitalism has a long agenda of demands to make the world safe for US corporations. These revolve around the destruction of 'protectionism' and trade barriers - in particular state subsidies for national industries, opening every country in the world to US products and financial institutions; the reinforcement and extension of patents and 'intellectual property rights' to include organic products, and natural organisms like the human genome and plants, and to protect the patents of US computer and drug companies; and the right for the US to station and use military forces in every part of the world. The reactionary agenda also includes forcing every major capitalist country to thoroughly "liberalise" its economy, ditching social protection, state ownership and state intervention in the economy.

It also includes dealing a decisive blow against the environmental movement, pushing aside objections to using lignite (the brown coal in which the US is rich) to fire new power stations, and to opening up oil production in the Alaska national park.

The beauty of the 'war on terrorism' is that it both starts from the moral high ground of portraying the US as the victim, and utilises emotions over the slaughter in the US to appeal over the heads of national governments, strengthening the hand of pro-US forces in every country. Just a year ago commentators were saying that 'US foreign policy is drifting'. Now there is an over-arching project, the first significant one to replace the Cold War; and every nation can be challenged "are you with us or with the terrorists?"

The first results of this operation can now be seen. Instead of a giant global justice demonstration in Washington on 27/8 September, there was just a small (but courageous and important) demonstration against war and racism. A broad 'anti-terrorist' coalition has been created, stretching from Britain, to Russia, to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan - although not without difficulties and contradictions which we discuss below. Inside the European Union, the pathetic Blair government has revealed itself (again) as a totally subordinate agent of the United States. And Congress has now signalled that it will go-ahead with plans to "fast track" free trade negotiations, especially those at next month's World Trade Organisation meeting in Qatar - in particular US demands for an end to "subsidies" and other "unfair practices" which keep out US goods. By contrast the US will not reciprocate by supporting European and third world demands for an end to "dumping" cheap goods on poorer countries.

Conflicts within the Bush team

Over and above its wider global agenda, the US regime feels compelled to respond militarily at some level, for obvious reasons of simple national prestige. When Thatcher launched the war with Argentina, part of her reasoning was that the prestige of British capitalism had been sorely offended by the conquest of 'sovereign territory', the Malvinas islands. Not to fight back was to suffer a loss of face and to look weak.

However the scope of the US response has been hotly debated between the 'doves' and hawks' in the administration. The most hawkish is Paul Wolfowitz, assistant secretary of state at the Defence department, who modestly calls himself "a major international figure" and has talked menacingly about "ending rogue states". Wolfowitz is an old Cold Warrior, who 25 years ago was part of an advisory team to Gerald Ford, urging stepped up use of military power. In the first days after the attacks Wolfowitz, under the rubric of crushing what he called "every snake in the swamp", urged military strikes against Bin Laden and Afghanistan, but then Iraq and Hizbollah. British journalist Ed Vulliamy noted: "(The plans) were drawn up by Paul Wolfowitz - a highly intellectual right winger who rose through the State Department and Pentagon ranks under Ronald Reagan to become one of the chief architects of the 1991 Gulf War. Drafted with a small coterie of loyal aides, mainly consisting of civilian appointees at the Pentagon, the plans argue for open-ended war without constraint of time or geography and potentially engulfing the entire Middle East and central

Asia…The plans put before the president during the past few days involve expanding the war beyond Afghanistan to include similar incursions by special ops forces - followed by air strikes by the bombers they would guide - into Iraq, Syria and the Beqaa Valley area of Lebanon, where the Syrian-backed Hizbollah (Party of God) fighters that harass Israel are based" (The Observer, 30 September).

This plan ran straight into the general philosophy of the use of military power developed by Secretary of State Colin Powell. The Powell Doctrine, according to Ed Vulliamy, "roughly put is this; do not get involved in military intervention unless it's in the nation's vital interests; only intervene military if the political goals are clear and achievable; only use overwhelming force, properly built up".

This in the past has led Powell into bitter confrontation with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright who wanted US intervention in ex-Yugoslavia as early as 1992. "What's the point of having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?" she once screamed at him. Wolfowitz must be thinking the same thing today.

In the present crisis, Wolfowitz has been out-manoeuvred by Powell, who first won over National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, then Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and then - decisively - vice president Dick Cheney. The imperatives of launching a broad-based international alliance came slap up against the logic of widespread military strikes. In other words, the long-term political goals of asserting American world leadership point, for the present time, at limited strikes against targets which can reasonably be held to have something to do with those alleged to have carried out the September 11 attack. According to Powell over-ambitious use of military power disrupts the other immediate fronts "international banking, policing, international justice (sic), public security, espionage and surveillance." As we discuss below, all-out military action now has been sacrificed to long-term economic and political objectives, with uncertain future results.

Nato and the problem of Europe

America's war on terrorism has the EU as a prime target. The reasons are clear. United States foreign policy has always faced a dilemma with the European Union (formerly EEC). In the Cold War period the US promoted European economic growth and moves towards unification, in particular as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, and with the hope that the Europeans would take on a higher proportion of West European "defence" spending.

However, this has created not only potential economic rivals, but in the post-Cold war period an alternative economic and social model, which while importing a lot from Anglo-Saxon neo-liberalism, still maintains important residues from the previous Keynesian social welfare period. In particular it threatens to create a political bloc capable of confronting the US on the world stage.

This account may seem surprising to some socialists, especially those in Britain who have seen the near complete destruction of the Keynesian social welfare model in their country (by both Tory and Labour governments). But it would be foolish to underestimate the survivals of social welfare and state provision which still exist in Germany, France, the Benelux countries, Scandinavia and to a certain extent Italy.

George Szamuely, writing in the London Observer (25 February 2001), argued: "The European Union, once a mere trading bloc, then a single market, is now evolving into a political federation with its own constitution and elected president. Armed with its own foreign and security policy, the EU could, in the not so distant future, emerge as a serious rival to the United States. Should the EU succeed in making the Russia's vast energy and mineral resources its own, it would become a continental superpower - the stuff of American nightmares".

This indeed seems to have been the agenda set forward by German chancellor Gerard Schröder in his May 7, 2001 speech, in which he strongly set out the case for European political integration and repeated his call for a European constitution. In reply, French president Jacques Chirac argued for "a United Europe of States" and not a "United States of Europe"; and Tony Blair called for a "European superpower, but not a European superstate". In any case, everyone seemed to accept that growing integration, even if it stopped short of a full-blown state, was inevitable. This is also strongly implied by the January 2002 introduction of the Euro as the working currency of 13 states, including France, Germany, Italy and France. A single currency means single interest rates, and from then it is a short step to single tax laws, all characteristics of statehood.

According to George Szamuely, the US is in reality bitterly opposed to European union: "Since 1945, successive US administrations have championed European unity without taking the idea seriously. By European unity Americans meant little more than a set of institutions to facilitate compliance with Washington's commands. Rather than have a dozen capitals to call, the President of the United States could convey his wishes with a single phone call to Brussels. The European Community was seen as a mechanism to ensure that Europeans paid their share of NATO's costs and did not wander off the reservation to pursue separate foreign policies. Nato ensured US supremacy over potential political and economic rivals.

"Once the cold war ended, transatlantic conflicts that had been suppressed for the sake of Allied Unity broke out into the open. Trade disputes between Europe and the US multiplied at a furious pace. Americans responded by trying to think of ingenious ways to keep NATO - and there American dominance over Europe - going in perpetuity. Nato was to have new missions. It would operate 'out of area' and crusade for 'peace', 'democracy' or oil interests in the Caucuses or the Gulf. Europe would have to sign on for these imperial adventures: Nato was all they had, and had always been an American show." (ibid)

This explains US hostility to an independent European military force. Bush says he "accepted" the idea of a European Rapid Reaction Force as long as "Nato continues to be the primary way to keep the peace in Europe", as long as there is "joint command" (ie with the US), and as long as Nato members "bolster their defence budgets".

Now the "new war on terrorism" provides an excuse for tying Europeans to Nato. Contrary to what was expected at the beginning of the crisis, the US has invoked Clause 5 of the Nato constitution, which obliges member states to come to the aid of any member under attack. This clause was clearly written to provide for mutual defence in case of an attack by the Soviet Union, and its use today is a fig-leaf for obliging the Europeans to toe the American line.

In the last period the Europeans have demonstrated a disturbing political independence, generally greeting the election of Bush with undisguised dismay, launching open attacks on the US over missile defence, the Kyoto treaty on world climate change, and sometimes being inclined to be very critical of Israel. Very different position on the South African racism conference were adopted by the US and the EU states.

Vitally, the European Union has shown itself willing to go to the brink with the US on some trade issues, leading to some secondary mutual bans on imports - let's not forget that the movement against "McWorld" initiated by French farmers' leader and anti-corporate campaigner Jose Bové started as a protest against the banning of the import of Roquefort cheese into the US. Most of all the EU refuses to give up its Common Agricultural Policy, which Washington sees as an unfair subsidy to farmers and a block on American imports.

There are other vital economic and political issues at stake. The Europeans have pushed for the normalisation of relations with Libya, Iran and Iraq. French and German companies have restarted trade with Baghdad, and in the wake of the Lockerbie trial normal relations have been established with Libya - including direct air flights and a joint banking venture between HSBC (strong in the UK) and a Libyan bank. There has long been competition between Europe and the US for political and economic influence in the Middle East. Now the US will by attaching some states to its "anti-terrorist" alliance, and pressuring and intimidating others, disrupt European access and influence to its own benefit.

Now the Bush team has a political agenda which can cut a swathe through European obstructionism - those who are not with us are with the terrorists. In this they will have the backing of Blair government in Britain, whose simple pro-American stance borders on naiveté. A pro-European government which wants Britain to enter the Euro zone is giving uncritical backing to the main force which wants to wreck it.

Equally the US will hope to enlist the support of right wing pro-American forces, for example the new British Conservative leader Ian Duncan-Smith who advocates British entry into NAFTA, and perhaps Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi who has gone so far as to repeat Samuel Huntingdon's nonsense about a "war between civilisations", particularly the Christian world and Islam.

Asylum seekers, immigration and civil liberties

As must now be obvious to any serious observer, Islamic fundamentalism - and the terrorism which it sometimes (though by no means always) gives rise to - stems from the desperation of the hundreds of millions of the oppressed in the Muslim countries, and from the lack of more socially progressive political forces to advance their cause. That desperation is not confined to those countries. Decades of neo-liberalism, third world debt, 'structural adjustment', and IMF-World Bank 'conditionalities' which had broken up state protection and provision, have greatly deepened the impoverishment of the third world. This has been reinforced by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc, which has subjected millions more to penury and devastating wars.

The result is a huge tide of refugees and economic migrants, to which has now been added more than a million on the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. While migrants from many countries try to enter North America and Europe, the US in particular is the target of migrants from Mexico and Central America. The imperialist powers face two ways on this issue. On the one hand, the labour of the migrants - to a greater or lesser extent - is needed. This is particularly true for the US, but also for some European countries (Germany and Italy) which face demographic decline and a future labour shortage. On the other hand, reactionary political forces have utilised the immigration issue to whip up a tide of racism. The imperialist states themselves want above all to be able to control this flow of migrants, strengthening reactionary immigration controls.

The new 'war on terrorism' is being used to strengthen border controls, and push through a raft of measures restricting movement of citizens, and the right to organise politically. This has been already prefigured in the British anti-terrorism law, passed last year, which potentially criminalises all dissident political activity, and has already established a list of banned organisations. 'Those who are not with us are with the terrorists' becomes a banner to demonise and de-legitimise all political protest. The measures being passed in the US and Britain - suspiciously similar - will enable the 'fast track' extradition of 'terrorist suspects', indefinite detention without trial of asylum seekers and indeed anyone trying to cross borders who is considered suspicious, the seizure of bank accounts, the banning of organisations as 'fronts' for terrorism and unlimited powers to launch all-round surveillance of communications. Through this the repressive powers of the state are being strengthened, although many of these things already existed in Britain. No wonder some US Congress members are saying these measures breach the US constitution.

Basic elements of 'normal' bourgeois

democratic rights are being throttled. Many Muslim and other ethnic minority groups in the major capitalist states are facing a tide of racism, including a flood of physical attacks often unreported in the press. Openly racist caricatures of Arab and other Middle East peoples are widespread in the capitalist press. It is not by accident that the first significant demonstration in the US against government policy was 'against war AND racism'.

Social dislocation in the third world has created not just migrants but massive instability, reflected for example in the permanent chaos in Afghanistan and the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, Chechnya, the Congo and elsewhere. For the imperialist powers, there is a permanent need to dispose of military forces capable of holding these conflicts in check, and pushing them back insofar as they threaten any vital economic interests. A good example of this is the recent British military action in Sierra Leone. In a world of third world chaos, permanent imperialist military intervention becomes the norm. We can be sure that the action being planned against left wing guerrillas in Colombia, previously justified by the 'war against drugs', will now fall under the rubric of the 'war against terrorism'.

Military power and 'missile defence'

In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the 'cold war', a 'peace dividend' of reduced military spending was widely expected. Now the US intends to pump billions more into its war machine. The Bush administration will be able to sweep aside all objections to its 'missile defence' programme and new equipment for every military service. This attachment to grotesque amounts of military power is entirely logical, and has a very precise political-strategic objective. From Reagan onwards American administrations have understood very well that military power translates into political and economic power. Despite the cost, there is a massive dividend to being the world's only superpower. The ability to quickly put forces in the field and strike anywhere means that the US is always a factor to be taken into account politically; and political domination translates into economic access.

The 'Son of Star Wars' missile defence programme is about ensuring absolute world military dominance for the foreseeable future. In June the US announced that it would have lasers, the 'shoot down' part of the system, in place in Alaska by 2005 - much sooner than anyone thought. Together with the anti-missile shield, the US is developing a long range bomber - developed from space shuttle technology - capable of entering space and arriving at any point on the earth's surface within 30 minutes. You don't need to much imagination to see what this combination means. In fact the US is preparing to be able to carry out a first nuclear strike against any nation without fear of retaliation. This in itself will constitute a n enormous threat to any other rival nation.

Neither is there much doubt which nation the US sees as its main long-term rival - China. With the economic catastrophe in Russia, no other nation seems to have the population and resource base to challenge US hegemony in the long-run.

According to Isobel Hilton: "The Republican party is divided between the hardliners who see China as a potential enemy and the business lobby pursuing its usual agenda of trade no matter what. (The same dilemma, on a smaller scale, presents itself over Cuba.) Among Bush's advisers, there is a perceptible difference between the more conciliatory State Department and the hard-line military." Despite these differences Bush has leaned towards the hardliners: "Since Bush came to power, he has antagonised the Chinese through his cavalier approach to the warming relations with North Korea, through his enthusiasm for missile defence, his commitment to arms sales to Taiwan and his decision to pursue a resolution in Geneva censuring China for human rights violations....The issue, though, is more sensitive if it is read in conjunction with missile defence. The Chinese regard the US missile defence proposals as aimed at neutralising China's long-range nuclear arsenal, a system that, as yet, poses little direct threat to the US. A more urgent cause of friction, though, is in the related area of theatre defence.."(Guardian, 3 April 2001) In other words, missile defence is seen as threatening China's capacity to confront Taiwan and India with short-range missiles.

Successive administrations have developed a strategy of being able to fight two major wars simultaneously and win - most models made the two wars as being against Russia and China. Defence spending cutbacks since 1990 put this objective in question. Defence Secretary Rumsfeld this year found himself in sharp conflict with the Joint Chiefs of Staff over his review of defence spending, and his decision to abandon the 'two wars' criterion. Although defence spending was to rise, most of it would be taken up by the missile defence project. Now the block on military spending will be lifted: the US will have the missile defence shield and a huge increase in military hardware for all four major US armed services.

Equally, Democrat objections to increased defence spending will be overcome. In his July 18th testimony to the Senate budget committee, Paul Wolfowitz faced a grilling over the decision to increase defence spending to $329 billion - eight percent higher than last year. This decision was particularly controversial because of the then projected $21 billion to be taken out of the Medicare and social security funds. Budget committee chairman, Democrat Kent Conrad, told Wolfowitz he would stop defence spending increases if it meant taking money out of federal health or social security funds. Conrad's objections are now in the dustbin.

Canada

In his September 16 speech to Congress, Bush conspicuously omitted Canada from the list of the US's supportive allies. This was meant to turn up the heat on Canadian premier Jean Chretiénne, whohadstated that Canada held no blank cheque for US on militaryaction. In addition, the US is now pushing for an agreement for joint sovereignty of US/Canadian

borders. This would mean free movement between the two countries, but an effective US veto on who could be admitted to Canada. The latter has long been economically dominated by US corporations, but now faces the threat of gradual political integration into the US: a state which cannot control its own borders is in the process of disappearing. In turn, politically marginalizing Canada reinforces absolute US political hegemony over the NAFTA bloc. Of course, there will be no free movement over the border with Mexico, and no deal with Mexican president Fox over legalising all Mexican immigrants in the US.

Contradictions in the alliance

There are enormous difficulties about constructing a lasting alliance for the 'war on terrorism'. Outside of its British satrap, the US has cajoled everyone else into the alliance using a mixture of threats and promises. Pakistan, Iran and the dreadful Vladimir Putin of Russia see supporting a strike against Afghanistan and the unloved Taliban regime as the price for US economic political aid and political support. Just a few weeks ago, Iran and Pakistan were on the State Department list of countries sponsoring or harbouring terrorists, and relations between Russia and the US were strained over missile defence. Now, with dollars glittering in their eyes, these countries are happily snuggled up within a US-led alliance. Putin of course is doing a quid-pro-quo in relation to Russia's dirty war in Chechnya. With Grozny still in ruins, and the Chechnyan population still terrorised by the Russian army, the West will turn an even blinder eye, and even dignify these outrages with the title of being part of the war on terrorism.

In Europe, the prostration before the US, into which even the German government has been dragged (despite the barely concealed US contempt for Schröder and his foreign minister Oskar Fischer), may not survive the military attack on Afghanistan. Already, US attempts to calm down Israeli repression against the Palestinians so as not to antagonise Arab states in the alliance have largely failed - although of course it has succeeded in preventing an all-out offensive by the Israelis.

After a strike on bin Laden and the Taliban, the basic question will reassert itself: what is the 'war on terrorism' about? Who are the terrorists who the alliance will stand together against? Iraq? Libya? The FARC in Colombia? The PLO? This is the major problem that the whole project faces. The alliance has been constructed around a short-term objective, when US objectives are medium- and long-term. There is little agreement between most members of the alliance about who terrorists are, or even the importance of terrorism as a problem.

A lot will depend the attitude of the European Nato members. For the moment all feel they have to stay with the anti-terrorist alliance, but have cautioned, especially at the September 26 Nato meeting, against widespread military action. Their emphasis was on the 'national security' aspects of anti-terrorism. Whether they will gradually resist all-round US attempts to bend them to an American agenda remains to be seen. Political backbone when dealing with the US has not in the past always been forthcoming. As George Szamuely puts it: "America's contempt is not entirely undeserved. Europe has passed up one opportunity after another to pursue an independent foreign policy. Britain can always be relied on to follow Washington's line. It cheerfully joined the bombing of Baghdad, sanctioned neither by international law nor United Nations resolution. After some harrumphing, the Germans too got on board. Sanctions on Iraq have been a total disaster. Former UN arms inspector Scott Ritter has written that by 1997 "Iraq had been disarmed. Iraq no longer possessed any meaningful quantities of chemical or biological agent, if it possessed any at all, and the industrial means to produce these agents had either been eliminated or were subject to stringent monitoring. The same was true of Iraq's nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities". Yet the European Union voices no serious opposition to the US-led sanctions regime.

"Europeans repeatedly rejected US demands to bomb Serbia, correctly foreseeing the present mess in the Balkans. But, after years of cajoling from Washington, they finally gave way. Closing the Danube to commercial traffic damaged European, not American, interests. America wants to incorporate the Baltic States into Nato. Europe is opposed, not wishing to antagonise the Russians needlessly. Americans look set to win."

Economic implications

The world economy had already tipped into recession before September 11. Now the immediate consequence of the attack is to deepen that process. Already British Chancellor Gordon Brown is using this, and the extra British military spending caused by the war, to warn of tax increases - in effect a 'war tax'. In the US the administration is raiding the pension funds, guaranteed as sacrosanct during the election campaign, to finance vastly increased military spending. There is a conundrum here for Bush, and one that leads to difficulty either way. The temptation is there to go in for a new round of Reagan-style military Keynesianism, attempting to utilise state funds to spend America out of recession and towards a new 1980s-style boom; already Bush has announced a $75 billion injection into the economy. On September 14th, three days after the attacks, Congress appropriated $40 billion in emergency spending and then approved, in record time, a $15 billion rescue for airlines. General pump-priming is opposed by Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan and many others in the US financial elite. If pump-priming is used, it will be in a very different context to the 1980s, when huge amounts of lending from, especially Japan, was sucked in to finance the budget deficit. These resources do not exist now. Military Keynesianism threatens a gigantic inflation of 1970s proportions which could lead to the same consequence, a 1974 type crash. Immediately though the effects will be recessionary, leading to thousands of job losses, which have already started in the

airlines. World trade will slow. Tourism will be undercut. The consequences, as ever, will be borne by working people.

Challenges for the global justice movement

The attack on the United States, and the 'war on terrorism' subsequently declared, constitute historic events which massively up the stakes for the Global Justice Movement. This movement is feared by the world's capitalist leaders, because of the breadth of its support and the depth of its demands. There has been a lot of debate on the left - mainly pointless - about whether this movement is just 'anti-corporate' or more generally 'anti-capitalist'. The point is that this movement is in motion and that the one generally leads to the other. Now this process of maturing and widening the movement is threatened with derailment. The example of the projected 27-9 September demonstrations in Washington has already been given. Equally, there was a projected demonstration mainly against privatisation outside the British Labour Party, conference on 30 September organised by the Socialist Alliance, the Green Party and trade unions. This would have been very big, but had to be turned in part towards an anti-war position, probably severely reducing the turnout to around 6,000, although the driving rain all day makes a precise judgement difficult.

It is clear that one factor in limiting the scope of US opinion has been an assessment of popular opinion in the West. Opinion polls show that there is not public support for all out war. A majority in the UK favour ending military action once Bin Laden has been captured or killed. Tony Blair has gone out of his way to insist that the ordinary people of Afghanistan are not the enemy and will not be targeted. Some relatives of the New York dead have spoken out against creating more victims among ordinary people. In the two weeks after the attack a wide anti-war mobilisation took place across American campuses. Students held dozens of meetings and demonstrations against the threat of war, in what UK journalist Matthew Engel reporting from Oberlin college in Ohio, described as "echoes of the 1960s anti-Vietnam war movement". This wave of mobilisation seems to have subsided a little, precisely in response to a diminution of stated US war aims. Widespread attacks would probably revive it quickly.

It should be said that the response of most public figures in the global justice movement has been good. Naomi Klein wrote an excellent article in The Nation, syndicated across North America and George Monbiot has been to the fore on anti-war protests in Britain and writing in the UK Guardian. Others weighing in on the mass media include Tariq Ali, John Pilger, Leo Panitch on Canadian TV, Seamus Milne in the Guardian, Robert Fisk in the Independent and Sunday Independent - in other words, the usual suspects. But the question at issue is the effect not on the leaders of the Global Justice Movement, or left wing public figures, vitally important though their stand is, but on mass support, and public opinion in general. The point is that it forces the Left and the Global Justice campaigners onto the back foot, making them fight on a much more unfavourable terrain. Those of us in Britain have the dubious 'privilege' of having had to confront war mania three times in the last two decades, during the Malvinas war, the Gulf War and again during the attack on Serbia. In the face of the terrifying power of the mass media and its reactionary consensus, it is very difficult to get a hearing and to mobilise widespread opposition.

But there is another side to this conundrum. First, the very nature of the 'prolonged war' declared by Bush and Blair creates major difficulties for the capitalist leaders. Zapping Bin Laden and the Taliban is one thing, moving onto Iraq or other states like Libya, would cause the 'alliance' to fragment. Much more opposition would emerge in Europe and the third world. Extending the 'war against terrorism' to Colombia, for example, will be seen through by wide layers of potential supporters of the anti-capitalist movement.

But there is an inescapable problem - and opportunity - for the Left here. The global justice movement has reached a certain level of development, easily combining anti-corporate campaigners, opponents of third world debt and hard-core anti-capitalists, including Marxists. Now, the Left would be crazy to put down ultimatums that all these people take a clear stand 'against imperialism'. But the minimum for staying together is a mobilisation against war and racism, and in defence of civil liberties. And rejection of the ludicrous idea that the main problem in the world is 'terrorism'. Through this a section of the global justice movement's wide support can be led to make the links much more explicitly, towards a de facto understanding of the nature of imperial power. For - in theory - it is not so much of a conceptual leap to go from understanding the nature of the corporations, to understanding the nature of the state which defends them. But in the face on the barrage about terrorism, this will not be such an easy task. In the first stages of the campaign, especially as military action against the Taliban starts, it will be difficult. As the true scope of the 'war against terrorism' becomes clearer the task will get easier.

The Bush regime and its British supporters have set themselves an enormous task. In their real long-term objectives they have no guarantee of victory. They will face powerful obstacles. The Left has to stand fast now, however temporarily isolated, to maximise its gains in the medium and long-term.

Anti-war movement emerges

16 November 2001, by Steve Bloom

On Friday, September 14, the U.S. Congress passed, with one dissenting voice, a resolution authorizing President Bush "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001, or harboured such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons." The one courageous vote against was by Democratic congresswoman Barbara Lee of California, who explained: "I am convinced that military action will not prevent further acts of international terrorism against the United States."

Congress is also considering legislation which would supposedly tighten domestic security by curtailing civil liberties. But here there is at least some resistance in Congress. The Bush administration wanted a provision which would allow the detention of foreign nationals indefinitely without trial. In the legislation which is likely to pass, however, this is being scaled back to permit such detention only for a specified period. At the same time there is complete agreement to expand wiretap and other eavesdropping powers, including the indiscriminate monitoring of internet communications by government agencies. Bush is also asking for authority to resume economic and military aid to nations which had previously been cut off due to their record of human rights violations, provided only that they now enlist in the "war on terrorism."

Clearly the rulers of the USA want to use the events of September 11 as an excuse for expanding domestic repression even when the actions taken have no relationship whatsoever to any "legitimate" security concerns.

Murderous policies

The international intelligence apparatus also wants to use this crisis to begin reimplementing murderous policies that have been responsible for thousands of deaths around the world in previous decades. For the last 26 years it has been the official policy of the USA not to engage in assassination plots against the leaders of foreign states. There is now a move afoot to drop that policy, and to reinstitute other CIA covert operations which had been curtailed due to rampant and well-documented abuses.

The average citizen responded with humanity and compassion for the victims of the September 11 attack. The city of New York received so many contributions of food and supplies, and so many volunteers to help with the rescue effort, that Mayor Giuliani had to announce no more was needed.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the majority of the US population has also responded positively to the patriotic calls. U.S. citizens of all ethnic backgrounds can be seen carrying American flags as they walk down the street, or else displaying them from cars, or homes, or offices. (Of course, a desire to make a statement of solidarity with the victims is involved here, probably as much as support for war). Polls consistently show 80 to 90 percent in favour of a military campaign against "terrorism," though the figures decline considerably when the question includes the idea of a long-term effort that causes substantial civilian casualties in other nations. It seems remarkable, and a positive sign, that even 10-20 percent of the US population is still not buying the war propaganda under the present circumstances.

Every major sporting event and many cultural activities were cancelled for almost a week after the attack, including Major League Baseball and the National Football League. Political demonstrations were called off as well, though the reasons varied. When the AFL-CIO pulled out of a planned demonstration in Washington at the end of September to protest meetings of the IMF and World Bank, its president, John Sweeny, issued a statement which declared that this was a time for "bringing people together to begin the process of healing and renewing our sense of community and confidence." He called on the IMF and World Bank to cancel their meeting as well (which was subsequently done), but announced that the AFL-CIO would withdraw from the demonstrations no matter what.

By contrast, the organizers of a major protest in the case of former Black Panther and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, scheduled for Philadelphia on Saturday, September 15, planned to go ahead until the last minute. They were forced to cancel, reluctantly, on Friday, however, when it became clear that the safety of demonstrators could not be guaranteed given the prevailing atmosphere. Among other problems, organizers cited "numerous attacks on both Arab and Muslim people and their businesses in the city."

Fervour

This kind of anti-Arab and anti-Islamic fervour was widespread in the immediate aftermath of September 11, representing one of the more sinister aspects of the popular response. Much of the establishment press and many politicians became so alarmed that statements were issued calling for a halt to such activity, stressing that Islam itself is not the enemy. No doubt this, too, was a factor prompting Bush's remarks to the same affect in his September 20 speech. Nevertheless, threats of attacks, and actual attacks, took place from coast to coast.

By contrast, and on the positive side of

the ledger, traditional left forces from the Green Party to explicitly revolutionary organizations, while universally expressing their shock, outrage, and condemnation of the human tragedy, have also rejected the calls for war and begun organizing a movement to combat both the war fervour and racist attacks against Muslim and Arab people. And antiwar sentiment extends well beyond the left. The National Council of Churches, for example, declared: "We must not, out of anger and vengeance, indiscriminately retaliate in ways that bring on even more loss of innocent life."

Not in my name

On Friday September 14, a contingent organized by "Not In My Name" (NIMN), a coalition which includes Arabs and Jews among others, participated in a large vigil sponsored by the city of Chicago. NIMN's signs read, "Arabs and Jews, We Refuse to be Enemies" in English, Arabic, and Hebrew. Participants reported an enthusiastic welcome from others present. On September 16 an antiwar rally, reportedly attended by 2500 people, was held in Portland, Oregon. In Detroit, the city whose metropolitan area has the largest Arab population outside the Middle East, hundreds marched on Monday, September 17, pausing at an Islamic Student Center where windows had been smashed. Their banner said: "Arab Peoples Are Our Brothers and Sisters-No War!"

In New York a vigil took place in Union Square on Saturday, September 15, around the theme, "Islam is not the enemy. War is not the answer." The following Friday a march from the same site to midtown Manhattan attracted thousands, and forces close to the Direct Action Network (one of the main groups behind the anti-globalisation protests in the US) has called for a weekly vigil every Friday evening. Another New York City coalition, made up of more traditional left organizations as well as unaffiliated activists, has been holding planning meetings of up to 400 people.

Students around the country organized a day of action on September 20, with more than 130 colleges and universities participating. At the University of California, Berkeley campus, a rally was reportedly attended by 4,000. The themes of the action were: opposition to any military response, to racist attacks, and to attempts to roll back civil liberties.

In general these same calls have constituted the political basis for unity expressed by antiwar forces, along with the idea of seeking peace and counteracting terrorism through economic and social justice on a global scale. There have been some attempts to discuss more specific alternatives, including the idea of bringing the terrorists to "justice" through the application of international law rather than a military response. But some raise objections to this, not wanting to make it seem as if the legal institutions of global imperialism, which also help to sustain imperialist domination, are any kind of legitimate alternative. This political discussion is still in the process of working itself out.

The first nationally coordinated protests took place in Washington D.C. and San Francisco on Saturday September 29, with marches in both locations attracting 5,000 to 10,000 participants. Students from campuses across the country were again prominent. There were also smaller protests in other cities, including Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Madison, Wisconsin; Durham, North Carolina; Columbus, Ohio; Chicago; New York, and elsewhere.

Unions raise voice

Labour activists and even official union bodies have begun to raise their voices. The San Francisco Labor Council (AFL-CIO) adopted a resolution which declared, "The tragic attacks of September 11 should be treated as a heinous crime rather than an act of war. As we mourn this tremendous loss of life, we declare our resistance to efforts to use this tragedy to engage in military actions that can lead only to more carnage and senseless loss of life. We reject the idea that entire nations should be punished for the actions of a few. Bombing raids and military strikes will only fuel an endless cycle of revenge that can only bring the deaths of more innocent civilians, both here and around the world." The council endorsed the September 29 protest actions in San Francisco.

In New York a letter that has been signed by more than 100 labour officials and activists from various unions declared: "war will inevitably harm countless innocent civilians, strengthen American alliances with brutal dictatorships, and deepen global poverty-just as the United States and its allies have already inflicted widespread suffering on innocent people in such places as Iraq, Sudan, Israel and the Occupied Territories, the former Yugoslavia and Latin America."

It demands: "NO WAR. It is wrong to punish any nation or people for the crimes of individuals-peace requires global social and economic justice. JUSTICE, NOT VENGEANCE. An independent international tribunal to impartially investigate, apprehend, and try those responsible for the September 11 attack. OPPOSITION TO RACISM-DEFENSE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES. Stop terror, racial profiling and legal restrictions against people of color and immigrants, and defend democratic rights. AID FOR THE NEEDY, NOT THE GREEDY. Government aid for the victims' families and displaced workers-not the wealthy. Rebuild New York City with union labor, union pay, and with special concern for new threats to worker health and safety."

Dennis Rivera, the President of Local 1199 (Service Employees International Union), who went to jail as part of the protests against the US Navy's use of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques as a bombing range, announced that the union's delegate assembly had voted to oppose "launching a war against any nation because of the actions of a few." He also condemned terrorism and demanded that those guilty of the WTC attack be brought to justice. Robin Alexander, United Electrical Workers Director of International Labor Affairs issued a statement which read, in part, "As we mourn and as we rage, we also declare our resistance to efforts to use this

tragedy to curtail our civil liberties or to engage in military adventures that can lead only to more carnage and senseless loss of life."

While all of the Democratic and Republican Party politicians (with the notable exception of Barbara Lee) have eagerly lined up behind Bush's pro-war campaign, Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate in the last presidential election, declared at a rally: "we must have the freedom of our minds to comment, reflect, and feed back because our government can make some serious mistakes, as they have in the past… We have to begin putting ourselves in the shoes of the innocent, brutalized people in the Third World and ask ourselves, why do they dislike our foreign policy?"

Ongoing protests are being projected from many quarters, with some effort to establish coordination and a coalition approach on a local and national scale. Even before the bombs have begun to fall it is clear that while there may be unanimity in the halls of Congress on the war, there remains considerable questioning and some outright opposition among the broader American public.

Will the Drive to War Kill International Labor Solidarity?

16 November 2001, by Teofilo Reyes

We are proud of how working people, and unions in particular, have responded to support the victims of terror. The fire-fighters who died in the rescue attempt, the volunteers searching for survivors, the nurses tending the wounded, the Ironworkers sent to shore up buildings, the locals that organized gate collections and blood drives have shown the generosity of spirit that is our best hope for a collective and humane solution to these horrors and others still to come.

CROSSROADS

As the U.S. government prepares for war, the labour movement should reflect on what the impact of the attacks will be, and proceed with caution. The labour movement has been trying to rebuild itself, in fits and starts, for the past six years, and the new situation places us at a crossroads.

Will we continue to fight against corporate globalisation and deepen ties to workers in other countries, or will we fall in with an "America First" attitude? Will we continue to fight for immigrant rights, or will we fall out along national fault lines? Will we continue to search for new organizing strategies if union campaigns in certain industries are labelled divisive and "un-American"? Will we fight concessions when corporations promise layoffs?

In short, will we step up to our responsibility to be the voice for what's best in American workers' hearts? Or will we slip further into irrelevancy, as corporate America wishes, by giving up our right to challenge the consensus?

The early responses from labour offer both possibilities.

The AFL-CIO quickly declared full support for any actions President Bush chose to carry out, and the UAW followed suit. The Teamsters recovered their Reagan-era fervour and immediately called for war against all states harbouring terrorists. John Sweeney said he had called President Bush to offer support and said, "We stand fully behind the President and the leadership of our nation in this time of national crisis. We will fully support the appropriate American response."

The Steelworkers called for justice, but added that the U.S. should not harm innocent civilians and pointed to the poverty and injustice that provides "recruits for the armies of the intolerant."

The SEIU, with a large immigrant membership, called for all appropriate measures to be taken but strongly warned against scapegoating immigrants and Arabs in particular. The United Farm Workers also called for retribution, but tempered it by drawing on the memory of Cesar Chavez and his legacy of non-violence.

The UFW has continued its corporate campaign against Pict-Sweet through prayer vigils, and the UFW and SEIU have called unity marches to help fight anti-Arab and anti-immigrant backlash.

BACK BURNER

Perhaps the greatest danger facing the labour movement in the coming months will be the government's attempt to manufacture a consensus around war and all the ugly things that go with it. In wartime all the legitimate demands of labour or of any other group in society (save the corporations that make the weapons) are deemed to be selfish—note the immediate calls for raiding workers' Social Security funds.

Any questioning of our leaders-even on issues unrelated to the war- is seen as wrong. This is how the government defends curtailment of the right not to be spied upon and how some Congressmen can justify their attempt to ram a "bipartisan" Fast Track bill through Congress in the coming weeks.

RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

This tragedy is a challenge for the American labour movement to deepen its internationalist stance. The AFL-

CIO is unique among labour in industrialized nations in the degree to which it has joined, if not always consistently, in the broader movement against globalisation.

Many union members have responded warmly to calls for international solidarity, as evidenced in campaigns for justice in sweatshops and maquiladoras. In the United States recently some rank and file activists have been pushing for the AFL-CIO to open its Cold War files to repudiate its past actions against labour movements in other countries and to strengthen trust with workers there.

Union activists who are shocked by the rush to war should call for a rethinking of U.S. international priorities and actions, and deepen their solidarity with labour across the globe. The human costs of war will be borne first and foremost by the dispossessed and the working class in each country. Leo Gerard, the Steelworkers' new president, has noted that poverty and injustice swell the ranks of fanatic organizations. It is labour's duty, now more than ever, to push for a new social order.

WHY THE HATRED?

Hatred of America abroad is based largely on the behaviour of U.S. corporations in other countries and the military might that the U.S. government uses to back up the existing order. But corporations are not "America." They are the same forces with the same dog-eat-dog values that labour and the global justice movement are fighting.

Our movements are, in a very real sense, the only alternative to the irrational forces that arise from frustration combined with fanaticism. International organized labour and the global justice movement can be the alternative beacon that says to the world: There is another way that is democratic to the core and whose power derives from our numbers—not wealth, terror, or military might. There is hope.

To put aside our oppositional character is to surrender that alternative, that hope. To offer a blank check to the Bush Administration, the most anti-labour administration in decades, is to invite the drowning of any alternative in the tide of military might and terrorist escalation.

The globalised economy means that both the terrorist attacks on September 11 and the actions the U.S. takes in response will affect workers the world over. American labour has made progress in throwing in its lot with workers across the globe. Can labour step back up to the plate, or will only peace activists do that now?

International solidarity is the high road, and it is the course that should be followed ever more resolutely in the months ahead.

Against His Masters Voice

16 November 2001, by Farooq Tariq

The Taliban claimed over 30 dead during the cruise missiles attack by the forces of the UK, Germany, Russia, Australia and the US. The irony of history is that the five richest nations of the world are eager to destroy the poorest nation on earth by force and with the most sophisticated weapons. Pakistani newspapers reported the possibilities of using Neutron bombs if the presently used weapons do not bring "positive" results.

Would these demonstrations be able to take the masses with them in the coming days? What future for the military regime in Pakistan? What is the general mood among ordinary Pakistanis after the US attacks? And above all what future for the Left movement in Pakistan? These are some of the questions that will be examined in this article.

The air attack on Afghanistan brought resentment among ordinary Pakistanis across the country although the level of anger varies from area to area. There is much militant mood developing in North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, the two provinces bordering Afghanistan. The general comment among the working people was that now the Taliban will retaliate and that US has not done good by this attack. 'Is this not terrorism" Nazir Bhatti, a motor mechanic told me this evening while commenting on the present situation. "If Americans die, it is very bad, if Afghanis die, it is no problem for the rich countries" Nazir said. So were the comments of a hotel worker at Sahiwal, a district in central Punjab, just after three hours of bombing. As we stopped at a tea café in Sahiwal last night, a hotel worker told us that the US has attacked and that there will be a lot of bloodshed now.

The mood in Punjab cities is different than in the villages. In the villages, Osama Bin Laden is becoming like a folk hero. He is worshipped everywhere and has become the person to follow. How this mood is translated in action is yet to be seen. But one aspect is very clear, that the US have bought more hostility by these air attacks.

The military regime is becoming popular among the traders and rich people. They see a lot of opportunities to make money in pursuing this policy. As every day, one or the other minister or prime minister is visiting Pakistan and telling the military regime their intentions to generate the economic activities. And what a brave stand the military has taken by supporting the US and its allies in combating "terrorism". What great hypocrisy by these gentlemen in gray suits who have been lecturing the military regime on the great fruits of democracy and non-nuclearisation of Pakistan.

After Blair, now Colin Powell is coming here to appreciate the timely help given by Pakistan to the US and its allies. Only two years before, the former US president Bill Clinton visited Pakistan for four hours and he remained for four days in India, a fact the military regime did not like very much. Such was the friendship of American imperialism just before the 11th September.

But for the ordinary Pakistanis, the regime is becoming increasingly isolated. With the rising unemployment and price hikes, the result of following blindly on IMF and World Bank policies, the masses pay the real price. With the ongoing attacks on Afghanistan, these hate feelings against the military regime and US imperialism will grow. The fact that General Musharaf noticed and told the US today on 8th October, in a televised speech that the US military approach should be short and sharp. But there is no short and sharp way of dealing with those who have been trained and equipped by the same army who declares them as terrorist today.

The "heroes" of the past in the military dictionary have become villains. The "Jihad" (holy war) becomes terrorism today for the military regime. It was us, the Left forces of Pakistan, who do not need to change their position about these religious fanatics who were fanatics earlier and remain so today. US imperialism was the enemy yesterday, so it remains today. But for the religious fanatics, the US was a great source of help for their Jihad in the eighties. Now it is a great Satan on earth that must be destroyed at all costs. In a debate on third party politics with Liaqat Baluch, the second in command in the most powerful religious fanatic party of Pakistan, before 11th September at the Sustainable Development Planning Institute in Islamabad, my main arguments against the religious parties politics were that they are always tied up with the military regimes. They were used at every important juncture of Pakistani politics by the successive military regimes, I told the audience in his presence. Whenever the military want to get rid of a civil government, the religious parties are very much willing to do the dirty job of creating a law and order situation.

Liaqat Baluch became very angry when I said that in the eighties, it was US dollars and not Jihad that was the guiding principle for the fight against the Soviets. But unfortunately, including Jamaat-I- Islami, most of the religious parties who got all sort of help from the military has to oppose openly their masters of the past. By doing so, they want to echo the general feeling of the masses at present. Many a time in history, monsters brought up for any reason go against his master’s voice.

Look at the example of Sint Bhinder Singh Wale, a monster brought up by Indira Ghandi, the former Prime Minister of India. This was to be used against the growing influence of Akali Dal, a Punjabi political party of the rich. But he broke his chains and led the powerful Khalistan movement in the eighties in Indian Punjab. Indira Ghandi had to send forces to kill him alongside with hundreds of his followers at Golden Temple in Amretser. She had to pay the price as two Sikh gunmen killed her in revenge few years later.

After 11th September, whenever General Musharaf appeared on TV he seems upset and agitated. He wants to say many things that he does not say. He has to think about what he says. His appearance on national TV represents the factual situation. He knows what can happen to him. He is playing with fire. By siding with US imperialism, he has turned many of his former friends as enemies. The US attack on 7th October also brought the news of changes among the army generals.

Two of his close allies had to go prematurely and surprisingly, apparently, a close friend of the religious fanatic forces has been promoted as the Chairman joint chief of army Staff. The changes in the army top ranks have all to do with the 11th September incident contrary to the claims of General Musharaf today while answering a question during his press conference.

General Musharaf may be receiving the Prime ministers and ministers every day, an unprecedented situation for Pakistan, but all this cannot go very far to stabilise his regime. We do not expect a dramatic economic help that could lay the basis for the recovery of the ever-declining economy of Pakistan. On the contrary there is a growing danger of development of a reactionary popular movement against his policies. A lot more blood can be shed than expected by the military regime.

Today Musharaf told another blatant lie, that the Nation is with him. His meaning of Nation can be the traders, exporters, feudalists and capitalists who smell US dollars from his policies but ordinary Pakistanis are becoming more and more vocal against his policies. He may lose power earlier than many think about his future. It may be an assassination attempt by a fanatic or change in leadership on any grounds. He is not so strong as he appears to be. He may have bought some time for his power, but not peace of mind.

Unfortunately, those who have been saying that US imperialism is an enemy of the workers nationally and internationally are in a very weak position. Their political terminology has been proven correct with the passage of time but they do not have the power and resources to tell on a mass level how correct they were in the past. It is not the old faces of the Left that have surfaced in the main political arena at present, it is the new and young voices around Labour Party Pakistan who are eager to build a peace movement. This is to oppose all those who believe that they can use the language of terror and suppression to make a point.

Help LPP to fight the terror

16 November 2001, by Farooq Tariq

This is a formal appeal from Labour Party Pakistan to help the party in this crucial juncture of Pakistan history. The LPP National Executive Committee in its three days meeting at Lahore from 4thto6th October decided to launch a peace movement in Pakistan. The main slogans will be, No to War, No to Imperialists aggression, No to the terror of religious fanatics, and for a peace full democratic Pakistan.

There will a Peace demonstration on 15th October in Lahore. The demo will start from Press Club Lahore to Charring Cross at 3.30pm. We are publishing posters and leaflets for a mass fly posting and distribution. It will be done at the other places including Hyderabad, Karachi and Islamabad during this month. The dates will be announced this week.

LPP is organizing these peace rallies in a very hostile atmosphere where religious fundamentalists are taking the streets every day. They want to go for a Jihad (Islamic War) against Americans, who were once their best friends politically and economically. Religious fundamentalists are the new kind of fascists and must be opposed in every aspect. LPP believe in no compromise or alliance with these religious fanatics on any issue. It boycotted the All Parties Conference called by religious fundamentalist Jamaat-I-Islami on 21st September on the question of restoration of the constitutions. Only LPP and PPP were the parties, which announced a boycott despite being formally invited. This was in line with the policies of LPP. Unfortunately, PPP is siding with US imperialism at this time.

LPP has a very proud record of fighting in practice for its agreed principals of Peace, democracy and socialism. It prints every week Workers Struggle, the only Weekly that brings up the issue that capitalist media try to distort or ignore.

Over 100 activists of LPP have gone to jails during the last two years for fighting for restoration of democracy and workers rights. All the main leaders of LPP have been in jail during this time.

Now once again, LPP has taken up the challenge to fight the imperialist war and religious terrorism. We need your support in all aspects.

1- Please makes a donation to LPP on the following account:

Education Foundation Donations

Foreign currency account (US dollars)

Account number 1161774808090

Standard Grindlays Bank, Gulberg Branch

Main Boulevard, Gulberg

Lahore, Pakistan

2- Please visit our website for update information:

www.labourpakistan.org

Please take a subscription of the Weekly, if you can read Urdu:

Weekly Mazdoor Jeddojuhd,
40 Abbot Road Lahore Pakistan

Pakistan Rupees 300 for a year

Outside Pakistan $50 for a year

Send your amount to the above account as well

3- If you are in Pakistan and is not a member of LPP, take up the membership, You can also become a supporter of the party by donation certain amount to the party every month. Please ask for more information,

Fraternally,

Farooq Tariq General secretary

9-10-2001

The unfolding design

16 November 2001, by Achin Vanaik

That is to say, between those who prioritise the application of uniform principles of international justice above other considerations, and those who prioritise foreign policy interests, i.e. seeking 'advantage' out of current US policy preoccupations.

The latter talk of eliminating Islamic and other terrorist groups and of certain selected countries (like Pakistan) being terrorist states because they sponsor cross-border terrorism. But of course, state terrorism is only selectively identified. The Indian state's repressions in Kashmir or the Northeast are not considered.

The government which has no remote rival in the number of civilians (in the millions) it has killed outside its own borders, or in the scale of its use of nuclear (in Japan), chemical (in Vietnam), biological (in Cuba) weapons, or in the frequency with which it has flouted international norms and rulings, is the US. But since the Indian state and its supporting chorus which make up so much of the 'foreign policy establishment' are so keen to become strategic allies of the US how can it dare to accuse the US of terrorism? Besides, wouldn't it be insensitive to do so at this juncture?

In fact, this precisely is the time when the US must be so reminded and criticized for its own atrocious record of terrorism; when it must be declared that the fight against terrorism must include the indictment of all states as well of sub-state agencies which are guilty. At a time when the US along with selected allies is making itself an international anti-terrorist task force, it must be announced as widely as possible that the elementary principles of justice are flouted when agencies of terrorism themselves unpunished and unrepentant are not only allowed to become the judges and policers of terrorism but actually hailed and legitimised for playing this role. Any commitment to principles of moral and legal impartiality has to insist that the task of adjudicating on and enforcing any sentence regarding the international crime committed on September 11 must fall on an international mechanism like the International Criminal Court (whose setting up has been opposed by US and India) and through appropriate procedures involving an unmanipulated UN.

Opposing the US effort to set up an international concert of nations behind it to justify its waging war on Afghanistan is all the more imperative because there is a much deeper design behind it all. In declaring that when it comes to retaliation there will be no distinction between the specific agency of terrorism and the country harbouring such agents, and that the USA's response to what is effectively an international crime must be a long term war, Washington has calculatedly sought to massively extend the scope of its reaction in keeping with its much larger strategy for furthering its global aims behind the mask of 'fighting international terrorism'. It is extraordinary that so many in India have failed to understand this. The US is demanding through its unfolded "long term programme of 8-10 years to fight terrorism" an effective carte blanche to militarily-politically intervene in any country which it deems to be providing a "safe haven" for any 'terrorists' identified as such by the US alone. Washington has also put the world on warning that it feels free to topple regimes it considers to be supporting the "worldwide network of terrorism". Indeed, toppling the Taliban regime establishes a vital precedent for the US's longer term perspectives.

What the US is doing is thus another systematic step forward in a longer game plan that has unfolded since the end of the Cold War. In 1991, quite unexpectedly the US found itself dominant in the system of nation states in a way that has never existed for any single country in over a century. During the first half of the twentieth century the eminence of Britain was being challenged by the US, Germany and Japan. After the Second World War the USSR challenged the US. After 1991, in the beginning uncertainly, later on more clearly and determinedly, the US has gone about extending and consolidating this unique situation of its uncontested global pre-eminence on all fronts - economic, cultural, political and military. The 1992 Gulf War became the excuse for Washington to reinforce control over the Middle East and its oil. Afghanistan and Central Asia has been throughout the nineties an arena in which the US has sought an increasing influence for itself and for its multinationals, given the oil-gas potential of the region. This has required wooing the Central Asian Republics away from Russian dominance and considering ways of expanding its influence in Afghanistan itself. Thus on three occasions the US considered recognizing the Taliban regime in return for concessions concerning the building of oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia to more amenable seaboards. They have by no means lost sight of this issue of strengthening American control of energy resources in this region in this current 'war against terrorism'.

In Europe, the central issue posed after the Cold War was what would be the shape of the new security architecture? Here there were three alternatives - strengthening the EU's Western European Union's (WEU) independent defence force or the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OCSE) or NATO. The first two approaches would have involved the diminution of American and the expansion of German and Russian influence in Europe.
The sub-text of the Balkans conflict (Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia) was the emergence of the US as principal arbiter of European affairs. Along with the consolidation and expansion of NATO, the pre-eminence of the US in Europe was thereby established. The ascendancy of the distinctively Anglo-American form of contemporary capitalist globalisation called neo-liberalism reflects the success of the US in clawing back part of the economic ground lost earlier to Germany and Japan. The National Missile Defence programme represents the US search for nuclear dominance and eventual control of space so as to establish a unilateral military supremacy over the globe.

The one big US failure in the post-Cold War era was its inability to drive a wedge between the Ukraine and Russia, the two most powerful countries to emerge from the wreckage of the former USSR.

The Balkans also provided precedents for American expansion through manipulation of the universal human rights discourse. And now in this "war against terrorism", once again through a manipulation of a crucial human rights issue, the US seeks to establish a flexibility and freedom for conventional military intervention (including the right to topple regimes) throughout the world that is truly unprecedented.

And any number of countries for parochial and short-sighted gains are even prepared to be part of a coalition legitimising this effort! That the Indian government backed by its usual set of factotums, courtiers and salespersons (i.e. the 'foreign policy establishment') is desperate to join this coalition is testimony not only to its moral hypocrisy in the fight against international terrorism but also to its incredible political naivety regarding the larger scheme of things.

A special interview with Adil

16 November 2001, by Adil

"I travelled to Afghanistan on 16th September and reached Jilalabad. The town was in absolute shock conditions. Everyone from there was talking of leaving Afghanistan as soon as possible. People are sick and tired of the Taliban regime.

There are around 20,000 military men at the disposal of the Taliban. They have lost their best friend Pakistan, so their military assistance is in trouble. On the contrary, there are over 25,000 military men with Osama. They belong to China, Algeria, Nigeria and many other Arab countries apart from Pakistan. When the Taliban say they will not hand over Osama to the Americans, it has nothing to do with their courage or their service to Islam, they are unable to hand him over as Osama has more Islamic militants than the Taliban.

They are the most unpopular regime in Afghanistan's history. If America comes here they will lose power not so much of the attack but more because they have no social basis. They are doomed to lose power. The Taliban are the most vicious and brutal government of all time. We opposed them from the beginning. But America and Pakistan have supported them from the beginning. They say today that the Taliban government is no good, we are saying it from day one.

There are three trends within the hierarchy of the Taliban regime. One is the most fundamentalist, who are totally opposed to handing Osama over to America. One big group is in favour of handing Osama to America. The third one is balancing the two groups. It is the third group which has prevailed recently in its decision that Osama should leave voluntarily.

There is a mix of people in the Northern Alliance. Abdul Rashid Dostum who heads Junbash Milli Islamia (Islamic National Movement) was a close ally of Babrak Karmal and Dr. Najibullah, the former rulers of Afghanistan with the support of Russians. He is not a fundamentalist and represents the Uzbak and Turkmenistan people of Afghanistan. Another component party of the Northern Alliance is the party of Professor Siaf, Itehad Islami Afghanistan (Afghanistan Islamic Unity). This is the most fundamentalist party of the Alliance. Then there is Ahmed Shah's party Shoora Nizaar (Islamic Association). The same people who did the September 11th event killed him on September 9th.

Ahmed Shah Massod was killed because Osama's people knew that he was the only capable person who could lead a resistance after September 11th. He was supported by many Western powers already. He was a religious fanatic but recently had changed his position to right wing ideas. Hizb Wahdat Islami is another party, which is part of the Northern Alliance.

The former King Zahir Shah seems to have the support of all the parties in Afghanistan apart from the Taliban. The flags of Zahir Shah's party are seen everywhere in Peshawar at least. Our party at this time supports him for a transitional period. The American plan is to hand him power after the fall of the Taliban and then he call elections in one year's time.

But it is clear that he will not be able to solve the problems of the people. There is a Persian saying that if the "bad" is in power and some good comes out of it, it is not that bad. So we have no other choice apart from supporting him for a transitional period.

We are totally opposed to American military intervention. But we are in favour of an immediate ending of the Taliban government. The situation is like America was bringing up a dog who has now gone mad. It is the responsibility of American to control or kill the mad dog. We will do our part to hunt down this mad dog which is dangerous for the Afghan people."

Stop The Imperialist Aggression In Afghanistan!

16 November 2001, by Fourth International

Continuing on a path which has become increasingly unrestrained over the past ten years, the USA has set itself up as planetary dispenser of justice, simultaneously judge and litigant. Acting on "proof of guilt" which has been shown only to their closest allies, the USA, with the participation and the support of the latter, unleashed a large-scale aggression against Afghanistan on October 7, which will undoubtedly exacerbate the enormous bloodshed that this country has known since the Soviet invasion of 1979. Once again, the USA, which contributed to the Taliban's seizure of power in Kabul, has opposes these fundamentalists by allying itself with others, those of the Northern Alliance. This shows that they have no concern for democratic principles and the interests of women, which, through pure hypocrisy, they purport to cherish only when their own strategic interests are threatened. A fine democratic coalition, between George Bush and his NATO allies, the Saudi kingdom and the Russian slaughterers of the Chechnyan people! Unlike the Gulf

War of 1991, the current offensive seeks the overthrow of the Taliban regime, beyond the liquidation of the Bin Laden network. In Iraq, the USA chose to maintain the regime of Saddam Hussein, for fear of "destabilizing" the region. In Afghanistan, the principal objective is the installation in Kabul of a docile regime in a country whose importance as a passageway for oil and key point of access to Central Asia is well known. Against this new aggression the third large-scale imperialist war in ten years! it is more urgent than ever to mobilize massively, in order to rein in the increasingly aggressive behaviour of the most powerful states. At the same time, it is necessary to oppose the attacks on democratic rights and social entitlements that will accompany the offensive underway.

This imperialist behaviour can only strengthen the tendencies to blind terrorism whose victims will be the civilian populations of the aggressor countries. "Terrorism" can only be ended through the removal of its ultimate cause: the injustice that reigns in the world and for which the US government bears the main responsibility.

8 October 2001 - Bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International

Disciplining the back yard

16 November 2001, by Ernesto Herrera

However, this is not news any more. Since September 11, it has been displaced by the "war against terrorism". The attack on the empire has reshuffled the cards. In the middle of an unprecedented socio-economic crisis and a broad and prolonged popular resistance (see IV 333) the Latin American elites, not finding anything better with which to confront the crisis of governability, have aligned themselves behind Bush's crusade.

They are committed to implementing an immense operation of military monitoring, police control, attacks on democratic liberties, and criminalisation of all social protest. In fact, they are enlisting in the army of the United States as it tries to impose the FTAA in a framework of political instability and social explosiveness.

For some time, Washington has been preparing a bellicose hemispheric project commanded by the Pentagon, to transform the Latin American armies into internal security patrols with strategies and structures of control laid down by US generals. Under the renewed doctrine of Low Intensity Conflict, the dissemination of "free market democracy" on a continental scale has become a 'security matter"

The criminal terrorist attacks of September 11 and the collective hysteria they have caused came as a godsend to the United States and the governments who carry out its orders without question. On Friday September 28, the ministers of the Interior of Mercosur created a Permanent Working Group to evaluate "joint and coordinated operations against terrorism" and to study initiatives "for inclusion in the Regional Security Plan" involving coordination of intelligence services.

At a meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) an emergency convocation of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism was suggested. The idea of creating a network of espionage in the framework of that body created in 1999 at the initiative of the Menen government - is indeed one of the initiatives most fervently supported by the most reactionary sectors. A few days previously, president Fernando Henrique Cardoso had authorized the opening of an office of the CIA in Brazil.

The army were not slow to follow with Argentine and Brazilian military meeting in the region of Foz de Iguazú, centre of the "triple border" that these countries share with Paraguay, an area where thousands of people of Arab origin live. The head of Brazil's Southern Military Command, General Max Hoertel, said that after the attacks against the Twin Towers and the Pentagon by suicide bombers "there is no doubt that we must adopt preventative measures not only against nature but also disasters caused by terrorists". (Clarín, Buenos Aires 7-10-01).

From the formulation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 Latin America and the Caribbean was a traditional area of US domination. As of that date, the United States considered the entire region as a zone of national security and imperial expansion. Military interventions followed one after the other through the years and the creation of the Pan-American Union (1890) was nothing more than the legalization of the process of political and economic integration under the hegemony of the "big brother".

In February of 1945, the member countries of the Pan American Union under the so-called Act of Chapultepec (Mexico) adopted the principle of "joint defence of the American states against external aggression". Soon, in September 1947, the 22 countries met in Petróplis, Rio de Janeiro, at the initiative of Arthur V. Vanderberg, one of the ideologists of anti-Communism and the protocol of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) was signed. The Treaty a typical mechanism of the Cold War - considers that any aggression against one of its members will be considered as an attack against all. After remaining dormant for decades, the TIAR has been revived.

At the initiative of Brazil, and in the framework of the OAS meetings held in Lima and Washington, the member states agreed to participate in the hunting down of anyone suspected of terrorism.

In fact, the invocation of the TIAR has, mainly, a sense of political

legitimation that is located in the resolution of a "democratic charter" adopted by the O.A.S. In concrete military terms, it adds absolutely nothing. The United States has already taken all the measures it thinks necessary.

It has established a network of fixed or movable military bases and radar systems in the name of the fight against drug trafficking, incorporating military pressure with "economic aid". In the framework of Plan Colombia, it has rearranged its installations in the region: Aruba-Curazao in the Dutch Antilles; Manta in Ecuador; Comalaps in El Salvador; San Cono in Honduras: the occupation of the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico. As James Petras puts it "the ease with which the US military could construct this network of bases is mainly due to the support and long term training of dependent military officials, carried out by the USSouthCom in Latin America" (Koeyú Latinoamericana, Venezuela, July 2001)

Democrats and Republicans have agreed in Congress to grant to Bush the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), known as the "fast track". This mechanism will allow the government to establish free trade agreements without it being possible for them to be modified later by the legislative power. Thus the way has been cleared for the FTAA (see article in IV 334).

The US deputies and senators, seem to have listened to the secretary of Commerce, Robert Zoellik, who had insisted that after September 11 the priority of the United States was "free trade" for "impelling the values that define us against our adversary". (Washington Post, 20-9-01)

The resolution comes at a time of maximum weakening of MERCOSUR when both political leaders and civil servants of the governments who make up the regional agreement agree with the proposal of the Unión Industrial Argentina: "to suspend regional integration until new notice". (Página/12, Buenos Aires 27-10-01).

What is certain is that the new international conjuncture has been a setback to the development of what some analysts called the "Brasilia-Caracas axis" (which enjoyed the enthusiastic support of Cuba) as alternative to the negotiation of the FTAA. Now, any attempt to block the imperial trade ambitions will be more difficult. The pressure of a social resistance and a continental anti-FTAA movement which had massively announced itself in the Social Forum at Porto Alegre, in Buenos Aires and Quebec has been weakened. The continuation of that resistance and movement is all that can ensure that Latin America does not end up as an Indian reservation of the United States.

After Genoa, after September

16 November 2001, by Christophe Aguiton

This latter was only able to note the disagreements between the United States and the other big powers on the Kyoto protocol, a text which had in any case been considered by the majority of environmentalist groups as wholly inadequate in countering the greenhouse effect.

On institutions and governments

As for the only decision taken, the creation of funding around health questions, the sums announced (US$1.3 billion) are regarded as ridiculous by all the movements working in this field. This breakdown of the G-8 stems from the divergences and contradictions between the big powers, divergences that moreover have appeared in a recurring manner, which is one of the explanations for the failure of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle. However, the breakdown of the G-8 takes on a particular dimension from the weak legitimacy of this body. Lionel Jospin went public with his doubts about the utility of such meetings, and François Holland hammered the point home by announcing the "political death of G-8".

Klaus Schwab, the founder of the World Economic Forum and of the annual meetings at Davos (also losing legitimacy) estimates for his part that the G-8 is not the best-suited body to discuss the "big questions relating to globalisation". In spite of the disarray among the great powers, the voice of the countries of the South was hardly expressed in Genoa.

Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade acknowledged the extent of the [global justice-Ed.] movement, even forecasting that, as in 1968, it would spread to Senegal; but he was no more able than his counterparts present in Genoa to formulate an alternative policy, nor to lay the bases for an advance towards an alliance of the poor countries able to provide a counterpart to the agenda of the rich countries.

The reasons for this weakness are well known. The countries of the South are also confronted with a breakdown of strategic orientation - the third worldist models based on autarchic development have revealed their limits. The elites of these countries have massively adhered to the neo-liberal creed while cherishing the illusion that they could play a role in the "new world order" while benefiting from competition between the great powers. The emergence of an opposition to neo-liberal globalisation, supported by the states of the South, would however be a decisive element in the international relationship of forces.

In Genoa two types of orientation took shape. The first, supported by George Bush and Tony Blair, clearly assumes the choice of neo-liberal globalisation, which is presented as the only solution, including for the poor of the planet.

This orientation will be supported only by a minority fraction of the public, which is increasingly expressing its worries about "neo-liberal globalisation". Attempting to rally the conservative electorate, George Bush and Tony Blair condemned the "wreckers" with great firmness. However, here too the outcome of Genoa shows the limits of such an orientation: the Berlusconi government, a faithful supporter of the neo-liberal line of the Bush administration, is now paying the political price for its repressive policy.

The second orientation was expressed only on an apparently tactical question: Jacques Chirac, quickly joined by Lionel Jospin, expressed his "understanding" for the demonstrators. The French political leaders were only following Bill Clinton who had made similar remarks in Seattle.

An understanding that has its limits: the French authorities, to this date, have not condemned the repression unleashed by the Italian authorities. Beyond their obvious electoral concerns, Chirac and Jospin are trying to formulate a response to the concerns of public opinion. They are not the only ones to think that it will be necessary to embark on a process of reform in one way or another - in its leading article on August 11 the Financial Times supported such a course.

Today, there are no concrete signs that this route is actually being taken: to achieve that, a consensus between the great powers would be needed, with, in the first place, the approval of the United States.

However, this debate is only beginning and it will exacerbate contradictions between the various states and the international institutions, the WTO, International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations Organization (UNO).

The movement after Genoa

Before entering an assessment of the mobilization, it is worth focusing on the acronym chosen by the Italian movements to indicate their unitary framework: the GSF, the 'Genoa Social Forum', based on the 'World Social Forum' held at Porto Alegre earlier this year. This choice is indicative of a short but rich genealogy.

The success of the international meetings organized through ATTAC and the CCC-OMC in Paris in June 1999 indicated the emergence of a movement that clearly appeared in November of that year in Seattle. A few months later in Bangkok the first "international alliance" began to be formalized, comprising not only ATTAC but also various coalitions for the cancellation of the Third World debt, Via Campesina, Focus on the Global South and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

In Geneva, in June 2000, the 'Swiss Committee on the Bangkok Appeal' organized a conference which would be very significant both for mobilizations like that in Prague and also for the construction of the movement: it was here that the appeal for the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre was launched. Porto Alegre represented a watershed at which the various movements could coordinate to prepare the mobilizations to come; Buenos Aires, Quebec and, of course, Genoa.

The purpose of this short resume is not only to summarize the history of a movement which includes many other stages and affiliations. The big mobilizations would certainly have taken place, with or without this series of conferences and meetings. Nevertheless, the framework built was determinant in creating a network of confidence and solidarity between those leading the social and activist movements of the various continents. Above all a framework was laid down, combining unyielding defence of the demands of these movements and a permanent will for unity, which made it possible for the movement to extend itself without fragmenting. This is an asset that we must preserve through the initiatives and meetings to come.

Genoa represented a turning point in terms of the number of the demonstrators, but that was only possible because the alliance of forces in the GSF was completely new. The end of the 1970s, the rise of autonomy and then the "years of lead" had accelerated the fragmentation of activist networks, including those of the radical left. The beginning of the 1990s saw a revival of working class struggles (leading to the fall of the first Berlusconi government), a political re-composition on the Italian left with the split between the DS and Communist Refoundation and the growth of independent trade unions through the rise of the COBAS. The emergence of the "social centres" (based in former industrial premises occupied by activists often from the autonomous currents) was a significant development, offering young people space for recreation and activism. However, these new activist frameworks did not work together much.

Genoa marked a turning point in this aspect, as a new activist generation made its presence felt by linking these radical structures to the particularly active and established Italian associative world (ManiTese, Lega Ambiante, ARCI and so on). The success of ATTAC-Italy since its official creation in June is indicative of this revival of activism.

Although there is nothing automatic about it, Genoa could well be a starting point for a revival of struggle in Italy within a framework of re-composition which is much more favourable than that of the 1990s. A more difficult question is posed by the place of the trade unions in this re-composition. The three Italian confederations (the CGIL, which was linked to the PCI, the CISL, in the past close to Christian Democracy and the UIL, linked to the Socialists) have been outside the process.

On July 19, the international and European trade unions (the ICFTU and ETUC) had organized a debate on

globalisation with several hundred participants, the majority of them playing leading roles in Italian trade unions. Vittorio Agnoletto, the spokesman of the GSF had been invited and his intervention was extremely well received, except by the union notables present. The secretary-general of the CGIL, Cofferatti, told Corriere de la Serra the next day that the demonstrations at Genoa should not be supported: they did not make enough positive proposals, which a trade union, because it is there to negotiate, must first take into account!

This confederal absence leaves space for the sectors of the trade-union left, whether they are members of the confederations or not (the COBAS and the CUB are independent, and in the CGIL the left tendency Alternativa Sindacale had called for demonstrations with the FIOM, the powerful metalworkers' federation). It is to be hoped that this pushes the confederations into the battle against neo-liberal globalisation, like the AFL-CIO in the United States. The example of Barcelona, where the CC.OO and the UGT (the two principal trade union confederations in the Spanish state) called for demonstrations against the conference of the World Bank together with the anarcho-syndicalist CGT shows that that is possible.

The social democratic parties could react more quickly than the union confederations that are linked to them. That in any case is what has happened in Italy and France. In Italy, the leadership of DS (Socialist Democracy), the party that until a few months ago headed the government that prepared the G-8 meeting, is split over the Genoa demonstrations.

In France Socialist Party spokesperson Vincent Peillon has regretted the absence of the PS in Genoa and, in an article published in Le Monde and signed also by government minister Christian Paul, has clearly supported the movement against neo-liberal globalisation.

On violence

The Italians showed at Genoa that they were masters in the management of unity in diversity. The difficulty was not so much bringing together components of varied origin, but to hold together a structure whose components had very different goals and strategies. The GSF stretched from the "debt" campaign, very moderate and heavily influenced by the weight of the Church in Italy, to the COBAS and Tute Bianche. The alliance thus created made it possible to integrate completely peaceful protestors and those practicing "symbolic violence" within a common framework.

At the end of the day, the balance sheet of the GSF is completely positive. It was legitimated, in Italy and well beyond, by its capacity to dissociate itself from the violence carried out by certain groups of demonstrators while firmly denouncing the Italian authorities who were really responsible for the incredible outburst of violence in Genoa on July 20 and 21. The GSF's unitary functioning and its capacity of integration are an example for the mobilizations to come. However, Genoa, coming after Gothenburg, obliges some thought on the violence that is likely to accompany demonstrations.

At Genoa, the distinction between the GSF and what was called the "black block" was clear. Without criminalizing the latter (there were among them, it appears, provocateurs, police agents, even far right militants, but the majority of the thousands of participants in this "black block" [1] were young radicals, overwhelmingly Italians), its orientation was clearly different from that of the GSF.

That was clear on the ideological level, with the GSF being accused of "reformism" and on the political level: the "black bloc" did not intend to encircle the red zone or even penetrate it, but wanted to attack the "symbols of capitalism": banks, "luxury" cars and so on. If in Genoa the responsibility for violence falls, primarily and above all, on the Italian authorities which carried out, or allowed to happen, acts which one could not believe possible in a democratic country, the clear separation between the demonstrators of the GSF and its European allies and those of the black block facilitated the public demonstration of it. The attacks against the peaceful processions, the violence wrought against demonstrators whose passage had been blocked and the beatings administered to activists in the Diaz school moved the whole world. On a more general level, if it is very important to point out the non-violent motives of the very large majority of the demonstrators, the delimitation with those who reject this orientation will not always be easy.

Indeed an understandable rage against a system which produces, on a large scale, inequalities, misery and violence against the poorest will be mixed up with the idea that the movement can be built in spite of or with violence. In support of this idea, it can be argued that neither Prague nor Gothenburg have led to the movement being isolated or marginalized by violence.

That may be so, but on an international scale it will be necessary more to examine reality more closely after these demonstrations. In Prague, for example, the assessment is not convincing. That is probably explained by the fact - a unique case - that the demonstrators came, in their overwhelming majority, from other countries. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to await the assessment made by the Swedish activists to draw the more general lessons. And there is undoubtedly a danger of the movement losing public support with, as an obvious consequence the withdrawal of the most reticent forces engaging in the fight against neo-liberal globalisation, to start with the trade-union confederations.

In Genoa, the attitude of the Italian authorities was such that public opinion will make them take responsibility for the violence, but that will not be always the case and the public support for the demonstrators is one of the keys to the success of the movement. The example of the GSF has a more general importance, however. It shows that it is possible to reject violence while accepting determined processions with the militants being protected from the police charges by passive means (helmets, plastic shields and so on).

Another tactic developed by some US activists has the advantage of expressing still more clearly the determination but also the non-violence of the movement; it involves helping the demonstrators, organized in "affinity groups", to resist, the police peacefully for the longest possible period of time, but in this case without helmets or other personal means of defence.

After September 11

The world movement that was expressed from Seattle to Genoa had as its symbolic adversary Wall Street, which represented the power of the financial markets and the Pentagon, representative of imperial domination and US militarism. With a sinister parallelism, these were the targets aimed at by the authors of the murderous terrorist attacks in Washington and New York. This relationship does not obviously make any sense to those involved in the movement against neo-liberal globalisation who know that the strength of this movement and its capacity to transform the world depends above all on its mass nature, on the support of public opinion and the democratic involvement of the social movements which form its base and its roots.

A particularly significant movement exists in the United States itself, where the trade unions and NGOs had prepared a very broad demonstration for September 30 in Washington to coincide with the general meeting of the IMF and the World Bank. Nonetheless this coincidence is used by those who will grasp at any possible arguments to defend neo-liberal globalisation and the current system.

On the contrary, the movement against neo-liberal globalisation carries within it the elements of a response to such atrocities.

The Zapatista insurrection in Chiapas, January 1, 1994 is probably the founding event of the movement that erupted on the world scene after Seattle. And the strength of Zapatism was to defend the identity and the specific claims of the Indians of Chiapas at the same time as it launched a universal appeal against neo-liberalism and for the creation of a world movement that was concretised in the first "intergalactic" meeting in summer of 1996. This capacity to defend the identities and specificities of the movements while developing alternatives on a world level is one of the essential characteristics of the movement that is being built, from Seattle to Genoa.

In its extension to every continent, this movement offers an internationalist response to all those who revolt and fight against a system which deepens inequality and exclusion. That was the case in Porto Alegre for all the movements of defence of the indigenous people in Latin America. In Genoa, the presence of a delegation of 50 representatives of Russian and Ukrainian trade unions and movements made it possible to make many contacts and to initiate the integration of Russian activists into the "world movement". Moreover, the mobilization against the new cycle of negotiations within the framework of the WTO that is due to be held in Qatar is a chance to link up with the movements that exist in the Arab world, thanks to counter-conferences and initiatives taking place in Cairo and Beirut.

The development of the movement world-wide, like that of the social and democratic struggles, makes it possible to offer another framework of response to those of the nationalists, fundamentalists or reactionaries. Thus, in France, the development of the struggles in the 1990s precipitated the crisis and the decline of the [far right-Ed.] Front National, which had based itself on the popular layers hit by the economic crisis.

The attacks of September 11 can only reinforce our conviction of the importance and the urgency of developing this global, democratic and non-violent movement, which alone is capable of offering global alternatives to neo-liberal globalisation.

We will see in the weeks and the months to come what the US policy will be, but the first declarations by George Bush, the "fight of good against evil" or the desire to get Bin Laden "dead or alive" are reminiscent of the cold war.

The most probable assumption is that of the militarist and repressive option. An innovation in the situation: beyond the alliances considered to be necessary by the United States in their fight against terrorism, the continuation of globalisation makes national or cultural stigmatisation difficult. More than the "clash of civilizations" foreseen by Samuel P. Huntington, [2] the "war" that the US leaders intend to carry out could well be a civil war. [3]

Terrorism will be the first target, but in this new crusade, the "enemy within" - radical forces, social movements and movements fighting neo-liberal globalisation - can be quickly criminalized at the same time as measures restricting freedoms are introduced.

Such an orientation can be the source of new contradictions between the big countries, and in this aspect the situation is different from that which prevailed at the time of the Gulf War. In Europe, several government notables have entered a slightly different note. After expressing their solidarity with the US people, they insisted on responses to deal with the basic political problems, in particular in the Middle East, and on the need for regulation at a world level.

This European desire for autonomy is consolidated by the result of two international conferences; that of Bonn, where the Kyoto protocol was signed by many countries, including European ones, but not the United States and that of the UN at Durban where an anti-racist resolution was adopted with the support of Europeans, while the United States left the meeting. These contradictions could open spaces in the movements, as was the case with the MAI or the general assembly of the WTO in Seattle. This question however will remain open, the pressures being strong for the continuation of Western solidarity.

The next cycle of negotiations on trade that should open in Qatar on

November 9, within the framework of the WTO, can allow an international mobilization that changes the given conditions at a world level.

It is, however, in a more serious and more difficult context that the mobilizations will develop and that the movement against neo-liberal globalisation will be built. A situation which will require of these movements a greater attention to democratic problems and the question of peace and security for the people: for the peoples of the South, increasing in inequality is compounded by the fear of military intervention, whether by the Western powers or local governments which will use the situation to settle conflicts which had remained latent.

Nonetheless, it is in this "other globalisation" that the hope of a fairer and more secure world for all the peoples of the planet resides.

Footnotes

[1] In order to justify itself the Italian police had claimed there was a great number of "black bloc" demonstrators in Genoa; however, under questioning from the Italian parliamentary commission of inquiry a police official had to admit that there were no more than 500 demonstrators who fell into this category.

[2] Samuel P. Huntington argues in his book, The clash of civilizations, the idea that the 19th century saw the confrontation between nations and the 20th century that of ideologies while the 21st will be that of the confrontation between civilizations.

[3] This opinion is advanced by Alain Touraine in an article published in the French daily newspaper Libération on September 14, 2001.

Youth against capitalist globalisation

16 November 2001, by Penelope Duggan

The development of the movement against capitalist globalisation has given a completely new meaning to this encounter. As the camp was scheduled for the week following the mobilization for the G8 meeting at Genoa, the challenge, to the Italian comrades primarily, but also to all the delegations - whether they came from Poland or Portugal, Sweden or Greece - was to link the two mobilizations and make the camp an indispensable meeting point for the resolutely anti-capitalist current beginning to emerge inside the movement.

Already, during the preparatory meeting for the camp in April, the opportunities and problems stemming from this coincidence of dates had been widely debated. How could mobilization for the camp be combined with participation in the broad unitary mobilizations underway in various countries? How would the numerous technical and financial problems posed by the necessity of spending one, indeed two or three days in Genoa on the way to the camp be dealt with? More money, time and effort would be needed by all the delegations.

Nonetheless, they met the challenge. More than 400 youth from 18 countries met up on Sunday July 23, 2001 in the Lazio region north of Rome to begin a week of forums, commissions and parties, based on the theme of the struggles against capitalist globalisation.

It’s true that getting there was hard. After demonstrating in the very demanding conditions of Genoa, with little sleep and less food, the Spartan conditions of camp life had some grinding their teeth.

However, after 18 years habits have been developed and passed on from one generation to the other and, very rapidly, everybody got on with setting up the camp. Throughout the week facilities included a marquee with simultaneous translation in seven languages for the forums, a big covered tunnel which served as an international village by day and a discotheque by night, a non-mixed women’s space and a lesbian and gay space, an infirmary, a "leadership" space for the secretariat and meetings of the camp coordination and a bar with tables in the shade - a welcome relief with the average temperature around 35°.

Unhappily, there was no shady space for the tents so everyone was obliged to be up early! Preferable, though, to the three days of rain in Portugal last year. Once everything was set up and the teams who were to take charge for the week of cleaning, security and the bar were established, the politics began.

The camp was opened by Livio Maitan, a longstanding leader of the Fourth International and its Italian section and today a member of the national leadership of the PRC. He sketched a picture of the political situation today and gave an initial analysis of the mobilization and repression that had just taken place in Genoa.

This theme would be deepened throughout the week.

Christophe Aguiton, a leader of the movement against capitalist globalisation and ATTAC France [campaign for global financial reform-ed.], situated the Genoa events in the context of the international movement. Gigi Malabarba, trade union leader, PRC senator and one of the organizers of the Italian movement against capitalist globalisation, spoke more particularly of Genoa in the Italian political context.

In addition to the analyses of the evolution of the movement and its

political context, some of the mechanisms of globalisation were explored in more detail; the debt - through a talk by Eric Toussaint of the Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt of Belgium (CADTM) - and the military aspect - dealt with by Catherine Samary, also a leader of the Fourth International and a Balkans specialist.

In order for a strong anti-capitalist current to emerge in the mobilizations, the movements that face all the inegalitarian and unjust effects of capitalist globalisation, must participate in these mobilizations.

Nadia from Mond of Italy stressed the necessity of a feminist movement defending the rights of women inside this movement and through its own mobilizations.

Internationalism

It must also be international and internationalist and the contributions of comrades from South Africa and Latin America on the forms of the movement in their countries - against the debt in South Africa; against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Mexico; the initiative of the World Social Forum in Brazil - were much appreciated. In the movement in Europe, reference to the Zapatista movement in Mexico is very strong. More than 60 youth joined Braulio Moro to discuss the struggle and reality of the Zapatistas.

So it was a very rich political program, with participants who brought a wealth of experience based on a great deal of work around these questions and other essential themes like ecology and sexual liberation. On the latter question, always of a great theoretical and everyday importance, the lesbian and gay space is open to all who wanted to pose questions on their sexuality and always organizes one of the best fêtes of the camp - it was heavily frequented and its activities were very successful.

Five or six parallel commissions on the theme of the day, debates and other meetings in the spaces, delegation meetings to prepare the debates of the day or draw up the balance sheets, meetings between delegations to exchange experiences or information, taking advantage of the heat of the afternoon to take a little siesta and get in shape for the exertions of the evening - it all meant there was very little time to waste.

A small group of comrades, representing the different delegations, were charged with pursuing the discussion on common work in the movement against the capitalist globalisation. This permanent commission set itself a program of discussions involving a balance sheet of the mobilization for Genoa, the forms of radicalisation of the youth in this movement, how to combine building the movement with a specific activity and profile for our organizations, international solidarity (with Palestine, against Plan Colombia) in the movement as well as more practical questions around the mobilization for the European summit in Brussels in December.

Inequalities

During the preparatory meeting for the camp at Easter, we noted significant inequalities between countries so far as the state of the movement against capitalist globalisation was concerned. There were countries like Portugal where it was practically non-existent, others where it was primarily a phenomena of a movement largely influenced by the churches against the debt (as in Germany), others where ATTAC seemed to involve above all "old timers" who had rediscovered political activity, with youth finding it hard to get a look in (the experience of the Danish comrades).

On the other hand, notably in Italy but also in the Spanish state and France, this movement had already begun to involve youth. In the few months between April and the camp (in July) it could be seen that the movement had developed at great speed and even if our comrades from Portugal formed the only organized delegation from their country everybody participated in the frameworks of unitary mobilization for Genoa.

Obviously a very significant advance, above all where these unitary collectives involve youth groups and organizations and our comrades in the different countries will do all they can to strengthen them.

Many young people who begin to radicalise on the question of globalisation orientate naturally towards forms of direct action and civil disobedience. This leads to discussion in the movement, not only between generations but also amongst youth.

Groupings like the marche rose and tute bianche in Italy are important factors in this movement. The "black block" obviously represents another dimension of the debate altogether. Questions are posed that we must continue to discuss among ourselves and in the movement.

A "movement"?

However, in what sense precisely can one speak of a "movement"? The movement against capitalist globalisation is in fact plural, composed of a whole series of movements, collectives, trade unions, feminist groups, ecologist groups, and national and international initiatives.

How can we strengthen all these movements and thus the overall movement while building our youth organizations? What is the link between our solidarity work with those who are in struggle elsewhere and the movement against capitalist globalisation? How do we mobilize against the effects of globalisation at the military level?

Nobody claims to have come up with complete replies to all these questions, but there has been an initial attempt at common reflection that should be pursued both at the national level and in international meetings.

Still, politics isn’t only about discussions, there is also the practical side. So e-mail coordination was set up for the Brussels demo, with the aim of producing a common leaflet and maximizing the presence of youth in this mobilization.

Before that, there are other tasks: solidarity with the Kabyle youth of Algeria, whose movement was introduced and analysed by five young comrades from the Algerian Socialist Workers Party who had made tremendous efforts to be at the camp, as well as solidarity with Palestine, where the French comrades have organized a delegation of solidarity and witness.

In other countries the new political developments have opened possibilities for strengthening the radical anti-capitalist left. One can cite the Left Bloc in Portugal or the youth organization in Denmark - which are already new organizational formations.

There is also the possibility of common work between different organizations beginning to find new convergences. The delegation from Greece was an example; as well as supporter of the Fourth International, it included six other organizations, some political, others anti-globalisation groups. The presence of delegations of youth from the British Socialist Workers Party or the Polish Socialist Party were also evidence of this search for convergence.

In France youth comrades are already mobilizing around the candidacy of 27 year old postal worker, Olivier Besancenot, who will be standing for the LCR (Ligue communist revolutionnaire - French section of the Fourth International) in the presidential elections of June 2002.

They hope that a successful campaign around this candidacy will provide an ideal basis for the 19th youth camp in France in July 2002.

Meltdown for Social Democracy

16 November 2001, by Anders Ekeland

Election results

Party	Share 2001	Change from 1999
Labour Party	24.4	- 10.6
Socialist Left Party	12.4	+ 6.4
Red Electoral Alliance	1.2	- 0.5
The Center Party	5.6	- 1.3
Christian Democrats	12.5	- 1.3
Liberal Party	3.9	- 0.6
Conservatives	21.2	+ 6.9
Progress Party	14.7	- 0.6
The Coast Party	1.7	-

The Labour party lost more than 10 percentage points compared to the 1997 elections, ending up with only 24.7 per cent. It represents their worst result in the last 80 years! It is a grim irony that before the 1997 election the Labour prime minister had said that if the Labour party got less than 36.9 per cent - the result from the 1993 elections - he would resign.

Labour got only 35 per cent and the Labour government resigned. Then there was two years with a 'Centre' government, composed of the Christian Democrats, the Centre party and the Liberal party. Labour plunged in the opinion polls.

This government lasted two years before it was forced to resign by the Labour party in alliance with the Conservatives and the rightwing populist Progress party over the question of building CO2 emitting natural gas power stations, illustrating grimly the fact that the Labour party has a less green policy than these bourgeois parties.

End of hegemony

Labour has been the governing, hegemonic party since World War II in Norway, having an absolute majority in several Parliaments in the "golden age", the first two decades after the war. There have been right wing intermissions, but the other parties were always small in relation to Labour and could only form unstable coalitions.

The Labour party has always been in government alone, and has participated in no coalition governments since World War II. In the light of this, a result below 25 per cent is a disaster. In the capital, Oslo, Labour got only 22.5 per cent - their worst result in the capital since 1900. However, in the year 1900 the party was in the process of being built from scratch!

The development of Norwegian social democracy over the last 10-15 years has changed the party from a reformist, welfare state party into a party of the Blairite type. But whereas in Britain the non-proportional voting system and the especially aristocratic and reactionary nature of the Tories keeps ordinary people voting Labour since there are no "real" alternatives, this is not the case in Norway and the other Scandinavian countries.

Due to the proportional voting system, and the more liberal nature of the rightwing parties, Labour is losing voters both to the right and to the left and its hegemonic position is being eroded much more quickly.

Essence

The essence of social democracy is to fight for reforms, to be willing to stand for interventionist policies. However, that is not the case anymore. A Labour party that privatises Statoil, the national Telecom company; slashes support for the poor regions; does nothing to raise the wages of the "educated working class" (teachers, nurses, municipal service workers);

and so on, is no longer a social democratic party.

As the historic general secretary of the Labour Party in its golden age put it "To enter the election campaign without any big cause clearly dividing the left from the right is totally hopeless".

This qualitative change in Norwegian social democracy has of course been going on for over ten years and the problem is that workers do not need this party, while the middle class prefer the rather liberal Norwegian Conservatives. As a former Labour Member of Parliament said: "The surprise is not the defeat, but that is has not manifested itself before".

The lack of vision, more concretely the lack of major reforms to the benefit of ordinary people; the lack of willingness to use the enormous oil wealth to repair schools; to increase the "female" wages of teachers and nurses; to support regional development; and so on, opened the door for the rise of the populist right.

One year ago, the populist right (the Progressive Party, sic!) was increasing in support and was almost as big as the Labour party, 25-30 per cent. And not only that: in northern Norway, a stronghold for the Labour Party since the war, the populists had a real breakthrough.

They said "We cannot understand why Norway cannot use a tiny fraction of the oil income on schools and health", while the Labour party simply continued with - in a Norwegian context - absolutely meaningless austerity policies. The electoral slogans of the two parties say it all. The Labour party had "If welfare is important", while the populist party had: "Welfare is important".

If there had been elections one year ago the rightwing populists would have been in government. But a series of sex scandals and a "Great Terror" against all opposition (real or imagined) by the party's leader, made it impossible for ordinary people to support this party so their votes went to the Conservatives.

The populist party lost 10-15 percentage points from their all time high in the opinion polls. Nonetheless, the party still managed a good result, only 0.5 per cent down from their very good result in 1997! It was only a disaster if one looks at what they potentially could have got.

However, the potential of rightwing populism is illustrated by the rise of a new regional party - Kystpartiet, the "Coast" party, which elected a representative in the 1997 elections and two members of parliament this time. On a national scale they are small - 1.7 per cent - but in the north of Norway they did get over 10 per cent on average.

For the left, both the SLP (Socialist Left Party) and REA (Red Electoral Alliance), it is important to stop the rise of the populist right, but that can only happen if the left unites and puts forward a real program. For the REA the problem is their opposition to any co-operation with the SLP. For the SLP the challenge is to be oriented towards mobilizing people instead of seeking compromises with the Labour party.

Another aspect of the historic change in the Labour party is the very low turnout. In the middle and upper class constituencies democracy is flourishing. The turnout is around and over 80 per cent.

In the constituencies of working people it is much lower, confirming that they see no point in voting - on the contrary it is the most rational thing to do if you do not want to support the rightwing parties, are not yet ready to vote for the Socialist Left Party and do not want to support the sexist, racist and "Stalinist" populist right.

Never before have so many voters changed party between two elections.

Spectacular success

The SLP did spectacularly well, doubling their share of the vote from 6 per cent in 1997 to 12.4 per cent! The main reason for this is of course that they took many voters from the Labour party.

However, this was not something that they fought for, on the contrary the party leadership was eager to use the success to get into a coalition government with Labour - with support from the Centre Party. The leadership has no real understanding of the challenge that the decline of the Labour party poses. It will be very interesting to see if they are going to develop a new analysis of the Labour party and what their own role is going to be.

The majority of the REA were rather optimistic before these elections. The target set was to get 2.5 per cent of the votes and one or two members of Parliament from Oslo and Bergen, where the REA has a real implantation, with results in the 5-10 per cent range in some working class constituencies and an average of 3-4 per cent.

However, as I pointed out in my analysis of the municipal elections in 1999, the REA did not politically challenge the Socialist Left Party and that is very dangerous since the two parties are competing for the same voters.

But in autumn 1999 the pro-bombing line of the SLP leadership (in the Kosovo war) made the hard-core left-wing voters inclined to vote REA alone. The pro-bombing line of the party leadership led to the emergence of an organized tendency in the SLP for the first time in decades, fighting openly against the most blatant rightwing tendencies. At the last congress (March 2001) this tendency did manage to pull the party to the left and they got rid of the most rightwing personalities in the leadership. That made the SLP more consolidated.

For example the youth organization of the SLP, which had turned left and declared itself a revolutionary organization two years ago, worked in the election campaign for the SLP this time and had two persons from their leadership elected to parliament. This was in contrast to earlier elections where they had a much more distanced attitude to the SLP and were inclined to vote for the REA. The majority of the REA ignored this

development inside the SLP.

Soft

Why is the majority of the REA soft on the SLP? There are basically two reasons. Firstly, that if the REA correctly criticized the rightwing tendencies of the SLP the latter would immediately counter by pointing to the still unfinished de-Stalinization of the REA. There are currents inside the REA that are "soft" Stalinists/Maoists and the REA leadership does not want any public discussion about it. They know very well that this is very bad public relations.

Secondly, many members of the REA have not broken with the traditionally Maoist analysis of the SLP as purely reformist. For example, in Bergen where the SLP is represented by hard-core left-wingers, the REA put up their own candidate without the slightest effort to try to unite the Marxist anti-capitalist left.

Even with an extraordinarily popular candidate, the REA did not achieve its target of getting him elected. There was clearly a possibility of co-operation with the local branch of the SLP, but the REA did nothing to make that happen.

Even if the SLP was just plainly a left-wing social democratic party, a revolutionary party cannot simply ignore them. However, that is what the REA did. They did nothing to get the left wing of the SLP or the SLP electorate to vote for them. Therefore, the REA ended up with only the REA hard-core voters.

This passive attitude of the REA majority was thoroughly criticized by the Internationalist League. The IL urged the REA to challenge the SLP politically, urging them to try to get an electoral agreement with the left wing of the SLP in order to isolate the right wing, but to no avail. And the REA was - as predicted - punished for trying to ignore the SLP. The SLP is the major strategic and tactical challenge for anyone who tries to build a revolutionary party with 4-5 per cent of the electorate behind it. Which is clearly possible, but dependent on a real regroupment strategy by the REA. It is clear that if the REA continues to ignore the SLP the coming municipal elections in 2003 will become a new setback. For the Internationalist League it is imperative to raise this discussion about the SLP inside the REA.

Workers Party debate

16 November 2001

We present here the positions of the Socialist Democracy (DS) tendency of the PT, together with the theses put forward by the DS' slate of candidates in the PT's recent national leadership elections and the platform of DS supporter Raul Pont, who ran for the presidency of the PT.

In the elections the DS slate won 14.75% of the vote, as against 10% in 1999. Raul Pont came second in the presidential election with 17.5% of the vote (in his home state of Rio Grande do Sul Raul scored 47% and the DS slate registered the highest vote of any list). The victorious presidential candidate, Jose Dirceu, won 55% of votes cast.

A strategy for victory

16 November 2001, by João Machado

The current Brazilian government is the fruit of the neo-liberal political offensive. The current president of the republic, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), was elected in 1994 following the success of an anti-inflation plan, the Plan Real (from the name of the new currency).

This plan was the first step of an economic programme which followed the lines of what was called the Washington consensus: opening of the economy, privatisation of public enterprises, fiscal responsibility . All that was supposed to lead to increased investment and economic development, reduce poverty and ensure Brazil's transition to modernity.

This programme opened the Brazilian economy (to foreign commodities and capital) and privatised most public enterprises - the two most significant exceptions, up until now, are Petrobras (the oil company) and the Bank of Brazil. Inflation has been reduced. But otherwise the results have been very different from what had been promised.

Fiscal responsibility has been limited to the reduction of non-financial public expenditure, while interest payments have increased sharply. For this reason, the public debt has grown in a spectacular fashion, from around 30% of GDP in 1994 to 54% in 2001.

The opening up and the privatisations have led to the denationalisation of the economy - it is no exaggeration to say that Brazil, like the rest of Latin America in general, is undergoing a veritable process of re-colonisation - but not at all to a growth of investment and of the economy.

The Brazilian economy has become much more dependent on imports and

completely vulnerable to international instability. If the foreign debt has remained stable (a little more than US$240 billion currently, or slightly less than in 1994), external liabilities (which include, as well as the debt, those Brazilian assets, including shares, which are foreign owned) have increased significantly. Thus as well as the already heavy cost of servicing the debt there is a rapid growth in the export of profits. All the international crises (Mexico, Asia, Russia) have had severe repercussions in Brazil. At the end of 1998 - beginning of 1999 the Brazilian economy in its turn plunged into crisis, and this year the Argentine crisis has also had serious consequences in Brazil.

Nor is there any reduction of poverty, the contrary is the case. The government has shown itself to be at least as corrupt as its predecessors and there has been no shortage of scandals.

Erosion of the FHC government

After some years of this economic, social and political framework, the weariness of the FHC government was already apparent at the 1998 elections. Nonetheless Cardoso was re-elected in the first round, playing above all on fear of the crisis (which, if he was no longer president, would worsen according to his sycophants) and profiting from the low rate of inflation. However, at the beginning of 1999 the devaluation of the currency, which affected one of the dogmas of his economic policy, increased popular dissatisfaction. Nonetheless the government succeeded in controlling the situation once again (perhaps for the last time) by bringing inflation under control. A modest economic upturn began from the end of 1999, and the government hoped that it would last at least until 2001-2002 (until the new elections).

But 2001 has not met these hopes. Political scandals have been more serious than ever. The former president of the Senate, Antonio Carlos Magalhaes, head of the PFL (Party of the Liberal Front, the second biggest party in the ruling coalition), one of the most well known personalities of the regime, was obliged to resign to avoid dismissal. Jose Roberto Arruda, the leader of the PSDB (Party of Brazilian Social Democracy, FHC's party) group in the senate, experienced the same fate. The current president of the Senate, Jader Barbalho, of the PMDB (the third biggest party in the coalition) will undoubtedly follow the same road.

Worst, from April onwards the country learnt that there was going to be an electricity shortage and that rationing would be necessary whereas generalized power cuts (apagao) were not ruled out. This when Brazil's natural facilities for producing electrical energy are among the best in the world. Brazilian electrical energy is primarily of hydraulic origin and it is produced by big power stations built by the state. This model has been undermined by public spending restrictions and by the beginning of the privatisation of the sector. Until 2000 abundant rainfall meant the problems could be avoided but in 2001 the skies were not as generous. For a government which had promised modernity, energy rationing is perhaps the worst thing that could happen.

Finally the deterioration of the international economic situation and the crisis in Argentina have had direct repercussions in Brazil. The economic upturn has run out of breath: the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics says that GDP fell by around 1% in the second quarter of 2001.If inflation is still low, it will certainly be above the rate negotiated with the IMF (4% +/-2% allowed variation; the official rate calculated up to July is already 4.3% and a rate higher than 1% is estimated for August).

Possible victory of the opposition

Consequently, the possibilities of a victory for the opposition are considerable at the election presidential of 2002. In the polls, Lula (who will certainly be the candidate of the Workers' Party, PT) is ahead with more than 30% (the best polls have him on as much as 36%). There are other opposition candidates - Ciro Gomes, Itamar Franco (former president of the Republic, currently governor of the state of Minas Gerais) and Anthony Garotinho (the governor of Rio de Janeiro) - who the polls give between 10% and 20% of voting intentions while the candidates originating from the governmental bloc do not go beyond 10% for now.

The government's margins of manoeuvre are reduced. Yet its candidate, not yet named, will enjoy a fair chance of victory. Some of the names suggested could even play the card of criticizing current economic policy. This is the case with Jose Serra, economist, Minister of Health, known as an internal critic of the government's economic policy. He has to his credit one significant victory: the Brazilian anti-AIDS policy, set up by his ministry, is considered as a world model; moreover it was imposed through confrontation with the pharmaceutical trusts, in particular those of the US.

The candidates of the opposition, on the other hand, with the exception of Lula, are not clearly differentiated from the government in the field of economic policy. Itamar Franco presents himself as a nationalist, but it was under his government that the current economic policy began to be applied (FHC was his finance minister). Ciro Gomes was also finance minister in the Itamar government. Originating from the PSDB, he could well become the candidate of the bourgeoisie, if the candidate of the government does not break through.

The elections of 2002 hence present an opportunity for the opposition, and particularly for the probable PT candidate, Lula. However, his victory is far from being assured in advance: if the candidates of the bourgeois opposition unite they will have a very good chance of victory but, even in this case, the government is not yet beaten.

Lula's candidacy

and the evolution of the PT

This context poses naturally the question: what is the best strategy for a Lula victory? The majority current of the PT, and in particular Lula himself, have made a clear choice: a maximum of moderation and the broadest possible alliances are necessary with all those who have a record of years of opposition whatever the reason. The Institute of Citizenship (Instituto da Cidadania), a kind of NGO directed by Lula, has made public a draft programme which avoids any rupture with the economic legacy of FHC, [1] while speaking of re-orientating the policy of the government. It is a very defensive programme which does not take into account the changes going on in the world. [2]

However public opinion is becoming much more critical of privatisation. One example is telling: in August there was a referendum in the town of Londrina on the privatisation of the municipal telephone company. Although the mayor (a PT member!) had campaigned for privatisation, this proposal was defeated!

The entire press understood (and said so) that the objective of the divulging of the programme of the Instituto da Cidadania (which has not been discussed inside the PT) was to gain the confidence of the entrepreneurs.

As to the alliances, Lula has already said that he wanted as candidate for vice-president someone like the senator Jose Alencar, ex-leader of the employers' confederation in the state of Minas Gerais, currently a member of the PMDB. This character has never been on the left (nor has he claimed to be) but he is in a minority in his party and has expressed his sympathy for the candidacy of Lula.

Happily for those who stand for class independence or even plain old political clarity, it will not be easy for Lula to carry off alliances of this kind. As the possibilities of victory of the opposition are great, all the sectors of the bourgeois opposition wish to present their own candidate. Even the little parties of the left who have supported Lula in previous elections have not up to now given him their support; they are devoting themselves to calculations on the possibilities of each of the candidates and the advantages they could obtain in exchange for their support to any one of them. Moreover, there are legal difficulties: Jose Alencar, for example, if he wishes to ally himself with Lula, must join a party in coalition with the PT, thus leaving the PMDB. Finally even inside the PT majority current there is no consensus for such broad alliances.

Can moderation help Lula win the election? It's not very likely. His biography is not that of a moderate candidate - he lacks the physique for the role. And on that terrain he will be in competition with a number of candidates from the bourgeois opposition. Even if moderation can sometimes facilitate electoral victory, it can also lead to a disastrous government: the catastrophic example of De la Rua (Argentina) comes to mind. Finally, this search for moderation and alliances with the bourgeois camp represents a political adaptation to the pressures of a milieu which is beginning to decline; it is in contradiction with the beginning of the change of the world situation and in Brazil itself.

The process of internal elections in the PT is another key question today. New rules have just been adopted: for the first time all PT leaders will be elected directly by all the affiliates, without the mediation of the party Congress. The affiliates will also elect the delegates for the Congress which will take place afterwards, with the leadership already selected. Socialist Democracy and some other left currents opposed this change of method, which personalizes in the extreme the election of the leaders, makes them more dependent on public (and thus media) recognition and tends to separate the election of leadership from the adoption of political orientation.

The Conference and political choices of the DS

The Socialist Democracy tendency, the current within the PT which involves the supporters of the Fourth International in Brazil, held its 6th national conference at Florianopolis in the state of Santa Catarina on August 3, 4 and 5.

The general policy of the DS is based on the consideration that although the political evolution of the PT is going in rather a bad direction, this party remains the unavoidable reference for Brazilian workers. The natural road for left political militancy involves membership of the PT. Inside this party a very broad space still exists for left politics (an important example of this space is the policy implemented by the government of Rio Grande do Sul and also several municipal governments). In the confrontations between the popular sectors and the government, the PT is still on the right side even if it is with moderate positions. For example, it still supports the MST (Movement of Landless Peasants). The PT's parliamentary group has in general good positions (even its most moderate deputies feel the necessity of distancing themselves from the government).

The DS is, then, maintaining the political orientation it has held for some years now: to build the PT, while debating its political orientation. In the presidential election this would mean political support for Lula, while proposing a programme for his candidacy and a policy of left alliances.

The change in the world and Brazilian political situation makes the conditions for the realisation of such a policy more favourable , even if the PT majority is becoming ever more moderate. In the PT's current debates the most important initiatives we have taken have been: the presentation, together with other left currents, of the candidacy of our comrade Raul Pont (ex-mayor of Porto Alegre) for the post of PT president; the presentation of a list for the national leadership of the party; and the presentation of lists of candidates in

several states. Raul and the DS candidates centre their campaign on the critique of the political line of the majority of the PT leadership and the presentation of alternative proposals. [3]

Both Raul's candidacy and the national and state lists of candidates currently enjoy quite broad support. It is very significant for example that the governor of Rio Grande do Sul, Olivio Dutra, supports Raul and figures on our national list. Olivio has been for a long time a member of the majority current of the PT. In the course of recent years he has adopted a more independent position closer to that of the left of the party, while remaining very linked to Lula. Olivio's support for Raul, and his participation in a list formed at the initiative of the DS, is the consequence of a political rapprochement and good personal relations with the DS, above all in Rio Grande do Sul.

Significant growth

In these favourable political conditions, the DS has experienced significant growth in recent years: since the 1999 Conference the number of its members has nearly doubled. The strongest growth has taken place in Rio Grande do Sul.

The Conference also debated draft documents put forward for discussion for the 15th World Congress of the Fourth International and the discussion on national political orientation has considered the consequences of the changes at the international level on the Brazilian political situation. An important idea has been that the DS must be (to some extent it already is) the main representative of the movement against capitalist globalisation and for the taking up of socialist themes inside the PT; the preparation of the World Social Forum of 2002 has been defined as a central task of the tendency. After some years in which the identification of the PT with socialism has gradually been eroded (in particular inside the majority current) the moment is favourable to for a revival of socialism in the PT.

The 6th Conference of the DS has shown the importance of the relationship with the Fourth International. That stems first from the participation of the representatives of the Fourth International - Livio Maitan, whose report on the world situation was greeted enthusiastically, as was Ernesto Herrera, responsible for the International's Latin American work. The discussion of the themes of the World Congress certainly also helped.

But there are probably two other stronger reasons for the lively identification of the Conference with the International: first, in the course of the preparation of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre this year during the Forum itself and after it, many DS supporters had an unprecedented opportunity to meet activists from other countries; then for the first time international questions have become directly related to political work in the country. An understanding of the importance of the International can only be strengthened.

Footnotes

[1] For example: this draft does not question the privatisations already carried out; the critique made of the process of privatisation is very limited; the programme makes no proposal to reduce the degree of denationalisation of the economy, nonetheless characterized as very high in the text.

[2] See the article by Ernesto Herrera on the discussion of this proposal in the Sao Paulo Forum, IV 334.

[3] See subsequent articles.

Another world is possible, another Brazil is urgently needed!

16 November 2001, by Democracia Socialista

We are now confronted with some positions that are decisive for the future of the PT and of Brazil. We will be selecting those who will lead the party during a critical period that is full of both challenges and possibilities.

We present the proposals of our slate to all the members of the Workers Party as an affirmation of the necessity for a new focus around which to build the leadership of the party and to renew it politically, practically and programmatically.

Globalisation of resistance to neo-liberalism

Since the late 1990s, the ruling class offensive throughout the world has been encountering growing political resistance. Mass revolts have occurred one after another in a number of countries, particularly in Latin America. Since the Seattle demonstrations at the close of 1999, the resistance has become international in scope. The increasing instability of the world economy, with its succession of crises, has undermined the legitimacy of the neo-liberal project and forced a certain change in terminology among those who are behind it.

Already, some significant victories have been won, although they are so far only "defensive victories". The so-called Multilateral Agreement on Investment - the most aggressive initiative of imperialist big business -

was withdrawn from the agenda. The attempt to insert unfettered mobility of capital in the statutes of the IMF had to be suspended in the wake of the crisis that began in Asia in 1997. The efforts to open a new round of liberalization of international trade in the context of the WTO have been blocked since Seattle. These "defensive victories" are only provisional: big business still has the resources and the forces to resume, in various ways, the pressures to impose the rules that it has so far been unable to impose on the peoples of the world.

In Latin America, the major form taken by capital's offensive at this time is the attempt to form a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). In fact, what the United States is trying to do is to establish a protectorate over the entire continent. In response to this threat popular resistance is growing, as indicated by the demonstrations in Quebec City in April 2001.

A coordinated, consistent confrontation with the neo-liberal project depends on the transformation of the anti-globalisation struggles into anti-capitalist programs and political alternatives. How long it will take for this process to develop cannot be predicted, but it may, in the forthcoming period, acquire a much more sustained pace. The World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre in January 2001, showed that there can be a convergence around such ideas as the concept that the world is not a commodity and that another world is possible. The Forum to be held in 2002 can represent a qualitative step forward in the resistance if it helps to go beyond the organizational and programmatic dispersion that now exists within the movement of opposition to neo-liberalism.

Socialism as a global, living and relevant alternative to Capitalism cannot be reduced to a form of economic organization; it is also the basis for the worldwide power structure and the type of society that today governs all human relationships. The brutal widening of the gulf between rich and poor continents, countries, regions and communities; the generalized increase in class inequalities; the erosion of social rights and democratic systems and the development of new forms of exclusion and authoritarianism; the accelerated and brutal destruction of cultures and traditional ways of living of the majority of humanity; the reinforcement of religious fundamentalism; the aggravation of the ecological crisis, which already seriously affects the planet and compromises the future generations; the radicalisation of militarism, conservatism and North American imperial ambitions under the new Bush government are clearly demonstrating, to a growing number of political and protest movements and social layers, that we need to oppose this mode of production, this power structure, this culture, this civilization with a global alternative.

The alternative to the neo-liberal capitalist system is a socialism informed by genuine democracy, pluralism and self-management, respect for differences and the elimination of gender and racial discrimination. A socialism that includes the self-organization of society on the basis of human needs and solidarity as an effective reality in a world in which human beings constitute the parameters of ethical relationships. A socialism that includes respect for diversity and the resources available for the development of the creative potential that is unique to every individual. A socialism that includes the guarantee of genuine access to information, coupled with the necessary training for each of us to benefit as a truly free individual. A socialism that includes an intransigent defence of local cultures and the integration of the traditional knowledge of communities. A socialism that is informed by respect for the environment.

Day-to-day construction

While we have no desire to minimize the lessons of the international struggle of the exploited and oppressed, we say this socialist content has also been the most decisive lesson we have drawn from the major experiences we have had here in Brazil:

- from the practice of the workers when, in the course of their struggle, they build higher forms of organization, advance their unity and achieve political independence from the bourgeoisie;
- from the practice of mass participation throughout the country (in an outstanding way over the last twelve years in Porto Alegre), where the people have begun to exercise direct public control over the state. The left worldwide is now discussing the experience of the participatory budget. We are beginning to build a participatory democracy. Citizens are not restricting their participation in politics to voting on election day, but are developing an active citizenship in which - in contrast to the logic of a capitalist society - the distance between governors and governed narrows, technocratic prejudices are fought, and a new culture of participation and collective accountability in the treatment of public affairs is created;
- from the practice of radical struggle of the social movements, in which those who are excluded from society engage in direct action to transform the world and use their victories on their immediate demands to build elements of an economy of solidarity and become schooled in cooperation.
- from the practical experiences of the critical appropriation of the products of technical innovation, through control of the use of bio-engineered plants or generalized dissemination of free software, through gaining access to life-preserving drugs or the use of the Internet in the international organization of the struggle against capitalist globalisation. Davos and Porto Alegre represent two historical outlooks, two models of civilization and two opposed, antagonistic and irreconcilable social realities.

That is why, in light of these developments, the conditions in which socialism can be conceived as a theoretical and practical question, integrated within our daily life, are being assembled. In which socialism can be conceived as a process of permanent struggle for the hegemony of conscious and interdependent action, in which our past achievements will lay the basis for qualitative leaps and revolutionary initiatives, continually reinforcing the

indissoluble relationship between socialism and liberty, democracy, feminism, equality and justice.

The structural impasse of neo-liberalism in Brazil

The FHC [Fernando Henrique Cardoso] government has rammed through a far-reaching reorganization of the Brazilian state, continuing a process that began under [Fernando] Collor [de Mello] and Itamar [Franco].

The prototype of the relationship between the state and the world capitalist market has been modified through the promotion of substantially increased rights for financial capital to the detriment of national sovereignty. Through the rescheduling of the foreign debt on permanently unfavourable bases, the radical dismantling of barriers to trade, the denationalisation of strategic productive and financial industries, the deregulation of capital flows, and the subjection of public expenditures to the objectives negotiated with the IMF, the country has abandoned control over a substantial portion of its capacity to determine its economic orientation in favour of financial markets. State property valued at some 30% of the GNP has passed into the hands of Brazilian or foreign capitalists.

The FHC government's renunciation of fundamental aspects of national sovereignty has gone so far as to convert the base at Alcantara (in the north-eastern state of Maranhão), into a service centre for launching U.S. satellites, under the complete control of the latter country. There has been a modification in the pattern of citizens' rights and mutual obligations. While the 1988 Constitution had pointed toward the universalisation of social entitlement, the neo-liberal reorganization has included a generalized attack on the fundamental rights of working people, and a disproportionate increase in the rights of property-holders.

The dynamic of increasing inclusiveness in the formal labour market that had existed since the [Getúlio] Vargas era has been broken. Social policies are now aimed at reducing social rights to the minimum, to social assistance directed to extremely impoverished groups, all others being redirected to the market. Wage-earners' taxes have increased, while capital gains have been protected from taxation. A new wave of subsidies in the billions, a veritable pillage of the public treasury, has been channelled toward the major capitalists including some multinational companies or recently privatised industries.

The neo-liberal reorganization has altered the very rules of the democratic game. A huge concentration of power in the central executive, control over the highest levels of the judiciary and the stripping of powers of the Congress (which has virtually lost its capacity to initiate legislation) have imposed a distinctly authoritarian model of management on the Brazilian state, with the concerted support of the mass media.

The social crisis, in part a result of the economic disaster, is evident in the serious deterioration of the labour market. Social expenditures have fallen. Urban violence exploded during the 1990s, and has already claimed more victims than the civil war in Colombia. Corruption has taken on explosive proportions amidst the degradation of the public sphere, the deregulation of financial controls, the clientelist nature of the government's base and the bureaucratic isolation of the major state economic agencies in a context of massive downsizing of the state sector.

Finally, the acceleration of the FTAA process is now producing increasing contradictions. The discussion on its implications, which until this year was almost non-existent, is beginning to spread, and it ought to be an important issue in the next elections, raising once again a debate on the national question and reopening, on another front, the discussion on the limits of neo-liberalism. This is an opportunity for us to strengthen the international movements that are challenging the size of the Third World debt and the need to pay it.

Crisis of the FHC government and the electoral contest in 2002

The impasse of Brazilian neo-liberalism is already threatening the very capacity of FHC to govern. The difficulties confronting the continuity of his power bloc are evident: its crisis is clearly deepening. FHC's popularity has been in freefall since 1999. This was clear in the 2000 municipal elections, with the indisputable progress of the left-wing parties and in particular the significant victory of the PT. 2001 has been characterized by the discrediting of the parties that support FHC. The calling of the early presidential election has resulted in one clash after another amongst the hitherto united majority.

The possibility of an institutional crisis cannot be excluded, with the development of the crisis in the Senate (whatever its outcome) and the moral disrepute of the Planalto [the seat of the Presidency] in the wake of the forestalling of the installation of the parliamentary committee of inquiry on corruption, the unending deadlocks with the Judiciary, the growth of mass discontent and the return of social mobilizations.

Furthermore, the relative economic upturn that characterized 2000 is now threatened both by international instability (as a result of its increased dependency, the Brazilian economy has become more vulnerable to the ups and downs of speculative capital) and by the crisis of electrical energy supply (an obvious result of the irresponsibility of the government and its privatisation project). And it is highly probable that the social situation, which is already catastrophic, will be aggravated by the attempts to disguise it. The governmental bloc will be unable to use the economy as a decoy to cover up its political demoralization, but in addition it will have to cope with new sources of unpopularity. There are greater possibilities of new and bigger victories for the PT and the left.

However, this overall vision of conjunctural difficulties and pressures on the government must be put into perspective. It must be acknowledged that the government retains a significant capacity for political initiative, as manifested in its continued parliamentary majority, its strong economic support and the support of its positions by the media. Its political centre is far from a state of collapse or powerlessness.

2002 has already begun

The FHC government is now seeking a candidate who can symbolize an effort at renovation on the strategic plane of the neo-liberal reorganization of the Brazilian state and carry out certain changes in its administration albeit without altering its foundations.

The bourgeois opposition parties, for their part, are seeking to build an identity and a project that can unify their various factions; Ciro Gomes and Itamar Franco are striving to express this movement.

The PT is the main beneficiary of the resistance to the neo-liberal program developed by the left and the mass movement. The party's candidate will be chosen in primary elections, the rules of which have not yet been established, but it is Lula who at this point seems to us to be the name most capable of expressing a mobilization of this scope and he should be the candidate of the PT. These forces that have been accumulated are by themselves insufficient, however, to produce a governmental alternative. Only the political and programmatic renewal from a socialist perspective of the Brazilian democratic and popular movement and of the PT can make its victory a possibility.

The PT is now leading an opposition to the PSDB and the FHC government that is clearer than it has ever been. It has overcome some major ambiguities, including in regard to the Itamar and Garotinho governments [in Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro]. However, the contrast between greater clarity in its political positioning as an opposition force and a lack of programmatic clarity in its definition as an alternative to neo-liberalism is starkly apparent.

The PT must keep neoliberalism, the federal government and the forces supporting it at the centre of its attacks. However, the party cannot leave the bourgeois opposition parties unscathed. We must denounce their limitations, their conservative promises and their inability to defend the interests of the vast majority of the nation. The PT and the democratic and popular movement must bring together the conditions to inflict a major defeat on the neo-liberal political camp in 2002.

The PT will be especially well prepared for this confrontation if it clearly defines itself as a defender of the workers' interests, of a democratic and popular program, and of a policy of left-wing alliances, and if it makes greater reference to a new socialist and internationalist perspective.

Carrying out the democratic and popular program

A breach has been opened for the Brazilian left to go on the offensive, defeat the bloc in power and take the leadership of the central government. To succeed in all these tasks, it is urgently necessary to unify the democratic and popular movement around a clear political line and action plan for the situation that will develop during the 2002 elections.

The major instrument for uniting the Brazilian left, expanding its base of political support as widely as possible, and constituting a broad mass movement that can defeat the governing bloc is the democratic and popular program. This program aims to go beyond the development model, social structures and political relationships that have long condemned the country to dependency and the tutelage of imperialist finance capital and the IMF, to economic crises, institutional deadlock and periodic episodes of authoritarian rule. That condemn the people to one of the most revolting distributions of wealth in the world, the domestic market to stagnation, the peasants to monopoly ownership of the soil, the workers to unemployment and super-exploitation, and the middle layers of the population to impoverishment; that deprives young people of any perspective and that forces a third of the labour force to live under the poverty threshold and condemns masses of people to a marginal existence.

The victory of the left means building a new political and social hegemony, opening the way to the coming to power of a new historic bloc and thereby creating the conditions for an open battle for power within Brazilian society, through the awakening to democratic political participation of tens of millions of individuals and their direct involvement in the establishment of a series of reforms in the peoples' interest.

This program can be carried out only in confrontation with the ruling class, and in particular the alliance of the major landowners, the financial oligopolies and international big business. The experiences we have already had in a number of PT municipal or state governments are proof of the viability of some of our proposals and make an ever-increasing contribution to the building of our forces.

Of fundamental importance as well are the struggles of the masses and their organizations and movements such as the Central Unica dos Trabalhadores [CUT - Central workers' organization], the Movimento dos Trabalhadores rurais sem terra [MST - Landless workers' movement] and the Central dos Movimentos populares [CMP - Coordinating council of grassroots movements], the World March of Women, and the effective actions of resistance to neo-liberalism such as the World Social Forum. But we must overcome the pragmatic temptation to consider these advances as a mere operation of accumulation of electoral forces; this would deprive the social movements of all their potential. On the contrary, the increase in their strength and their capacity for independent mobilization will broaden and deepen the conditions in favour of unity and victory for the masses.

A new state for a new country

We cannot synthesize these experiences unless we clearly develop a plan to reorganize the Brazilian state in accordance with democratic principles of socialist inspiration, i.e. on the basis of a non-liberal perception of democracy, based on a guarantee and expansion of rights (particularly those of labour), on a critique of the predominance of commodity rights, and on the constitution of a public sphere shaped increasingly by processes of direct and participatory democracy. A new Brazil is impossible without a culture that promotes the dignity of the public sector, without fundamentally and openly challenging the privileges of big business and the major landholdings, and without a reconstruction of social programs. On that basis, we will be able to build a new sustainable model of economic and technological development, of growth with distribution of wealth and reduction in regional inequalities.

Developed for a country of the periphery, our program must incorporate as central themes national sovereignty and support for the construction of a new international order. It must be conceived within a new anti-capitalist internationalist culture including an agenda that directly challenges the logic of submission to markets, supported by the struggles of the labouring classes and the World Social Forum. The rejection of the FTAA must provide an impetus to the resumption of a Latin American project that is not only independent of but opposed to American hegemony.

Looking to the future

Our slate is defined, in the first place, by its approach to the debate within the party. As members who are identified with the revolutionary imagination and the construction of a new type of society that goes beyond the capitalist order, we could of course draw up a lengthy inventory of differences with the policy that is predominant on the national level, beginning with a number of key values, extending to the critique of capitalism, and concluding with some pragmatic points of government, not to mention the general standpoint we should adopt on questions of strategy and tactics.

Pragmatism, electoralism and institutionalism are growing. Some depoliticised primary elections have frequently had a disintegrating effect and helped to destroy collectivity. The PT's internal democracy has suffered, among other problems, from the generalization of such practices as mass recruitment on an unclear basis and the adoption nationally of meetings with open polls throughout the day without discussion among the participants and based on members' transportation systems. These practices significantly distort representation in the party's leading bodies.

The party must prepare for the big challenges that lie before it and do justice to the great hopes that have been placed in it for two decades. Up to now, we have managed to grow through elections, in cohabitation with some archaic tensions, including certain features of the traditional formations. But the eulogies to lack of organization, institutional dilution, programmatic concessions and unclear alliances have gone on for too long and cannot help but prejudice our performance in more complex and demanding circumstances of the class struggle. However, we will not resolve these problems through a mere doctrinaire reaffirmation of principles, as important as those are.

Much has been achieved through the successful pursuit of another approach to politics, one that makes no concessions to our opponents, that promotes in deeds the development of the experience and political consciousness of the people, and that is consistent with our principles without being doctrinaire ¾ whether in regard to municipal or state governments, our intervention in social or political movements or in the battle of ideas and the action of the party, or in Parliament. If we want to measure up to the challenges we face, we must take a qualitative step forward, generalize these approaches and experiences and transform them into a standard of conduct.

The PT must expand its internal democracy by promoting its forums for discussion; put greater efforts into training its cadres, and place greater reliance on the strengthening of the mass movements. It must reaffirm its role as a leading party by coordinating, articulating and initiating actions and experiences that enliven the democratic and popular camp, both as a movement and as institutions. We cannot allow the PT to be only a federation of political currents and groups. We want the party to go beyond the electoral contest, and this must be an ongoing task.

We are going into a decisive battle against huge forces, and in such circumstances the worst thing to do is to extol moderation, the illusion of conciliation, the loss of our socialist values, a lack of clarity in our political goals, the abandonment of the demands of the masses and a loss of consciousness of who we are and what we represent.

The broad masses will adopt the party's proposals only if they find in them some answers to their problems, the determination to confront the powerful, and the capacity to overcome obstacles. The party must stimulate the desire for transformation, build confidence in ourselves and encourage initiatives by the exploited and oppressed masses, in accordance with the idea that the emancipation of the workers will be accomplished by the workers themselves.

Linking experience with struggle

16 November 2001, by Raul Pont

Raul Pont was born in Uruguaiana, Rio Grande do Sul, in 1944. A founder member of the PT, he is a member of the National and State Directory of the party.

A student leader in the 1960s, he chaired the DCE of the UFRS [1] in 1968. He was a trade union militant and university professor in the 1970s and 1980s and a founder of the journal Em Tempo at the end of the 1970s. He was Secretary General and President of the PT in Rio Grande do Sul and a member of the National Executive and Treasurer of the Party.

He was a candidate to the Senate during the first election contested by the Party, in 1982 and the first PT candidate for mayor of Porto Alegre, in 1985.

In 1986 he was elected as state deputy, gaining the highest vote of any PT candidate in Rio Grande do Sul. He led the group of state deputies in 1987 and 1988. In 1990 he was elected federal deputy; in 1992, he was elected deputy mayor of Porto Alegre. In 1996, he was elected mayor of Porto Alegre, in the first round, with 55% of the vote.

From the foundation of the PT, Raul has been recognized by all for his concern for democracy within the party. He was in the forefront of the defence of tendency rights, of proportional representation on the leadership bodies and a minimum quota of 30% of women in the leadership. From the beginning of the experience of the local administrations in Porto Alegre, he developed a new central concern: linking the experiences of left government with the struggle for socialism.

These concerns - presented below in the form of theses- are centrally relevant to the new period of struggles and the renewed chance we have of winning power at national and federal level.

(NOTE: in the PT's presidential elections Raul Pont came second with 17.5% of the vote and scored 47% of the vote in his home state of Rio Grande do Sul).

Theses

1. Electoral victories in dozens of cities, several capitals and the conquest of state governments, as in Rio Grande do Sul, prove the viability and necessity of a political front linking the popular democratic, feminist, antiracist, ecologist and socialist camp, establishing the social base underlying the strategy of a programme of transition to socialism. If it is possible in the municipalities and the states, it is possible also in the entire country starting from a program which is identified with the interests of the majority of the population.

2. Our governments can provide an experience of participatory democracy which challenges the inevitable and immutable character of the traditional representative system. Direct democracy and popular sovereignty go beyond the concept of traditional citizenship and make possible a process of participation and an awakening of the consciousness of the population, posing in new forms the historical debate on the relationship of society to the state.

3. The question of democracy, increasingly obviously in contradiction with the neo-liberal capitalist state (provisional measures, authoritative centralism, dictatorship of capital in the workplaces and so on) constitute a key and strategic element in a project of transition to socialism. With the national question, it is one of the most significant programmatic axes for socialists, because of its mobilizing potential and because it is essential to the strategic project which we defend. The experiences of left governments are the base on which we will defend, stimulate and practice popular participation by defending its autonomy and its self-organization. There is no socialist project without self-organization of the workers and producers, and the autonomy of these experiences with respect to the current representative system is a necessity for the political education of the majority of the population.

4. Our governments are significant for the construction of political hegemony in society. Participatory democracy enables us to face the power of the media and the economic regime, without underestimating them and believing that popular participation is enough to defeat them. It is clear that the question of ownership, the institutions of the capitalist State or the concessions to national telecommunications networks are not resolved at the level of a municipality. But a participatory democracy can constitute a network of associative organizations of services, culture, leisure, sport, or in the area of production and trade with the micro and small entrepreneurs involving thousands of citizens. It constitutes a social vanguard... This dynamic will be all the more vigorous when its dimension extends to the national level.

5. The process of social transformation is much fuller and complex than the conquest of left governments. However, our governments cannot be seen as being separated from this more general fight to go beyond capitalism, or our experience will simply be that of management of a state in crisis, leading to serious political and ideological defeats. The transformation for which we fight requires, above all, an intense popular self organization and the growth of the leading political role of the working class and its allies in the fight for the transcendence of exploitation and alienation, the destruction of the environment and oppressions of gender, race, national cultural and religious character. Our governments, thanks to participatory democracy and the realization of their program, can instigate and contribute strongly has the advancement of these historic conditions in the struggle for

socialism.

6. Our experiences have already acquired a great international dimension and it is one of the central aspects that has to be developed by the governments and by the PT. To be aware of this task is fundamental as we prepare ourselves to contest and win the elections for the presidency of the Republic and the governments of the states. A development comprising national sovereignty and democracy, justice, distribution of wealth, agrarian reform, presupposes a confrontation with the neo-liberal forces inside the country but also with the imperialist centres and their instruments of domination. To break the encirclement and the asphyxiation that they impose on us, which have already cost so dear to so many experiences in Latin America and in the world, it is necessary to develop solid internationalist links with other left experiences and the social movements. Evidence of this potential is the World Social Forum which will have its second meeting in Porto Alegre in 2002; the repercussions beyond Brazil of the experience of the Participatory Budget; the construction of significant initiatives of international mobilization, like the Women's March, the Plebiscite on the Foreign Debt and those which are developing against the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas).

7. Our Workers' Party must rise up to the level of these challenges and others. Our institutional victories only have meaning if they are integrated with a socialist project. And there is no socialist project without socialist parties. The PT as the main socialist party in Brazil must overcome organizational and programmatic backwardness in relation to the conquests already won and those which can be won soon. In addition that cannot be done without overcoming practices, conduct and conceptions, which do not reflect our best qualities as a democratic, militant and socialist party.

Footnotes

[1] The Diretorio Central dos Estudantes (DCE) is a student organization, in this case of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRS).

An LCR candidate for the presidential elections

16 November 2001, by François Duval

While the employers, under the misleading term of "social refoundation", continue to wage a large scale offensive against social rights, the Jospin government which has been in power since 1997 has introduced a series of socially regressive measures, in some cases going beyond what the employers have actually demanded. Since the local elections the employers have taken advantage of a period without immediate electoral contests to proceed to a series of massive dismissals, unhindered by the so called "social modernization" measures adopted by the left parliamentary majority.

This situation has proved favourable to a more autonomous activity of certain sectors of wage earners, like the June 09 demonstration in favour of a law forbidding dismissals, called by workers at Danone and Marks & Spencer. On the political level, the dissatisfaction of sections of the popular layers with the institutional left has been expressed regularly at elections by abstention and, for some years by votes for the far left.

This made it possible to send five revolutionary deputies (two for the LCR and three for LO) to the European Parliament in 1999, on the basis of a common campaign. In the April local elections, LO had rejected unity. For the presidential elections of 2002, the LCR had proposed that Arlette Laguiller, LO spokesperson and popular political personality, should be the common candidate for the LCR and LO, on the basis of a political agreement reflecting the orientations of the two organizations. LO rejected the proposal and refused to even meet to discuss it!

In these conditions, the LCR decided to put forward Olivier Besancenot as candidate for the presidency of the Republic. Olivier Besancenot, a member of the political leadership of the LCR, is a 27 year-old postal worker. He is particularly involved in the trade union movement in his workplace and in the mobilizations against capitalist globalisation.

This candidacy will be opposed to the right wing and the policy of the government. In particular it will defend a new policy for youth and workers, rejecting inequality, unemployment and poverty and aspiring to a radical transformation of society. On the French political scene, it is a new candidacy, because it represents the emergence of new generations in the world of work, in the associative world, the political world and the struggles of recent years. A generation that rejects neo-liberalism both in relation to capitalist globalisation and in everyday life. A generation that rejects the world becoming a commodity, the worsening of inequalities between rich and poor, job insecurity and low wages while profits soar.

This candidacy, representing this new generation, will also reflect the problems of the workplace in the face of the neo-liberal capitalist offensive.

The candidacy of a postal worker and a trade unionist symbolizes the situation of million workers confronted

with the policy of privatisation of the public services required by the European Union and the international economic institutions. Privatisation that will worsen the living conditions of millions of employees - which will lead to job insecurity, impossible working hours and wage austerity.

In this situation, this candidacy is, naturally, in solidarity with all struggles against layoffs and in defence of wages and all social rights. The main themes Olivier Besancenot will campaign around will be: the prohibition of the dismissals (in particular by profitable companies); an immediate increase of 1,500 francs per month in wages and minimum social benefits; the taxation of profits and financial speculation,; emergency ecological measures; a democratic revolution in France and Europe; equal rights between French citizens and immigrants, men and women, straight and gay.

Finally, this candidacy will be the only one to establish the link between the daily fight against capitalist exploitation with the struggle against capitalist globalisation.