

Genoa July 2001

Taking anti-capitalism to the next stage

Seattle, Washington, Melbourne, Prague, Seoul, Nice, Davos/Porto Alegre, Quebec, Gothenburg – now Genoa!

The anti-capitalist movement is marching onwards. In Genoa more than a hundred thousand will protest over the course of the week. Our movement can now make a mighty leap forward – by linking up with one of the most militant and political working classes on the continents.

We are a movement of globalisation from below – a globalisation of the struggles and communities of the working and exploited people's of the world. Of course we speak with many and different voices – different languages, nations and ethnic groups.

All of us wish to express our identities against the stifling uniformity of corporate culture. But we also wish to share and unite our heritages of struggle and creativity. This is the great strength of our movement.

The anti-capitalist movement contains workers, working farmers, landless poor, students, indigenous peoples. Overwhelmingly it is young people – a new generation in revolt against the world in which they have grown up – who give the movement its present dynamism.

The anti-capitalist movement is a progressive movement. It is progressive because:

- it exposes the crimes and oppressions of capitalism.

- it is progressive because it is consciously and proudly internationalist, linking workers, small farmers and youth in the "North" with those in the "South".

- it is progressive because it privileges direct action against the corporations and the international financial institutions over negotiation, over the hopeless game of respectable parliamentary politics.

The movement's ideas are extremely heterogeneous. But all have come to the conclusion, along one path or another, that capitalism is killing people and their world, and it must be stopped. What it should be replaced with is a debate that must continue alongside our common protest.

We think that the enemy is capitalism, not simply the key institutions that oversee the trading or financial system. Not everyone agrees. Supporters of the movement like Susan George or Walden Bello imply that capitalism was not always like this – even that it has only very recently become like this; that all the bad things



started with neo-liberalism in the 1980s.

If that were true then the answer would be a return to a pre-1980 world, a world before structural adjustment programmes, of a welfare capitalism in the "First world". It would mean the "import substitutionism" and state capitalist development strategies of the Third world in the 1960s and 1970s.

What this amounts too is a neo-reformism or a neo-third world nationalism. It will not work in a world where capitalism continues to increase the scale and global reach of the means of production and exchange. You cannot turn the clock back like this.

Even the most radical ideologues – the USA populists and the anarchists – who are not frightened of direct action and even use the word "revolution", imagine that the alternative lies in the past, a Romantic cleaned-up view of man and woman in harmony with nature tilling the soil, lovingly cultivating local customs and ancient languages.

We can save and learn from the past. But only if we break the stranglehold of big capital. We cannot do this by looking to the past for the main answers, by re-localising, by basing "community" on ancient modes of production.

The essentially liberal and populist leaders dismiss "socialism" and "revolution" as outmoded nineteenth and twentieth century heirlooms, or as inherently associated with the grotesque experiment of Stalinism in the USSR and eastern Europe. "Democracy" for them is sufficient – never outdated apparently.

If it were only that they cheered the movement on from the sidelines and submitted their utopias to criticism of the activists, it would not

be so bad. But since Quebec and Gothenburg some of these NGO spokespersons – like Susan George – have rushed to condemn those who bravely resist the police provocations on the streets.

This is just playing the game of our enemies. We have to defend one another against the common enemy and put the blame squarely on the state of corporate capital and its politicians and police not on those who fight back. On this basis we can indeed have "unity in diversity".

For over a year after Seattle self-styled revolutionary socialists – like the United Secretariat of the Fourth International or the International Socialist Tendency – insisted that liberals like Susan George must not be criticised for fear of "discouraging" the movement. Now her comments on Gothenburg have forced the IST at least to distance themselves from her "reformism". For the USFI, up to its ears in ATTAC – this maybe more difficult

Being in a united front against corporate capitalism with reformist figures or organisations does not mean that criticism stops. We have to subject these people to criticism whenever they deserve it. They are not short on their criticisms of militants and they have access to the bourgeois press.

Inevitably conflicts will break out within the movement against global capitalism. They can be educational and clarifying, not demoralising and divisive of the real fighting forces. The liberals should be given no privileges. Their real support – numbers of fighters on the streets – does not entitle them to any.

And the most conservative forces in the anti-capitalist movement are pressing hard to make the weight of money and media coverage pay. The forces which dominated the World Social Forum (Porto Alegre) are explicitly linked to the reformist social democracy in Europe and the Third world.

In Porto Alegre the VIPs invited by ATTAC included French Socialist Party ministers like Jean Pierre Chevènement and the leaders of the Brazilian PT. The Zapatistas are being induced to sign up; if they do it will further pacify the movement.

The masses the rank and file of the trade unions, the poor peasant organisations, are the real rebels. They have thronged the streets of Cochabamba in Bolivia to defeat water privatisation. They have blockaded the streets and emp-

ried the factories and offices in four general strikes in one year in Argentina to scuttle IMF austerity plan after austerity plan.

In Europe the young anti-capitalist activists must build powerful links with these struggles in Latin America, in Africa, in Asia. We must follow the example of Seattle and Quebec and build strong links with the rank and file of the trade unions. We must help them build powerful currents of workers against the corporate takeover of a public services – as a conscious part of the anti-capitalist movement.

We have to fight against US and EU imperialism – against the NATO bombings or blockades of “rogue states” like Serbia, Iraq or Cuba. We have to fight the setting up of European rapid reaction forces and the Star Wars project of George W Bush. We have to fight the growing state racism in Europe whether it comes from a Blair or a Berlusconi.

Young workers will rally to this campaign, immigrant communities and anti-racists will do likewise. If we can create a powerful anti-capitalist wing of the European workers' movement in the next few years then we can turn back the neo-liberal offensive.

Then another world will be possible and we will be able to say what this world is – SOCIALISM. It will be founded on the power of the working class and on the rubble of the corporations and their state.

The only social force capable of leading this

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struggle to success is the working class. But at the moment it is only episodically drawn into battle, mainly in North America. In Europe, the trade union and social democratic leaders are happy to parade their members up and down streets for small reforms and do all they can (as in Nice) to keep them away from the conscious anti-capitalists.

The anti-capitalist youth must seek to tear down this barrier with as much courage and imagination as shown against the steel fence in Quebec.

That is why we have to carry on with the international mobilisations against the gatherings of the globalisers. We have to make them as enormous and as militant as possible.

We must try to draw in the official mass organisations of the working class and indeed all popular organisations opposed to the globalisers which have an internationalist, anti-racist character.

We can and we should maintain a unity in action between those who have different tactical outlooks. Let those who want to specialise in NVDA do what they want – but without condemning or trying to impose Gandhian non-vio-

lence on others in the face of brutal repression.

To those who believe in street fighting and trashing of banks and corporate shops we say: “we can make winning the majority of the working class easier for ourselves by not turning every demonstration into a miniature insurrection from the beginning.”

Playing at insurrection only plays into the hands of the police. A few hundred young street fighters – however courageous – will never defeat the state forces or even win consistent partial victories. For this we need tens, hundreds of thousands on the streets and millions on strike.

It cuts us off from the mass of people who do not go on a demonstration in order to fight the police – though they may well defend themselves if attacked. We need to keep throwing the responsibility for violence where it really belongs – onto the state, capitalism and imperialism.

To the advocates of traditional labour movement “peaceful” mass demonstrations that simply process from A to B causing the forces of order scarcely a moments thought we say “do you call yourselves militants?”

If you leave it to the anarchists to protest militantly and effectively against the arrogant conferences of the globalisers then every courageous young fighter will gravitate to anarchism. And this will be a just punishment for your cowardly legalism and opportunism.

We have to win the rank and file of the unions to direct action tactics and to political mass strikes. We have to advocate and practice organised self-defence so that the forces of order cannot break up our demonstrations or violate our democratic rights at will.

Obviously to do this we have to go beyond symbolic acts like demonstrations and take up real ongoing struggles against pri-

vatation, cuts in education and healthcare, austerity packages, unemployment. Also for campaign to recruit to the unions, for land and workplace occupations, for road blockades, for general strikes.

Workers, peasants, indigenous peoples in the Third World have already taken up many of these struggles since the “Asian” crash of 1997-8 – which also devastated the economies of Latin America and Africa.

In Canada, Australia, South Korea and the USA workers and youth are also ahead of us. In

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Europe east and West we have to take up the fight to draw in much wider numbers.

Drawing into the movement hundreds of thousands of active rank and file workers will require a hard struggle against long entrenched, extremely pro-capitalist bureaucracies. We need to help the rank and file of the old mass organisations empower themselves.

If necessary, we must create new ones to bring in a new generation of workers, neglected and ignored by the old bureaucrats. In every country we need to build permanent “convergence centres” to support their and all other progressive struggles to achieve for a re-radicalised anti-capitalist working class movement.

Above all we must make our movement even more international by linking up with the struggles all “three worlds” and with the organisations which are really waging them. Eastern Europe and the countries of the former USSR will be represented in Genoa.

We have to build links with them, materially support, and take solidarity action with, all their struggles against the “new” capitalists and corporations that have destroyed their countries. The crises in countries like Russia and Ukraine have been as or more devastating than in Latin America – GDP falls of over 50%.

We need not a hot air “Rebel International” – such as the organisers of Porto Alegre suggested. Capitalism – imperialism – cannot be “humanised”, it must be overthrown and replaced. We need to start building a new working class international on a foundation of immediate solidarity actions, links between fighting bodies of all sorts.

But we need to accompany this with debate and discussion as to what our strategy should be, what kind of programme we need to get rid of capitalism and imperialism. Whilst doing this we can build new organising centres in every country, linked to one another by ideas and actions. Then it will be possible to build a new International – not for post-modernist “rebellion” but for WORLD SOCIALIST REVOLUTION. ★

REVOLUTION

**Come to a Global Gathering for
anti-capitalist youth
Campsite near Genoa
Ideas, food, music
22-25 July**

**•What is global capitalism?
•Non-violence and violence
What do we do next?**

**Coaches leave Centro di
Convergenza, Piazzale Kennedy on
16.00 on Sunday 22 July
Contact us in Genoa on:**

0039-10-3770821