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SpOiLs of War

Chomsky on Empire

Domin8-tricks

Latin Trouble

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EVIL EMPIRES

I guess Chomsky, and maybe most of us, might think of the phrase 'Evil Empires' as needlessly lengthy - since every empire is evil.

In fact, Chomsky has quite a bit to say about empires and imperialism, much of it head and shoulders above everyone else in terms of clarity and content (for a choice interview, look no further than p.20, for more, dig into the reviews section).

Other subjects that seem to come up a lot when empires are mentioned include wars and oil. The official US line has started to call the Iraq invasion a battle instead of a war now, but this doesn't stop everyone knowing what it really was. After all, we have 2,000 years of empire building in our history to look at (for the 5-minute version, see p.6).

Oil has only more recently become tied to empire, in fact, since the First World War. But is oil behind the slaughter of Iraq? As Margaret Atwood said, "Never believe anything until it's officially denied".

Oil is currently key to capitalism, and the US state is all about mollycoddling the capitalist wild-child, so it doesn't take a genius to work out that wars (or battles) for oil are seen as crucial, if you look at the world through White House windows. The trick is to create a system whereby every war for oil also benefits the bank balance and preferably, at the same time, crushes the baddies and helps win a second term too *(The spOILS of war, p.18).*

In Europe, without the military might, the best chance is to start thinking about alternative technologies, to avoid the oilfield battlefields *(How green is my biofuel?, p.4).* With any luck, this means that by the time things are looking hairy around the last few oil wells, we will be in renewable fuel-run utopia. That is, if US-induced global climate change hasn't screwed everything by then.

Talking of the weather, all spring, the world's mainstream media and the SWP (p.10) were obsessed with the war to the exclusion of everything else (except the elections/SWP membership – p.12). Well, the news is that people kept being bullied at work, the government sneaked out more measures to give us crap education, privatised health and identity card futures, and 14 UK construction workers were killed in 6 weeks in April/May, the youngest being a 17-year-old (p.8). South American turmoil, reported in previous *DAs*, continues (p.16). People are still locked up and being murdered by the US prison system, and people are still locked up in sweatshops across the developing world making clothes and trinkets for western, Nike-obsessed punters, desperate for an answer or a shopping fix (p.13). But, the un-news these past months has not all been bad news. In India, 60 million – yes, 60 million people went on strike against privatisation (p.11).

As McDonalds Workers' Resistance said, "we don't take shit, we make it" – this ironically also sums up the US State's attitude towards the rest of the world. Hence, we can now reveal Bush's notepad on the page entitled "war plan Iraq": "bomb them, maximise looting and destruction, install puppets, lift sanctions, sell Iraqi oil, use cash to pay US firms to rebuild the damage we done" (OK, he had help with the spelling). "We don't do body counts", said General Tommy Franks, Head of US Central Command. Unfortunately, he forgot that other people can count above their fingers and toes. By one measure of violence against noncombatants, as compared with resistance faced by soldiers, the war in Iraq was particularly brutal. In 'Operation Just Cause', the 1989 US invasion of Panama, 13 Panamanian civilians died for every US military fatality. If, as is currently estimated, 10,000 Iraqi civilians died in the latest war, that proportion would be 66 to 1.

Misery for some means brisk business for others. Amidst jittery stock markets, Lockheed Martin have done pretty well out of the war, in fact, they have done pretty well since winning "the largest defence contract in history", a $200 billion development contract to build a Joint Strike Fighter, which aims to "provide the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, and the UK's Royal Navy and Royal Air Force with an affordable and stealthy tactical aircraft for the 21st century" - one capable of killing thousands of civilians who happen to live in 'rogue states', no doubt.

Back home in blighty, we are still stuck with an evangelical in charge, with the same maniacal grin and more-than-ever self-obsession with finding his 'place in history'. He is no longer interested in mere domestic issues; he has it all worked out at home – Thatcher was right, right down to her education plans *(A lower class degree, p.22).* Fame is what drives him these days – now we know why he likes rubbing shoulders with popstars, he just wants to be loved and, if 10,000 innocent Iraqi's have to die for it, so be it. In fact, he is getting a bit annoyed with all these godless do-gooders whinging on. He was going to end a wartime address to the nation with the words "God bless you", but was eventually dissuaded by an aide. After an off-the-cuff remark about a "most ungodly lot", he made do with one of those anodyne "thank yous" – just like his fave celeb accepting the latest twat-award would've done.

Welcome to evil empires.

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Are you going to stay in that armchair waiting for the meltdown, or get out and DO something? Either way, be a SUBSCRIBER FOR A FIVER. That's almost half the cover price cost, and you get DA regularly, through your door. Why not switch to page 34 and fill in the form now, while you are thinking of what you can do with the £3 you'll save?

How green is my biofuel?

Given the oil wars (see centre pages), is the European Union scared of running on empty? There's more to green fuels initiatives than meets the eye.

...the local cops worked out that if they followed people who were running their cars on this Netto's special brew, the tailpipe emissions smelt like a chip shop. Anyway, apart from this slight problem, just how green is your chip-fat chariot?

The European Commission has recently announced a new Directive on Biofuels, reflecting the fact that the European Union (except the UK) is keen to see these green fuels developed as soon as practicable. The main outcome of the Directive is that a voluntary target for biofuels has been set to enable Europe to meet 5.75% of its petrol and diesel needs through biofuels within the next few years. This might not sound like much, but it is a start. There is, however, much intrigue behind the move.

Before the intrigue, it is worth outlining the current situation regarding these green fuels, and dispelling a few myths in the process. Firstly, there are lots of possibilities for getting energy directly from plants, rather than from crude, coal or natural gas. Some of them involve 'blue sky' technologies which haven't yet been proven, such as manufacturing hydrogen or using enzymes to break down lingocellulosic matter within woody plant matter. This is all very technical and futuristic, but there are current technologies to make diesel and petrol from everyday crops, such as oilseed rape, wheat and sugar beet, using proven methods. For example, the 'diesel from oilseed rape' method involves simply extracting the oil from the seed and then cleaning or esterifying it, while the 'petrol from wheat or beet' methods both involve making industrial ethanol.

In fact, there are even simpler ways to make 'green' diesel. One is to collect used frying oil, clean it using a garden shed level of technology, and stick it straight in your diesel fuel tank. In the US, some people have been running their vans on 'McDiesel' for years, by simply going around fast food restaurants and taking their used oil off them – and the same is true in Britain. Another method is to simply go to a cheap supermarket and buy 5 litre sized cartons of sunflower, rape or soya oil. This should work out about 30-40 pence per litre, rather than 80-odd pence at the oil multinational's pump.

Of course, it should be pointed out that one reason this is a cheap option is that it is illegal, since road-going motor vehicles are only allowed to run on fuel for which the fuel duty has been paid, and the current rate of tax is around 43 pence per litre. Apparently, there is a statistical chance of actually getting caught too, as a number of people in Llanelli found out when they got nicked, after the local cops worked out that if they followed people who were running their cars on this Netto's special brew, the tailpipe emissions smelt like a chip shop. Still, there are reliable reports that loads of people are doing this up and down the country – especially dodgy cab drivers, and not many people have been caught. Anyway, apart from this slight problem, just how green is your chip-fat chariot?

The biggest environmental problem facing humanity (except the possibility of horrendous war damage) is global climate change, and it is no longer a secret that this is due to the burning of fossil fuels, which releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, where it forms a 'blanket', letting the suns rays in, but letting less heat than normal radiate back out. The result is global warming, which is more accurately called global climate change, because not everywhere is simply getting warmer, and there are additional problems taking place, such as sea level rises, and more stormy weather and floods.

So, burning ordinary (fossil) diesel or petrol in a vehicle basically takes stored carbon from underground crude oil resources and releases it into the atmosphere, and this is the key problem. However, burning biodiesel or bioethanol also releases about the same amount of carbon dioxide, but this is plant carbon which has been taken from the atmosphere as the plant grows, so, technically, it is a re-release, and the net result is that all the carbon released is going to be re-absorbed when you grow next year's biodiesel/ethanol crop. So, it causes no global climate change?

Actually, in order to grow biofuels using modern methods, lots of big machinery is needed, all of which is made of things like steel and concrete, which use up fossil fuels in their making. Farming the crops themselves uses lots of fossil fuels, particularly in the manufacturing of chemical fertilisers. Nitrogen fertiliser uses natural gas straight from the North Sea as a feedstock – in other words, 'Growmore' and the like are actually made out of natural gas. If you take all this lot into account, then using modern farming techniques, it would take about one unit of fossil fuel to make

two units of biofuel. In other words, it is still worth doing, but it is not 'wonder-fuel'.

There are some other useful spin-offs from using biofuels. One is that some studies show they burn cleaner, so helping air quality problems in urban areas, and another is that they are biodegradeable, so spillages, etc., do not pollute in the same way that fossil fuel spillages do. On the down side though, most people do not relish the whole countryside being covered in bright yellow oilseed rape, especially if they are allergic to pollen, and even more especially if we end up getting GM oilseed into the biofuel chain. Incidentally, it is also worth mentioning here that in order to replace 6% of Britain's current diesel needs with biodiesel, we would have to plant the entire set-aside land of Britain with oilseed rape. Admittedly, this is the worst crop in terms of yield – bioethanol from wheat or beet is much better in terms of production potential, but the general point is that we won't get these green fuels for nothing in terms of environmental damage.

Enough technical intro, let's move on to the political intrigue. For a start, it is clear that for the EU mainland, biofuels are now seen as a means of diversifying fuel supply away from world oil markets. Since the US has shown that it is prepared to be more blatant than ever before about grabbing control of major sources of world oil resources by force, it would appear to be a prudent move by the EU to look to alternatives. Hence, while the environmental agenda is still there, securing fuel supplies which cannot be snatched by the US is now a major concern.

Another crucial reason why the EU is going for biofuels now is in order to provide a future for the agricultural industries. As part of the EU enlargement process, it is inevitable that lots of eastern European agricultural sectors cannot be given the same sort of subsidies which the current EU club has been enjoying for so long. Even without EU enlargement, the fact that tens of billions of Euros a year is being siphoned off into lining farmers' nests through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has long been recognised as unsustainable in the long run. EU enlargement is the trigger which will force major reform of the CAP, and thus leave farmers having to compete in world markets with their products.

This will not be easy, especially given three other factors. Firstly, other developed countries, such as the US, despite talking about free markets, actually subsidise their farming sectors, and so already flood world markets with falsely cheap agri-products. Secondly, and especially in Britain, the big supermarket friends of Labour have been allowed to tighten their monopolistic grip on British agri-industry and, while this continues, domestic farm gate prices will be cut to the bone. Thirdly, global free trade rhetoric means that there is increasing pressure on commodities like sugar, to allow sugar cane producing Third World countries to have a fair chance at competing in European markets.

In short, the future looks bleak for food crops in the EU, so the non-food crop option looks like a saviour. In fact, it won't be, but it may just help a bit. The problem is that there are already world markets in wheat, sugar and non-mineral oils, so biofuel makers will simply go to the world market for the cheapest feedstock for their process. So, the cosy internal biofuel market which some EU politicians seem to think will emerge to replace the old cosy CAP food crop market just will not happen. Also, in making biofuels, the labour and profits are going to be in the processing, not in the crop growing. Since modern intensive crop production employs few people, and processing will be done outside the rural areas, there will be no great boost for struggling rural economies.

Turning to the issue of how biofuels are to be encouraged, there is yet more intrigue. In Germany and Austria, full tax relief is already available for biodiesel production. Hence, you can already buy biodiesel, cheaper than ordinary diesel, at the pump. Also, in order to feed this rapidly expanding market, oilseed processors are already buying British rapeseed to make into German biodiesel. In Britain, the usual policy of 'fudge it and do too little too late' is apparently the main tactic. The Chancellor confirmed in the April budget that a derogation (fuel tax break) is to be given for biofuels. The amount of this tax break so far has been quoted by the Government as 20p/litre, and although there is currently a review going on, the intention seems to be to go ahead with the new regime from January 2005. Within the potential UK biofuels industry, it is widely known that a derogation of 27p would be needed to get the industry started, so whether the Government is

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Evil Empires:

Empires, by definition, are evil. They come about by one group dominating others, usually by military conquest and other forms of coercion.

In the ancient world there were many examples of empires, all following a familiar pattern of conquest and exploitation. Warlords set themselves up as absolute rulers of an area, then extended their power over neighbouring lands. The more ambitious then fought wars against other rulers to extend their territories, and create an empire. Of course, for most people, one tyrant was much the same as another. One common characteristic of empires is that they define the conquered people as inferior or as 'barbarians', while stealing any ideas off them that might be useful alongside other plundered wealth.

The Roman Empire is a perfect example of how the victor's view of history becomes the standard one. Roman views of the peoples they conquered are universally accepted, and the Romans are usually remembered as glorious, enlightened civilisers of the 'savage' tribes of Europe and North Africa who then ungraciously turned on them at the first sign of decline and decadence and plunged Europe into the 'Dark Ages'. Of course, the so-called 'savages' had their own methods of organising society and their own 'civilisation', just as sophisticated in its own way as the militaristic Romans.

For Europeans the next phase of empires begins in the 15th century with the growth of mercantile exploration. This is often presented as an investigative and pioneering quest to find out what was around the next corner. The real motive was greed, as European monarchs sought to increase their wealth and power. Columbus 'discovered' America by accident and so opened up a new period of expansion. Spain, then the main power in Europe, was the first to exploit the New World. Spain was closely followed in its conquests by Britain, France, and others who saw the obvious advantages. In time, however, the Industrial Revolution and the wars that were fought between the European powers saw Britain emerging as the dominant economic force in the world.

The British Empire was gained by a combination of military conquest (North America), economic ascendancy (India), colonising sparsely populated areas (Australia), or a combination of all three (Africa). It was used to supply the raw materials for the expanding industrialisation in Britain. The British claimed that they were bringing civilisation to the 'heathens' blithely ignoring the fact that some of the places they had added to the Empire had the evidence of civilisations staring them in the face. When any evidence of ancient civilisations in Africa or elsewhere was discovered this was conveniently attributed to lost 'white tribes' who disappeared through 'miscegenation' – inter-breeding with racially inferior stock. The racist theories of the 19th century, complete with their classifications and charts of the respective inferiority or superiority of different 'races', appropriated the evidence of prior civilizations and, bizarrely, offered it as a horrible example of what can happen when the superiority and exclusivity of whiteness is compromised by 'inferior' stock.

Of course it was during this time that another empire was quietly being built. This empire did not think of itself as one; in fact, its whole ethos was supposedly anti-empire, but it used the old methods of military conquest, colonising, and economic muscle. As it expanded westwards in the l9th century, the USA fought the Spanish and the Mexicans. The new empire-builders wiped out entire Native American tribes and herded the

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calling the industry's bluff or is not really serious about biofuels is questionable.

A tax break of 20p/litre has been already in place for two other forecourt fuels for some time, namely CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) and LPG (Liquified Petroleum Gas). These were apparently sponsored by the Department of Transport as cleaner city fuels to help air pollution in cities, although the fuels are allowed to be sold anywhere, so this seem like a very 'blunt instrument' to achieve cleaner air in cities. Anyway, these fuels are based on fossil fuels, so they cause lots of global climate change, and they haven't caught on, partly because they invariably require changes to (or new) vehicle engines (whereas biodiesel and bioethanol are straight replacements for diesel and petrol).

This brings us to one of the key issues with the derogation. Fuel tax was invented to raise money for Governments, not to differentiate between green and dirty fuels. As we have seen, bioethanol made using modern, intensive farmed wheat is probably worth doing environmentally, but it is not that great because of all the chemical fertilisers, etc. involved. A far better choice would be to grow it organically. This would have the major added benefit of actually helping regenerate rural economies, because organic farming is more labour-intensive, and so, a larger part of the overall value of the biofuel would be created in the countryside. In fact, a far better option would be to take both the wheat grain and the straw off the field to the bioethanol factory, where the straw could be burnt to generate the necessary heat and electricity to run the plant. Calculations have shown that there would be so much of this 'green' electricity left over, that it could be exported to the grid, thus actually making our national electricity mix greener too. Of course, using the Government's chosen method of the derogation blunt instrument, if there is ever a biofuel industry in Britain, it will be run using the cheapest (financially) and most expensive (environmentally) options.

a short history

survivors into enclosures called 'reservations'. It even fought a civil war to ensure that the vision of a united continent could be achieved. Once it had secured itself as the major power in the western hemisphere it decreed, through the Monroe Doctrine that, *"the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonisation by any European powers."* In other words, the USA were now the top dogs and would control what happened on that continent.

So through a combination of political, economic and military methods, which made the British seem like amateurs, the USA exerted its control over the rest of the Americas, making it safe for the expansion of capitalism. In the next century, two world wars left the European powers devastated and/or bankrupt and the USA the dominant force in the capitalist world. But there was still the problem of the Soviet Union, which had taken its own path to empire building.

The Russian Empire had always been a ramshackle affair and regarded with suspicion by the western powers, even when they had an alliance with it. It had assumed the task of leadership of the Slav peoples while dominating other ethnic minorities within its own borders. After the revolution the Bolsheviks, instead of freeing these people, simply took over the role of the old Tsar and rebuilt the empire under their own ideology calling it '*socialism in one country*'. In doing so first Lenin then Stalin set about destroying all internal opposition with brutal thoroughness.

WW2 gave the Soviet Union the chance to spread its influence over Eastern Europe. Like the USA it never called itself an empire but to all intents and purposes that's what it was. Of course, the strain of trying to keep up with the USA broke it, and the whole rotten Marxist experiment crumbled, leaving the USA as undisputed heavyweight champion of the world.

So now we are back to the modern equivalent of the Roman Empire; they even have the same hand-across-the-heart salute. Not only does the military might and economic muscle of the USA dominate the world, their version of history is so important to them that wherever their media ownership is in danger of being shown up by independent journalism, people get fired, censored or, as in Iraq, fired on by the US military. The sending of Christian evangelists to Iraq to hand out bibles along with aid mirrors the old British imperial mission to Christianize the conquered 'heathens' in Africa and India. The USA even has the added bonus of cultural hegemony, with everything from Hollywood to Big Macs easily recognised around the globe.

Indeed, they are so confident in their superiority that have a project called the 'Project for the New American Century'. This sets out their vision of a 21st century world where everyone in it will hold those same American values as envisaged by the project members (these include Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Dubya's brother Jed, who helped in the Florida election carve-up). This project – whose website reads like a conspiracy theorist's worst nightmare - envisions and promotes (it argues by force if necessary) a future in which the world is run by the big corporations, one in which workers will do as they are told and have less rights than we have now, and in which even more of the world's wealth is held by the few (all American), and all 'anti-Americanism' is wiped out summarily.

This is what we have to fight against. It may seem a hopeless task at times but remember, all empires eventually crumble and fall – with a bit of help.

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So, as usual, the problems and the solutions are clear. Biofuels are not a permanent panacea for British transport fuels, but they could be a sensible stop-gap measure, giving us a generation of relatively green fuels while we sort out the mess we are in with private cars and congestion. However, in its arrogance, the current Labour regime is dithering, and will eventually choose a half-cocked implementation which will ensure the wrong farming methods are used. Indeed, talking of arrogance, one response from Labour has already been along the lines of 'we are likely to reach our Kyoto targets anyway, without doing anything about transport fuels, so we don't NEED to do anything'. In typical style, this misses the main point, that we need to take every opportunity we can to try to start sorting out the environmental excrement that modern capitalism has got us in.

Real solutions, of course, will only come when we manage to rid ourselves of capitalism and parliament, and we can collectively make sensible decisions about our transport needs and how to provide the necessary energy to service them. Clearly, the private car is the main problem, so these fuels are only a partial fix, but the idea of producing crop-energy locally for local transport use is one which fits well with collectivist, anarcho-syndicalist principles. Only a collective-run transport system can deliver a truly integrated system, based on needs and equity, not quick fixes. One thing is clear; if we managed to claim the opportunity now as a society to collectively re-organise and run our transport industry, I would bet my bicycle that we would immediately decide to make biofuels, and we would do it using organic methods, and using renewable energy to run the plants, such as small straw burning power stations. In other words, given the choice we would go for the sensible, green transitional option while we started to re-organise transport. We would use the green technology, not the grey-green technology which the Labour government intends to inflict upon us, if/when it gets around to it, that is.

ON THE EDGE

'T&G' Charles

The Prince of Wales has applied to join one of Britain's biggest unions, the Transport and General Workers (T&G). The union says it is happy for Prince Charles to join because of his charitable work for the low paid. The move came about after a T&G official recommended it to the Prince at a function of the Prince's Trust. His private secretary, Sir Michael Peat, later wrote to the union to express an interest.

Jack Dromey, a T&G national official, has said, "Before I recommend acceptance of his application to join, I want to make sure he's a good employer." Well, that's all right then. As long as any employer is deemed 'good' by the union bureaucracy, they can join!

Met's new riotcop

The Metropolitan Police has made major exception to its height rule for joining the force by allowing 12ins tall recruits. Public Order Police Constable SO 595 is Scotland Yard's latest weapon in fighting crime.

Equipped with telescopic truncheon, riot shield and handcuffs, children can dress him up in a flak jacket, boots, helmet, gloves, fire extinguisher, (fire extinguisher?), radio & loud hailer. Soon, a whole range of colleagues will join him; a female sergeant, a police van, a helicopter, and even a toy traffic police sergeant.

Maybe the next there will be a scab for the riot cop to help break picket lines, or maybe a May Day protester for the cop to beat with a truncheon.

Ashamed of your mobile?

Get a life, its only a phone

The Serbian resistance

Since last October, there is another new sister organisation to the Solidarity Federation (see p.34), this time in Serbia. However, it has been a bit of a turbulent first few months.

After Zoran Djindjic, Serbian president, was assassinated in March, this new organisation, Anarcho-sindikalistièka Inicijativa (ASI) issued a statement denouncing both Djindjic and his killers. The Serbian authorities were obviously angry at being told what they already knew, namely that 'Zoran Djindjic, the criminal, was killed by other criminals'. The anger turned first into telephone threats and then into blatant repression, as the ASI secretary was held without charge and without access to lawyers for several days.

This was part of a wider atmosphere of martial law imposed for 42 days after the killing. Strikes and other workplace actions were banned, along with public gatherings and public comment on the decision to impose the state of emergency. The ASI refused to accept such measures calling for Serbians to organise against the state and capitalism, instead holding out the inspirational example of the 300 striking metal workers at the IMT factory in Belgrade.

Only upon release did our comrade finally find out the grounds for arrest – 'legitimate suspicion that his freedom could jeopardise security of the citizens and of the Republic itself'. Self-evidently, the police consider those who publicly express their opinions to be more of a threat to people's safety than those who lay off thousands of workers, who live off stolen surplus value, who train young men to kill, or even those, such as the minister of agriculture, who run their cars over pedestrians.

Repression against the ASI continues. Another member, employed in the National Theatre in Belgrade, has been subjected by bosses to threats, intimidation and surveillance at police request because she is 'suspected' of agitating within the theatre and of distributing ASI and other propaganda. It's all a reminder of how various fascist regimes in the recent past have acted against workplace organisers. If such intimidation continues, ASI vows not to hesitate to use any means necessary to protect their members' rights.

Day to day reality in Serbia after martial law remains the same as before. The assassination, which merely represents the ongoing power struggle at the top of Serbian society, will change nothing for ordinary Serbian people. As ASI predicted in its original statement, 'the so-called reforms will proceed, thousands of people will be laid off, and their lives will continue to be swept under the carpet of privatisation'. However, workers are not taking all this lying down. Resistance is on the rise as, they begin to comprehend the extent of union leadership collaboration with the state's neoliberal policies.

This slaughter must be stopped!

**UK construction workers killed in 6 weeks in April/May 2003: 1 death each in Herefordshire, Bedford, Salisbury, Hillingdon, Staffordshire, Leicestershire & Leeds.
2 deaths each in Essex & Durham.
3 deaths in Wales.
The youngest victim was just 17 years old.**

As Tony O'Brien, Secretary of the Construction Safety Campaign said: "On average in the UK, 85 construction workers lose their lives in what the government say are mostly predictable and preventable incidents caused by some failure of management by employers". If the current rate of 14 workers killed per six weeks was applied across this year, we might expect 121 to be killed in 2003, the worst construction fatality statistic seen in the UK for over 10 years.

But these are not statistics, these are real people who had families and friends, currently going through the horror of bereavement in tragic and generally violent ways. The number of Health and Safety Executive (HSE) enforcement officers operating in construction in the UK is just 145, which is five short of their own target. These few are to deal with the millions of construction workplaces. Even the construction employers, through their Major Contractors Group, want more inspectors - they recently called for 1,000 to be in place.

But that alone would not be enough, because the HSE's enforcement policy is too weak with them, treating our laws more as guidance than what they are - criminal laws, and the punishment in the courts is still derisory.

Recently, the courts fined a company just £6,000 for breaches of safety laws that led to a worker's death - so, £6,000 is the price of life at work in the UK today. Add to this the fact that only one construction employer has been sent to jail for killing a worker, and there are clearly too many reasons for employers to take risks with workers' lives.

The government still refuses to act on the promises it has made to change the law so that fines in courts reflect the seriousness of the crimes, and that bosses who negligently kill workers go to jail. They also promised more resources for the HSE, a better enforcement policy, and more rights for workers and trade unions to defend themselves. As usual, it was all lies, and it is down to all of us to take direct action to win improvements at work.

**Contact Tony O'Brien 07747 795954
construction.safetycampaign@talk21.com**

Foil the base

A couple of thousand people joined the Foil the base action at Menwith Hill US spy base on 22nd March.

Most people either came in home-made tin foil suits or brought various shiny objects with them (apparently, it messes up the monitoring systems). There was plenty of banging noises and other music, and a few spectacle actions involving getting over, under or through the fence, with varying degrees of success.

At the main gate, silver foil kites were being flown in abundance, and the noise levels were cranked up. Others marched around the fence, and what with scuffles and fence-breaks, a few people were arrested. The police presence, as is usual nowadays in Blair's new democratic Britain, was ludicrously heavy, with hundreds of riot cops itching for a scrap.

So, just another fringe demo that will be ignored by everyone by the week after? Not quite, this was a positive and truly useful action. For a start, it was positive for all concerned, not monopolised by a single group, and all the more empowering for it (witness the range of different actions that were going on at the same time around the base). For a carry on, it is actions like this which keep the powers that be guessing – forcing them into their usual massive over-reactions, hence showing the true cost of anti-democratic wars and state secrecy – millions wasted in policing.

Legalising contamination

The new Water Bill may force water companies to add fluoride to our water supply, a move dubbed by the National Pure Water Association as 'forced medication on a massive scale'. The addition of fluoride to water has now been banned throughout almost all of Europe, and scientists continue to issue warnings about its health effects and question the need for it in our food and water supplies.

While fluoride in toothpaste, by acting directly on our teeth, can neutralise the interaction of sugar and bacteria that causes cavities, the problems begin when it is swallowed and allowed to build up in our systems. This is already the case with a long list of processed foods and beverages high in added fluoride, a substance with no nutritional value. Among these products are teas, dry infant cereals, soy-based infant formulas, soft drinks including juices, dried fish, seafood and chicken, not to mention children's specially-flavoured toothpaste, which is usually swallowed rather than spat out. As a result, most of us (90% of children according to some recent US studies) already comfortably consume more than recommended safe amounts of fluoride.

Severe health effects linked to fluoride include increased incidences of hip fractures, joint conditions, bone cancer, Alzheimer's disease and, ironically enough, brittle and discoloured teeth leading to more dental cavities due to pitting and loss of the outer enamel – the very same problem fluoride is supposed to combat in the first place. Once fluoride gets into the water we drink and cook with, these problems can only continue to pile up.

Not surprisingly, the issue involves the interests of evil corporate empires – this time it's the phosphate fertiliser industry which produces fluoride as a toxic waste product. And, of course, it's much cheaper to dump it in our water than dispose of it safely. Moreover, the industry has done brilliantly in persuading everyone, not least of all politicians, that it is necessary to combat tooth decay.

Now ministers have taken up the corporate baton and plan to extend fluoridation of tap water as "a cheap and effective way of helping to prevent dental decay". But it's more than a little curious that Switzerland has just ended 41 years of this practice for the exact opposite reason.

The Swiss say fluoride's benefits "could not be proved by any study", while, despite fluoridation, dental cavities among children continue to increase. Precisely the same findings from North American studies have recently been published in the scientific journals 'Dental Clinics of North America' (April) and the 'Journal of the Canadian Dental Association' (May). In the US, after 60 years of water fluoridation and with fluoridated toothpaste and other dental products becoming a billion dollar industry, poor oral health remains the significant health problem it was when fluoride was but a twinkle in Colgate's eye.

This is just one more illustration, if one were needed, of the consequences of corporate control of our food, water and other essentials - one more argument that the sooner we organise to fight, undermine and overthrow capitalism, the better will be the state of our health, our lives and our planet.

Further info: National Pure Water Association, 01924 254433, www.npwa.freeserve.co.uk

ON THE EDGE

Royal scroungers

A cousin of the Queen who is 36th in line to the throne is living on state benefits. Marina Mowatt, 36, is said to be claiming housing benefit and income support, despite her parents, Sir Angus Ogilvy and Princess Alexandra, being worth a reported £23 million.

Ms Mowatt claims housing benefit on her "grace-and-favour" home, a cottage in Windsor Great Park, Berkshire. The money is paid directly to her landlord, the Crown Estate, which manages Royal assets, including property. She also claims income support of about £115 a week and £28.30 a week child support for her daughter Zenouska, 12, and 9-year-old son, Christian.

Doorstep bully

The US warned there will be consequences if Canada proceeds with a plan to decriminalise marijuana. "We would be forced to respond," said Murray, the "drug tsar", without saying how. He tried to link drug laws with crime and youth drug addiction; "You can't wall this off saying, 'We're only talking about a little cannabis.' Our experience is they come together like the four Horsemen"(!!)

So, watch out Canada, there's still room on the "axis of evil" merry-go-round, and the US military won't have as far to go to invade - they'll be able to commute home for weekends.

What will you send?

The Labour Party have a Freepost address, which means they have to pay the postage on anything they recieve. Please don't send bricks, phone directories or anything else heavy, as it would cost them a fortune! The Labour Party, Freepost LON 10417, London SW1P 4UT.

ON THE EDGE

Justice Italian-Style

Mario Placanica, the police officer that shot dead anti-capitalist protester, Carlo Giuliani at point blank range, at the protests against the G8 summit in Genoa 2001, won't face prosecution. The decision was based on the idea that Placanica did not aim the gun at Carlo Giuliani - despite clear photo evidence of the gun being pointed at the protesters. The driver of the landrover, Officer Filippo Cavataio, who twice drove over Carlo's body, will also not face prosecution, as this only caused light wounds! Er, bullets bouncing off rocks and landrovers that cause light wounds when they run you over? Welcome to Italian justice.

www.indymedia.org

Protesters hijack radio

Anti-war protesters hijacked national radio on March 22nd. Listeners to the 1pm BBC Radio 4 news bulletin were stunned to hear a pirate broadcast promoting the demonstration in Brighton, which cut in over the scheduled programme.

Brighton resident Brian Oram said: "I just turned on the radio for the 1pm Radio 4 News on 94.5 FM. There was a normal start to the programme for about 60 seconds, then a big hiss and another broadcast started. A non-BBC male voice started going on about Kate Adie and unauthorised satellite uplinks being targeted by US forces. It went on for about one minute, then changed to an anti-war speech requesting large support for an anti-war demonstration in Brighton." A spokeswoman for the Radiocommunications Agency said: " I can confirm an illegal broadcast interrupted the licensed radio channel."

www.Roasta.com

Crap comrades

Mark Thomas has had enough of the SWP.

A friend of mine claims that he and his wife are in the biggest and probably fastest-growing political party in Britain - they are both ex-members of the Socialist Workers Party.

They, like many, found being in the SWP not unlike being in a cult. They too had directives from a central committee or leader; they too had to follow an ideology strictly; and they too had to perform daily tasks and rituals, namely selling the party's paper. If the SWP had the flair of the Hare Krishnas, its members would be dancing up and down Oxford Street banging drums and chanting: "Marx and Trotsky, Marx and Trotsky, Trotsky and Marx." Unfortunately, flair is just one of a number of qualities the SWP doesn't possess - popularity being another that just happens to spring to mind.

The party has been criticised for its involvement in the anti-war movement - mainly by those in the pro-war camp, who condemn it for being a "far-left" group and therefore, by implication, too radical. For some, the problem with the SWP is the polar opposite - it is too conservative. It was not surprising that the party dominated the Stop the War Coalition; its leaders are old hands at controlling "popular fronts". They have to be. Without fronts like Globalise Resistance (commonly known by activists as Monopolise Resistance), the SWP would have shrivelled into political oblivion long ago.

What should be surprising is the party's treatment of its coalition partners. It may hate the competitive pressures of capitalism and believe in our ability to co-operate with each other, but the SWP itself is totally incapable of co-operation. Coalition partners would be presented with decisions as *faits accomplis*: the SWP would call a demonstration, then inform everybody else after the press release had gone out. Moreover, it actively undermined protests and demonstrations that it didn't control.

As far as many activists are concerned, the party isn't that active. For a bunch of revolutionaries, its members seem to spend an inordinate amount of time in shopping centres selling the paper and recruiting. I don't recall Che Guevara uttering the words: "You can pay the monthly subs by direct debit if you like."

On the London demonstration on 22 March, it was the SWP stewards who tried to stop protesters taking part in a spontaneous sit-down protest outside Downing Street. They have a problem with direct action or civil disobedience, as do some Labour MPs who have conveniently forgotten that they got their jobs as a result of direct action. One senior member of the anti-war steering committee was quoted as saying, in full-blown Pravda style, that "direct action is elitist". How can protest actions that anyone can organise and commit be elitist?

It is natural for the party to dislike people organising independently. What use to the party are people who spend the day chaining themselves to the gates of a nuclear base? Chained to a fence, you can't even hold a pen to sign the membership form.

The SWP's main priority is recruitment. Why else did it continually call demonstrations week after week during the Iraq conflict? This was a big tactical error for the anti-war movement. When the bombing started, many people felt dispirited and tired, but were organising and carrying out further actions and protests. More importantly, the SWP had not realised that many people on the enormous demonstration in February were there because they felt they had been denied a democratic voice. These demonstrations were bound to result in diminishing numbers - and many were bound to judge that as the collapse of the anti-war movement.

However, if recruitment to your party is the priority, the size of the demo doesn't matter. Even if you get only 20,000 people out, they are what market researchers might term a pure market group. They are prime targets for recruitment - and who cares if the peace movement breaks in the process.

For many in the anti-war and anti-globalisation movements, the act of creative dissent is a cornerstone of their moral and political philosophy. They want to empower and inspire themselves as well as others. More than a million people marching in London against the war was inspiring.

But isn't it also inspiring when a group of Quakers spike the bombers' support vehicle at Fairford, or a carnival of dissent is held at RAF Menwith Hill? More inspiring, surely, than hearing the words: "Copy of this week's Socialist Worker, comrade?"

We don't know exactly which country President Bush will attack next, but there is no doubt that he will attack somewhere. The peace movement could do a lot worse than start to organise a coalition free from SWP domination, one that regards peace as the goal and co-operation as the means of getting there.

[This article first appeared in the New Statesman, 19th May 2003.]

Indian summer

From city strikes to rural rights: Vision 2020, and UK Plc's plans for Indian 'peasants'.

Across India on May 21st, an estimated 60 million people walked out in a general strike against privatisation. This was not just an angry moment or a disgruntled industry. Workers in sectors as diverse as banking, oil, retail and manufacturing began taking decisive, unified action against the US-led encroachment of privatisation for US profit and everyone else's misery. Meanwhile, in rural areas, people are fighting the UK-led plan, Vision 2020.

In Andhra Pradesh, 70% of the population work in agriculture. Half are small farmers cultivating about two acres, the other half work on larger farms as hired hands. A wide range of crops are grown from saved seed of previous harvests - seed that has adapted to the environment over generations. They don't use chemicals or machinery, and children start learning from an early age how to prepare the land and look after it. Even the traditional houses are made with earth, cow dung, and straw – from sustainable materials.

The UK Department for International Development has got plans for the area, namely, Vision 2020, drawn up by the right wing US consultancy McKinsey, that has amongst its employees the notorious has-beens William Hague and Jeff Skilling, former head of ENRON. (Incidentally, McKinsey was also commissioned by the UK Government, under shadowy circumstances, to write a report called Driving Productivity and Growth in the UK Economy, which concluded that planning regulations were discouraging the location of go ahead international companies in Britain, and which is thought to have had considerable influence over Stephen Byers' Planning green paper).

The most controversial element of Vision 2020 is its land consolidation programme. The plan is, over the next two decades, to reduce the proportion of the population deriving its income from agriculture from 70% to 40%, replacing these people with machines, chemicals and GM crops. In one fell swoop, this will deprive 20 million farmers of their livelihoods, and destroy the cultural fabric of the region.

Opposing Vision 2020 is not just for primitivists and anti-technologists. Farmers and labourers alike earn very small amounts of money for their day or weekly wage, about £1 a day for a farmer and 30p a day for a labourer, although labourers are also paid with food. This is disgusting, grinding poverty, and change is needed, but it is better than nothing, and Vision 2020 will simply create mass-unemployment and mass-migration to already overcrowded and under-serviced cities.

Vision 2020 is definitely the wrong kind of change. Once development agencies and corporations start to pull threads out of the cultural fabric, they will create more types of poverty than they could ever hope to predict. The British Government sees this mass clearance of the peasantry as a necessary step along the path of development. It describes the destruction of traditional agriculture as "alleviating the peasants from centuries of toil". But as a woman farmer has stated, "we have chosen to develop our own forms of agriculture, based on our culture".

The farmers are very aware of the implications of a conversion to mechanisation of their agriculture and have formed massive coalitions reflecting the interests of over 150 million small farmers. These coalitions have created grassroots land reform programmes to promote sustainable agriculture. In contrast, 30 years ago, Bombay had 5 million people living in the slums around the city; today, it has over 15 million. In 2020, the British Government would like to see many more.

More from Jyoti, Chapter 7 Office at The Land is Ours; www.tlio.org.uk

You've read the reports; here are some pics. The London Chamber of Commerce warned that MayDay would have a negative impact on business even if it passed off peacefully because of the costs of extra security and the inevitable disruption to traffic in parts of central London. Good to know it was all worth it then.

ON THE EDGE

WMD Bristol

Workers' Memorial Day 2003 was marked in Bristol by workers who gathered for a day conference and film showing either side of the day itself (28th April). Discussion ranged from media coverage, to health & safety at work (HSW) and its enforcement by the HSE (or the lack of it). All agreed that workers cannot rely on the state to protect us from the dangers of work.

There were plenty of examples of action, such as using HSW law as a tool to attack the (commonly ignorant) management, and as a central issue around which workers can organise.

People also talked about attempts to build grass roots solidarity at work and the problems facing workers trying to get organised.

Bristol Against Casualisation Campaign, Box 4, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB. Tel: 07792 018881 bristolacc@hotmail.com

GM update

In April, Monsanto announced a 15% slump in profits and faced a shareholder resolution urging them to rethink their GM seeds strategy. They appear to be going back on their 1999 pledge not to develop the GM 'terminator technology'. Then it was Bayer CropScience's AGM, with simultaneous demos in Germany and Cambridge, where 8 people were arrested (see www.bayerhazard.com).

As DA *goes to press, the government is about to make a decision on 18 GM crop applications. The public consultation goes on until September, but they probably won't bother listening or waiting before giving the GM companies the go-ahead. So, this is the last year to take some direct action out on UK GM farm scale trials (see www.geneticsaction.org.uk or contact DA).*

ON THE EDGE

Witch-hunting

Having followed his mentor into Iraq, Tony Blair seems to be following George Bush to fundamentalism - new legislation will allow faith schools, churches, hospices and other religious employers to sack lesbian and gay staff.

The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement said that the move would institutionalise homophobia in a way that "makes Section 28 look like a tea party". The 2003 Employment Equality Regulations were originally drawn up to comply with an EU directive on workers' rights; they were meant for the first time to give protection to Muslims and to gays. However, Muslim or Christian organisations will have the freedom to discriminate against gays and lesbians.

A Whitehall source said the decision was made "at the highest level", and that Barbara Roche, the equalities minister, had been overruled. The wording of the key clause is almost identical to that submitted by the Church of England. It states that an exemption applies when an employer acts "so as to comply with the doctrines of the religion – or so as to avoid conflicting with strongly held religious convictions".

One loophole allows an employer to dismiss or fail to hire if he is "not satisfied" that they fit his own "ethos based on religion or belief". Hence, Stagecoach, run by Scottish evangelist Brian Souter, or Vardy, the North-east car dealership owned by millionaire Christian Peter Vardy, can discriminate freely. Organisations with a 'religious ethos' currently employ 200,000 people, including over 100,000 teachers. If the government has its way, this sector will expand still further.

How long before the mere accusation of being gay is enough to lose your job - witch-hunts, anyone?

Elections retrospective

BNP, Socialist Alliance – the triumph, the disasters, and the bullshit

In the May local elections, the main talking point was the gains made by the fascist BNP. They stood right across England, concentrating in the North, including every ward of Sunderland, and many in East Lancashire and Oldham.

Their percentage of the total vote rose, which is a worrying trend, though they failed in postal scheme pilot Sunderland. In Burnley, 7 more seats means they are now the second largest party on the council, on an above average turnout, suggesting that they managed to get their support out. Noticeably, it is not in the poorer areas of Burnley that the BNP performed best. These either stayed Labour or, where there was a large Asian anti-war protest vote, they went to the Liberal Democrats. It is in white, middle-class areas where the BNP is strongest. There appears to be a number of former Tory voters who are unhappy about the Conservative Party's embrace of 'diversity', and have been seduced by the BNP's 'new' policy of 'repatriation by consent'.

The BNP also failed in Oldham, where they stood candidates in 12 out of 20 wards. Nick Griffin lost out in the Chadderton North ward. Although he lives in mid-Wales, he claimed to be a legitimate local candidate on the grounds that he rents a cricket field locally. The BNP managed to get 27% in the ten wards where it stood (7,835 votes out of 29,125). In the Alexandra ward, though, which includes the Fitton Hill estate, often thought of as a BNP stronghold, Labour councillor Mohammed Azam beat the BNP's Anthony Wentworth. The BNP actually stood a total of 221 candidates across England, just a small percentage of the 12,000 contested council wards.

As argued in *DA* in the past, the BNP have built up their strength in local areas and campaigned against Labour councils that have failed the working class. They have been assisted by the ham-fisted attempts of groups like the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) to counter them by bussing activists into an area with little knowledge of the local issues and fears. On the other hand, the left wing parties rejoiced in their own small triumphs. The Socialist Party (ex-Militant) managed one victory in their Coventry stronghold, in a very low turnout and special local circumstances. The Socialist Alliance (SA) was resurrected by the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) to stand in nearly 170 seats. Their candidates stood as 'Socialist Alliance Against the War' in the hope of securing a wide range of votes on a single issue. Only in eleven seats did a SA candidate face the BNP, and, in each case, faired badly.

In Burnley, the 2 seats SA contested were a failure, but this did not prevent them from making the ludicrous claim that they prevented the BNP from taking these seats! The big SA news was their "absolutely brilliant result" in Preston, where "Michael Lavalette won with 546 votes. Once again, there was a low turnout of 28%. This Town Centre ward is about a third Muslim, and Lavalette was encouraged to stand by a local imam who was active in the Preston Stop The War coalition. The local SA group was actually moribund and inactive. Their website hadn't been updated since September 2001 and their meetings were non-existent. The local Muslim population were encouraged to protest by voting for the SA Against The War candidate by the imam at the local mosque the Friday before the election.

What all this shows is that if you carefully pick your spot, select the right issue and get the timing right, you can become a local councillor with no local base. It shows up the appalling nature of representative democracy in this country. If a group of anarchists got together, disguised their politics and campaigned around a local issue, they may get someone in.

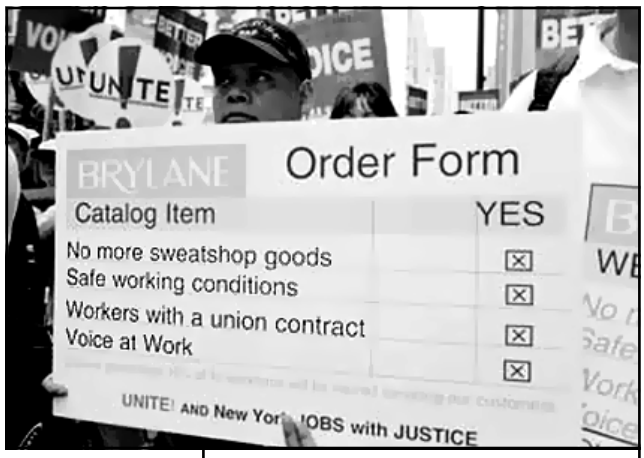
The SWP/ANL critique of the BNP and their approach to the fascist threat has been a disaster. Their mantra is becoming ever more tired and detached from reality. Firstly, "the BNP are Nazis", which is untrue, although they are fascists; secondly, "the BNP tell lies" (well, all party politicians do); thirdly, "their members have criminal convictions", a stupid card to play, especially in working-class areas. Finally, worst of all, "the BNP are not proper politicians", so they are not like mainstream politicians that working class people don't trust to begin with – hence, the SWP/ANL gives them radical credentials; the only people many working class people would consider voting for is somebody who is not a proper politician.

The left has built its anti-fascist approach through the organised labour movement, and in doing so, has neglected whole sections of the working class who are non-unionised and isolated on crappy estates. Furthermore, the SA rarely stands in direct opposition to the BNP. Instead of looking to the short-term and meaningless panacea of electing a token local councillor, we have to look at the longer term and the fight to pull working-class people away from their dependency on representatives to a do-it-yourself approach. In other words, build a culture of direct action, where people get used to taking control of their own lives on a daily basis.

As a postscript, the SA conference following the elections was dominated by the SWP, who voted through all their own motions, while everyone else had theirs defeated. One notable intervention came in the debate on fighting racism and fascism. Julie Waterson, SWP full timer and ANL organiser, claimed it was the ANL that kicked the BNP out of Sunderland and Oldham; "We have marginalised them. There are only 17 BNP councillors because of us!" Maybe she meant they got the councillors because of the ineptitude of the ANL? She went on to say; "no working-class people vote for the BNP." Apparently not, their votes are ex-Tories, and if there are any working-class votes, they are only the (scream) "SCUM off the estates." Somewhat contradictorily, she then stated; "The Labour vote collapsed in Burnley - they only got 300 more votes than the BNP." So the BNP is taking working-class votes from Labour then?

All in all, it doesn't make much sense, but it does mean that the ANL/SWP can carry on with their fatally flawed strategy and not worry about the concerns of the white working class. DA

Jordan's Sweatshops



Syed Adil Ali walks across the ground floor of the two story Silver Planet textile mill outside the Jordanian capital, Amman. He points at a multicoloured pile of clothes ready to be shipped to the US. "Wal-Mart," he says, "it's shorts; boy's shorts, we export for all the big US retailers: Target, Wal-Mart and JC Penny."

While the world has been focused on Iraq and the future of its vast oil resources, US companies of a different kind have been rapidly extending their influence throughout the Arab world. Under the terms of its Free Trade Agreement with the United States, Iraq's neighbour Jordan has seen a massive increase in clothing manufacturing for the US market.

Three years ago, not a single textile mill in Jordan exported to the big US retailers. Today, there are more than 40,000 workers toiling in more than 60 factories, producing solely for the US market. Washington inserted a provision into Jordan's 1994 peace agreement, with Israel giving Jordan permission to export products duty free to the United States, provided at least eight percent of their industrial inputs come from Israel. These special factories are located in Jordan's Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZs).

Jordan is a strategic tool for both the US and Israel, and yet, Jordanians own almost none of the factories. Most are owned and operated by entrepreneurs from China, Taiwan, Korea, India, Pakistan or the Philippines, who import workers from overseas. Of the 40,000 workers employed in the Qualified Industrial Zones, fewer than half are Jordanian. Ninety percent are women under the age of 22, and almost all of them are paid the minimum wage, about $3.50 a day.

Factory owner Syed Adil Ali says his factory only contracts Sri Lankan girls. "They are very peace minded girls," he says, "I found some kind of problem with the boys. They made some kind of union, some kind of disturbance in the factory. So we prefer the girls." There is no union at Syed's factory, which makes more than $2 million a year in profits. He is planning on adding a third floor to the factory and employing hundreds more workers.

Zaid Marar, public relations official, drives his blue BMW around the Al-Tajamout Qualified Industrial Zone. Thousands of foreign workers live in the industrial park. He says the dormitories comply with the minimum human rights standards permitted by US retail giants. "There are 80 people per floor, ten rooms in each. There are eight people per room and five and a half square feet of space for each according to JC Penny's specifications." Syed Adil Ali's work-force of 600 is housed in one of these army-barracks style buildings. They are required to live on the factory grounds far away from the city. Because of their sixty five-hour work week, the workers rarely leave the complex. The company provides for their basic needs - for most workers, it supplies their only sources of food and drinking water.

In some cases, the workers have been unpaid for months at a time. Factory owners work with agents in South and East Asia to locate workers interested in coming to work in Jordan. They apply to the Jordanian Ministry of Labour for visas, which restrict them to working only for the factories that bring them. Then, they buy the worker a one-way ticket to Amman. When the employer is finished with the worker, he buys the worker a ticket home. When employees try to start a union, as 120 Bangladeshis earlier this year, they are summarily deported.

Jordan's Textile Trade Union has no problem with the current situation. The union's President, Falthalla Omrani flew to Washington for the Free Trade Agreement's signing ceremony. "You have to start somewhere," he says. "Jordan needs foreign investment. We need factories." Overwhelmingly though, Jordanians oppose both the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and the peace treaty with Israel.

Before the Gulf War sanctions, Jordan ran a brisk $1.2 billion trade with Iraq. Now, that trade has been cut by more than half, and the official unemployment rate is 20 percent. In the Bacca Palestinian refugee camp outside Amman, locally owned factories that used to sell to Iraq are shuttered, their work-force laid off, their equipment for sale. Navri Sarisi, president of a community centre at the Bacca Camp, believes the United States is trying to set up a relationship between Israel and Jordan similar to the one between the United States and Mexico. The minimum wage in Israel is eight times the minimum wage in Jordan. "The trade agreements came by force of the United States," he says, "and the best example are these Qualified Industrial Zones. The Israelis are investing money in very cheap labour where people work long hours. They are getting free access to the US market duty free and customs free."

Welcome to the global free market, where the rules and the orders come from Washington, and if you don't like it or fit with their plans, you are a terrorist and/or instantly unemployed.

US: Stitch that!

Textiles union UNITE has organised over 700 workers at a strains-riddled US catalogue clothing company after distributing its own glossy - and distinctly unflattering - catalogue to customers. After the stunt and a union "fashion show" outside Brylane's New York HQ, the company's position softened. The UNITE campaign ended in success earlier this year, when the company accepted the result of the union recognition vote in favour of union representation.

This international news could not have been brought to you without the following excellent WebSources:
A-Infos News Service; www.ainfos.ca/
DAMN (Direct Action Media Network); http://damn.tao.ca/
IWA (International Workers' Association); www.iwa-ait.org
SchNEWS; www.schnews.org.uk
Labourstart; http://www.labourstart.org/
ASeed - Roots; http://antenna.nl/aseed/
Earth First – Action Update; http://host.envirolink.org/ef/
Corporate Watch; www.corpwatch.org
No Sweat; http://www.nosweat.org.uk
Hazards; http://www.hazards.org

For updates & future events, visit antenna.nl/aseed/, www.anarchyaction.co.uk, www.schnews.com/guide.htm

US

In April, fifteen activists bound together by a mixture of roofing tar, chicken wire and nails wrapped around PVC piping were arrested in Saco, Maine, and charged with criminal trespass, after trying to block the entrance to General Dynamics Armament and Technical Products Co.

The bindings were decorated to look like crayons. Underneath were layers of duct tape and chicken wire mixed with roofing tar covering a piece of PVC pipe. Inside the pipe, the protesters were bound together by chains linked with spring-loaded rings so they could release themselves at any time. It took police about an hour to separate the group. In many cases, groups of three or four people were still attached to each other by one arm as they were put on a school bus to be transported to the police station. No one was hurt in the protest, which lasted about four hours. Over 30 police officers and firefighters used scissors and wire cutters to untangle the protesters. Nearby, several dozen protesters chanted and sold cookies by the road for Veterans for Peace.

The activists said they were there to raise awareness about the disparity between military and educational spending, as well as Maine's dependency on defence spending in its economy. Tax dollars, they argued, should be spent on teachers and social services, not the grenade launchers and machine guns produced by companies like General Dynamics.

Saco is unaccustomed to anti-military demonstrations despite General Dynamics' long-standing presence in the community. The plant has operated in Saco for more than 50 years, formerly under the name Saco Defense, but gained new attention recently because many of the weapons manufactured at the plant have been used in the war against Iraq. Although Maine has seen dozens of anti-war demonstrations, this event involved a more elaborate form of civil disobedience than most other protests.

Australia

Easter saw the Baxter 2003 border camp come into being. Around three thousand people converged on the detention centre located near the small South Australian town of Port Augusta.

As a part of this year's camp, there was a radio project called Radio Free Baxter, broadcasting in the immediate area of the detention centre, and taking in-coming calls from it so as to establish two-way communication with the people imprisoned inside.

For more info, visit:
Radio Free Baxter:
http://antimedia.net/radiobaxter
Indymedia: http://
melbourne.indymedia.org Camp site: http://baxter2003.baxterwatch.net
No One Is Illegal: http://antimedia.net/nooneisillegal

India I

In March, the state government of Kerala ordered over a thousand indigenous people to be evicted from the Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary in the southern state of Kerala, an area famous for its elephants. Up to 20 people are said to have been killed during the exercise, and many more injured.

The tribals were trying to reclaim their traditional rights to the forest lands that fall within the sanctuary's boundaries. In the past few years, the Indian government has accelerated its efforts to evict forest-dwellers in northern states from their ancestral or adopted homes, under the pretext of environmental protection.

The Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1973. Since then, the government has declared many Kerala forests protected land. It is situated in the middle of a 300 square kilometre forest, and forms part of the Nilgiri Biosphere; it is also home to many indigenous tribal groups.

China

On 22nd March in northern China, miners who tried to flee a gas-filled mine shaft were forced back into the shaft by managers, immediately before a massive gas explosion killed 72 out of the 87 workers. The massive explosion ripped through the Mengnanzhuang coal mine in the Yima township of Xiaoyi City, bringing down the mineshaft roof. Many of those who died had smelt a build-up of toxic gases in the mine shaft, and attempted to leave the mine, but a mine manager threatened them and forced them to return to the coal face despite the imminent danger. Less than an hour later, the explosion occurred.

In fact, the mine should not even have been operating, as a temporary closure order introduced in January because of safety concerns was still in force when the explosion occurred.

A few days later, on 30th March, an explosion at the Mengjiagou coal mine near Fushun city in Liaoning, killed at least 25 miners. China Labour Bulletin reports that the families bereaved by this latest blast were approached at the mine shaft entrance by management, and asked to sign a 'take it or leave it' agreement to accept 45,000 yuan (£3,490) in compensation for each dead relative. Yan Mingfang, who lost her husband in the explosion, was also severely beaten by security guards and hospitalised after asking questions about compensation.

China Labour Bulletin:
www.china-labour.org.hk/iso/

Poland

Back in February 2002, a group of workers started a trade union (Konfederacja Pracy - Work Confederation) at Poznan - Sulzer Chemtech Poland (part of the huge Swiss Company Sulzer Chemtech). The next day, company president Andrzej Lyko had sacked one of the activists and convened a staff meeting, where he used bullying and intimidation tactics which led to only 15 people joining the union (out of 175). In August, the Labour Court ordered the sacked worker, Rafal Jackowiak, to be reinstated, but he was sacked again in October. Since then, he has been fighting for his rights. Meanwhile, the other union members are being harassed, bullied, and getting their pay withheld.

Protest letters to: Sultzer Chemtech LDT, P.O. Box 65, CH 8404 Winterthur, Switzerland. Fax +41 (52) 262 00 60. Copies to: Sultzer Chemtech Poland, Wysogotowo Okrezna 9/11, 62-081 Przezmierowo, Poland. Fax +48 (61) 814 16 89

Iceland

The Icelandic government plans to construct a large hydropower project in Iceland's Eastern Highlands, one of Europe's largest remaining wilderness areas, in order to supply power to a US aluminium smelter owned by Alcoa. The "Kahranjukar Project" involves building miles of roads, boring a series of tunnels, diverting dozens of rivers to create 3 reservoirs and erecting 9 dams, including one that is 630 feet - Europe's highest.

The Karahnjukar Project is all about supplying power to a planned Alcoa aluminium smelter. US-based Alcoa is the world's largest aluminium producer and is moving to Iceland not to expand production, but to cut costs. It is closing smelters in the US and moving to Iceland, where the government is offering cheap electricity. The aluminium plant will get a subsidised rate, the price rising and falling with the price of aluminium (which is currently low, due to a glut in the market). It's not just cheap power that draws Alcoa to Iceland: the island's reliance on geothermal power has given it an exemption from the Kyoto Protocol's fossil fuel emissions, which would allow Alcoa's smelter to operate without having to pay penalties for any carbon dioxide emissions.

If Karahnjukar happens, a large wilderness area will be sacrificed so that the world can consume cheaper aluminium. The massive project will be built on the north side of Europe's greatest glacier, Vatnajokull, a vast ice field beneath which lie several active volcanoes. The project will drown 22 square miles of tundra, presently the grazing grounds for more than 2,000 reindeer and the

nesting ground for the pink-footed goose, and affect the flows of close to 60 waterfalls. In early summer, silt from the exposed banks will blow off all over the countryside.

Iceland's equivalent of America's Grand Canyon, Dimmugljufur, or Dark Canyon, is a deep cleft carved out by the region's most powerful glacial river, the Jokulsa a Bru. The part of the canyon between the edge of the glacier and the dam will be submerged; on the far side of the dam, it will become a dry gulch, the impounded water diverted through a 25-mile-long tunnel to the power station that will generate the electricity needed for Alcoa's smelter.

The Iceland Nature Conservation Association (INCA) has led a strong campaign against Karahnjukar for several years. So far, it has included regular large demonstrations, daily protests at the parliament building, a hunger strike and a court case against the environment minister. The environmental activists want to turn the area into a National Park of "Fire and Ice."

For more information, updates, etc.; www.inca.is

India II

In the first ever case of "reverse dumping", 1,416 drums filled with 290 tonnes of hazardous mercury wastes from a thermometer factory at Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu were sent back to the US in April. Mercury vapours released from the factory owned by Hindustan Lever Ltd (HLL) ruined the health of the workers, who suffered from bleeding gums, skin patches and eye irritations, and caused lasting damage to the environment. Mercury from the factory damaged the tropical forest of the Pambar Shola, where it is located, and contaminated the nearby Kodi Lake. Contamination levels outside the factory were measured at 600-800 times permissible limits, but HLL had been denying this figure.

In March 2001, Greenpeace and a local environment group - Palani Hills Conservation Council - exposed mercury bearing waste glass dumped by the company at a local scrap yard. Demonstrations by local people at the factory site forced its closure by the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board.

HLL at last arranged to ship the hazardous mercury and related wastes from its now defunct thermometer factory in Kodaikanal back to US. The consignment was sent to the hazardous waste recycling firm, Bethlehem Apparatus, in Pennsylvania, and included glass culets, finished and semi-finished products and sludge.

The controversial thermometer factory was transplanted in India in 1983, after it was shut down in Watertown, New York. The factory imported all its mercury, primarily from the United States, and finished thermometers were exported back to the US for distribution to markets abroad.

Italy: No-Border camp in Puglia (26/7 - 3/8)

The "Immigranti in Movimenti" collective in Naples and the "Tavolo Nazionale Migranti" are organising a 'no-border' camp in Puglia around the two themes of border controls and migrant work. The initiative is part of a series of proposals and campaigns launched at the European Social Forum held in Florence last November.

Puglia is a coastal frontier of Fortress Europe, the home to numerous detention centres and the seasonal destination for thousands of clandestine migrant workers who work on the tomato harvest.

The growing fortification and militarisation of national boundaries, exacerbated by harsher measures of expulsion and administrative detention and by the introduction of new criminal offences, has led to the increasing "clandestinisation" of immigration and, as a direct result, greater exploitation of migrant workers. Behind the rhetoric of "firmness" against clandestine immigration, the country is guaranteed a quota of workers who are forced to endure conditions of total exploitation without any protection of civil and social rights.

The camp, supported by the 'no-border' network, which, in the last few years, has conducted campaigns against the politics of closing borders and has organised "no-border camps" in many European countries, is part of a number of initiatives which aims to involve organisations and activists from across Europe in the creation of an international anti-racist movement. Given the fact that the directives on immigration controls are decided by the European Community, it is fundamental that the movements which oppose such policies co-ordinate their activities at a European level. The protection and the improvement of working conditions depends on the collective power wielded by workers united together.

The programme could include the following topics: the crossing of borders, the presence of administrative detention centres, and the forms of exploitation of immigrant workers. The camp is also an opportunity to meet up, share experiences of self-organisation, and exchange information and experience in the fight against legal and material apartheid.

For details and more info on this and other camps, visit:

Latin Troubles

Latin America is troubled. In recent issues, *DA* has provided analysis; *DA24* on Plan Colombia, *DA25* on the Argentine economy, and *DA26* on politics in Venezuela. These are not overnight or here today, gone tomorrow kinds of troubles; they are troubles brought about by decades of manipulation and bullying by the USA, and the consequent pain of having forced 'free market' and trade liberalisation policies thrust upon them. It is time for an update.

Venezuela

In 1998, Hugo Chávez was elected in Venezuela on a left-wing programme. In April 2002, as laws implementing social reform were about to come into force, the US government and Venezuela's white racist elite organised a coup and kidnapped President Chávez.

After mass street protests led by women from the poorest areas, Chávez was released and reinstated. However, the left wing administration is not exactly squeaky clean, and there is a grassroots movement which is not unquestioningly loyal (see *DA26*).

In January 2003, oil managers, the corporate media and corrupt union leaders again tried to bring the government down, but their attempt failed. Since then, there has been an uneasy peace, but the problems remain, and neither the reactionary right and big business nor the Marxist-leaning politics of the government can solve them.

As the Venezuelan anarchist organisation *Comisión de Relaciones Anarquistas* (CRA) has pointed out, only a real alternative, which avoids the shady Chávez and his gang, as well as the US-backed groups, can bring long-term progress.

Check out the CRA/*El Libertario* web site: www.nodo50.org/ellibertario

Argentina

The red brick building that contains the Brukman clothes factory is one of about 100 factories, restaurants and other businesses that have been under workers' control for over a year (see *DA25/6*). By late April, however, the state was beginning to tighten its grip. After all, where would capitalism be if people were allowed to go around running their workplaces without bosses, and doing a much better job than before?

In a heavy-handed operation, riot police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at hundreds of sympathisers who had collected outside the plant, following rumours that the authorities were preparing to take control of it. Subsequently, the police were seen leading some people away after breaking up the crowd. It was unclear whether police entered the factory, but white clouds of tear gas wafted through the neighbourhood as police used their chemicals on hundreds of people.

Brukman has been run successfully by 57 of its 157 original workers since the economic collapse in Argentina last year. They have been expelled twice but allowed back in by legal action. About 20 percent of Argentine workers are jobless, and the plant workers do not want to join them, so they are still fighting in court in hopes of winning the right to continue operating.

Flood Emergency

People in Santa Fe, Argentina, have been hit by a terrible flood, which has gone practically unnoticed by the media in Britain. This has been made worse by the uncaring inaction of politicians there, too concerned about the elections to warn and evacuate the population. In the face of many deaths, hunger, the risk of disease, loss of housing and all possessions for those who have been forced to leave their homes, grassroots women have had to take charge of evacuations and food distribution.

About 160,000 people have had to be evacuated. The government is playing down the number of deaths, which people estimate to be about 1,000; women report seeing babies' bodies floating in the water. The city is cut off by water as high as two metres, and roads which have been blown up to drain the water.

A community already impoverished by the deepest economic crisis in history, brought on by years of corruption and privatisation, now faces the loss of what little remained. Women have taken legal action against the governor of the province and the city mayor, accusing them of being responsible for the loss of life and criminal negligence. While the investigation gets under way, one official has been sacked, and thousands are joining the legal action.

In England, a flood appeal has been launched by the Global Women's Strike; the proceeds will be sent directly to these grassroots women (see below).

Contact Global Women's Strike, London 020 7482 2496 Email: womenstrike8m@server101.com

Donations in pounds to:
Women in Dialogue, (Cheques made payable to WinD Flood Appeal) Account no. 85111260, Lloyds TSB, 106 Kilburn High Road, London NW6 4HY; sort code: 77-91-13.
Donations in dollars to:
Women in Dialogue, earmarked "Flood Appeal". Cheques to PO Box 11795, Philadelphia PA 19101, USA.

Colombia

Since Plan Colomia was launched in 2000, 'attracting' US$1 billion in mainly military aid from the US for the Pastrana government, violence has reached new heights (see *DA24* for in-depth analysis on Plan Colombia). Since January 2003, US special forces have been 'officially' deployed in the country for the first time, in the eastern province of Arauca. Their blatant, declared aim is to train the right-wing, murdering Colombian troops, and protect a key oil pipeline. Every day more than 1,100 people are uprooted by the US-sponsored carnage, which is explained as a war on the coca plantations and the drugs barons, but in fact is a war to secure US domination.

Meanwhile, Coca-Cola's plant managers have been using paramilitary groups to kill and intimidate union organisers. This has given rise to the Stop Killer Coke campaign, run by trade unions such as the United Steelworkers of America, the International Labour Rights Fund and the Colombian labour union Sinaltrainal.

Right wing paramilitary groups have killed at least eight union leaders, and a recent ruling by US District Court Judge Jose E. Martinez means that cases brought by Colombian Plaintiffs under the Alien Tort Claims Act ("ATCA") for human rights violations committed by paramilitaries on behalf of Coca-Cola bottlers Panamerican Beverages, Inc. ("Panamco") and Bebidas y Alimentos ("Bebidas") in Colombia could go forward. The corporate defendants had argued that the TVPA's coverage is limited to "individuals," and that this excluded corporations from liability. In rejecting that position, the court held that "the legislative history does not reveal an intent to exempt private corporations from liability... and that the term 'individual' is consistently viewed in the law as including corporations".

Sinaltrainal, the union of food and bottling workers in Colombia, is fighting for justice, as is the family of Isidro Gil, who was murdered inside the Bebidas bottling facility in Carepa by paramilitaries brought in by Coca-Cola. Other crimes committed by them include kidnapping and torture of union leaders.

For more info on the Coke campaign, visit http://www.cokewatch.org

THE SPOI

Think of an empire, and what springs to mind? Greece or Rome? The Spanish or Ottoman empires? Whatever it is, it probably belongs in a school history book. It might be fairly recent history, if you can cast your mind back to geography class and world maps with Africa and much of Asia dominated by the British pink empire and the French purple empires. Nevertheless, the French and British empires are now no more than fading memories. So has the sun really gone down on 'empire' as a form of political organisation? The short answer is no – and the long answer…

Certainly, white colonialist ruling elites taking orders from London, Paris or wherever were chased from country after country in the 1950s and 60s. This was the era of national liberation, of pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism. It was also the height of the Cold War, with America and the Soviet Union vying to extend their 'spheres of influence' and exerting, to a degree, political, military and economic control over 'client' states. While the colonial period may be characterised by the plundering of natural resources and outright economic exploitation to enrich the 'mother' country's ruling class, the abiding memory of the Cold War is the clash of ideologies that stood at its core – capitalism versus 'communism'. That is not to say that the plunder and exploitation of colonialism had halted. After all, both sides had an arms race to fund.

America won the Cold War, in part because it could sustain a massive defence budget without causing the kind of economic chaos seen under the Soviet system. And behind this ability lie oil and petro-dollars. Because the oil trade is based on the dollar, the resulting need for dollars in oil importing countries allows the US to keep on printing them with no fear of adverse economic effects. This enables, among other things, an almost unlimited level of military spending. Meanwhile, oil-exporting countries have billions of dollars to invest back into the US economy.

The ending of the Cold War has had two major effects. Firstly, capitalism now dominates the globe and its natural resources; secondly, we are now witnessing the era of the single superpower, a superpower that is, itself, bent on global domination. Although Europe is a larger economy, only the US has the military might to back up its economic and strategic interests.

This much has been clear during the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. Through this little imperialist adventure, America will extend both its control over world oil supplies and its political domination of the Middle East and beyond. Any lingering doubts that this was the main impetus behind 'regime change' should have been dispelled, on one hand, by the conqueror's immediate securing of Iraq's oil installations and the Ministry responsible for them, while, on the other hand, allowing its troops to stand aside for a whole week until the rest of the Iraqi economy, schools and hospitals included, was looted into oblivion.

Talk of using the exportation of Iraqi oil to help the Iraqi people is as contemptible as Bush and Blair's claims about weapons of mass destruction. Instead, America's capture of about one eighth of world oil reserves (only Saudi Arabia, with about one quarter, has more) will serve several purposes, none calculated to better the lives of ordinary Iraqis, all calculated to line capitalist pockets and further US economic and political interests.

Most immediate, and perhaps most visible, is reconstruction - aka wholesale privatisation and profiteering. Potentially profitable parts of the Iraqi economy, not just its oil industry, but also its general infrastructure, now completely battered by bombs and looters, are already being parcelled off to US multinationals (saving a few subcontracted scraps for Britain and other collaborators like Spain). The squabble between P&O and Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) over the contract for Iraq's only deep water port at Umm Qasr ('liberated' by British forces) began the bun fight. Predictably, the US Agency for International Development handed the £3 million contract to SSA.

As for the Iraqi oil industry itself, sanctions have directly restricted exports and indirectly resulted in underinvestment in

LS OF WAR

production facilities. With sanctions ended and £13 billion pumped into modernising production, Iraq could approach Saudi Arabia's export capacity. However, encouraging such a level of investment and by-passing production quotas to ensure the quickest possible return will require withdrawal from OPEC, undermining the Arab-dominated cartel's influence on oil prices. Or as Larry Lindsey, Bush's former economic adviser, preferred to put it: "*When there is a regime change in Iraq, you could add three to five million barrels of production to world supply [per day]. The…war would be good for the economy*."

The next two decades will see three important developments. First, many non-OPEC reserves, such as those in the North Sea, will be depleted or will be approaching depletion. Second, economic growth in China, India and elsewhere will raise global demand for oil by over a quarter. Third, US energy imports will rise from about half of its current requirements to about two thirds, due to declining home production. Hence the need for guaranteed cheap oil for the future and the great efforts to curtail OPEC.

A fourth development will be increasing economic rivalry between the US and the EU spilling over into competition for control of resources. The dollar's role in the oil trade, and the impact of this on the US economy and defence spending was mentioned earlier. However, the euro threatens this position. Already, back in 2000, Saddam's Iraq switched from the dollar to the euro for its oil sales, forcing Jordan, for one, to switch so it could buy Iraqi oil. And there is speculation regarding Iran and Russia among others in this regard. While Iraq will now be switched back to the dollar, the consequences of a loss of control over this aspect of the oil trade is surely not lost on US strategic planners.

All of this means that US threats of "regime change" in other countries should be taken all the more seriously. Such states may be unfriendly, like Iran and Libya (both important OPEC members), or not yet unfriendly, like Saudi Arabia with its significant radical islamic threat to the current corrupt regime – yes, an occupation of Saudi oilfields has also been openly suggested in Washington. Whether or not such scenarios come to pass, there is little doubt that we are seeing the expansion of the American empire, an empire based on control of oil, for which Iraq is a perfect outpost, be it as a guarantor of future low prices, a launchpad for further "regime change", or a convenient base from which to exert economic, political and military control over the whole region.

What is more, Iraq is within striking distance of another important oil region – the Caspian Sea basin. The former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan lie above what is estimated as the world's third largest reserves. These have hardly been tapped yet, but over the next two decades, they are expected to supply almost as much oil as Iraq. Already about three quarters of current Caspian operations are in the hands of US companies. It would suit America very well to keep these countries out of OPEC and to use the region as a further source of cheap oil.

The extent of US influence in the region can be gauged from recent developments over the issue of oil transportation. America has backed the infamous Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project which, from 2005, will carry Azerbaijani oil (and eventually oil from elsewhere in the region) through Georgia to the Turkish port, Ceyhan, on the Mediterranean. Two shorter and cheaper options were unacceptable in Washington's eyes, one because it would have crossed Iran to the Persian Gulf, the other because it would have involved the Black Sea and Russia, which is already perceived to have too much say in the transport of Caspian oil.

It is not wholly certain that the US will get its way in the Caspian. Certainly, there are potential problems, like cross-border tensions, inter-ethnic rivalries and islamic radicalism. Iraq too holds similar obstacles to the imperialist ambitions of corporate America, ambitions which will be satisfied with nothing less than complete control over the oil that turns capitalism's wheels. This powerful mixture of oil and imperialism will explode into more wars, wars with even thinner pretexts than in the case of Iraq, wars that must surely provoke even greater opposition. To oppose war is to oppose capitalism and imperialism.

Imperial Ambition

An interview with Noam Chomsky, by David Barsamian

...if India invades Pakistan to put an end to monstrous atrocities, that's not a norm. But if the United States bombs Serbia on dubious grounds, that's a norm. That's what power means.

DB: What are the regional implications of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq?

Noam Chomsky: I think not only the region but the world in general perceives it correctly as a kind of an easy test case to try to establish a norm for use of military force, which was declared in general terms last September, when the National Security Strategy of the United States of America was issued. It presented a somewhat novel and unusually extreme doctrine on the use of force in the world. And it's hard not to notice that the drumbeat for war in Iraq coincided with that. It also coincided with the onset of the congressional campaign. All these are tied together.

The new doctrine was not one of preemptive war, which arguably falls within some stretching of the U.N. Charter, but rather of something that doesn't even begin to have any grounds in international law, namely, preventive war. The doctrine, you recall, was that the United States would rule the world by force, and that if there is any challenge perceived to its domination, a challenge perceived in the distance, invented, imagined, whatever, then the US will have the right to destroy that challenge before it becomes a threat. That's preventive war, not preemptive war.

And if you want to declare a doctrine, a powerful state has the capacity to create what is called a new norm. So if India invades Pakistan to put an end to monstrous atrocities, that's not a norm. But if the United States bombs Serbia on dubious grounds, that's a norm. That's what power means.

So if you want to establish a new norm, you have to do something. And the easiest way to do it is to select a completely defenseless target, which can be completely overwhelmed by the most massive military force in human history. However, in order to do that credibly, at least to your own population, you have to frighten them. So the defenseless target has to be turned into an awesome threat to survival which was responsible for September 11 and is about to attack us again, and so on and so forth. And that was indeed done. Beginning last September, there was a massive effort which substantially succeeded in convincing Americans, alone in the world, that Saddam Hussein is not only a monster but a threat to their existence. That was the content of the October congressional resolution and a lot of things since. And it shows in the polls. And by now, about half the population even believes that he was responsible for September 11.

So all this falls together. You have the doctrine pronounced. You have a norm established in a very easy case. The population is driven into a panic and, alone in the world, believes fantasies of this kind and, therefore, is willing to support military force in self-defense. And if you believe this, then it really is self-defense. So it's kind of like a textbook example of aggression, with the purpose of extending the scope of further aggression. Once the easy case is handled, you can move on to think of harder cases.

Those are the main reasons why so much of the world is overwhelmingly opposed to the war. It's not just the attack on Iraq. Many people perceive it correctly as exactly the way it's intended, as a firm statement that you had better watch out, we're on the way. That's why the United States is now regarded as the greatest threat to peace in the world by probably the vast majority of the population of the world. George Bush has succeeded within a year in converting the United States to a country that is greatly feared, disliked, and even hated.

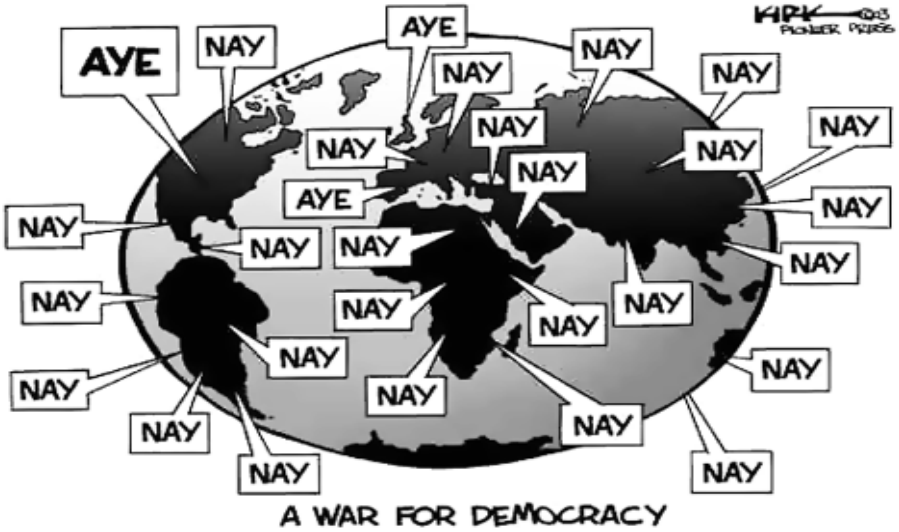
DB: A slogan we have all heard at peace rallies is "No Blood for Oil". The whole issue of oil is often referred to as the driving force behind the US attack and occupation of Iraq. How central is oil to US strategy?

NC: It's undoubtedly central. I don't think any sane person doubts that. The Gulf region is the main energy-producing region of the world. It has been since the Second World War. It's expected to be at least for another generation. It's a huge source of strategic power, of material wealth. And Iraq is absolutely central to it. It has the second largest oil reserves. It's very easily accessible, cheap. To control Iraq is to be in a very strong position to determine the price and production levels, not too high, not too low, to probably undermine OPEC, and to swing your weight around throughout the world. That's been true since the Second World War. It has nothing in particular to do with access to the oil; the US doesn't really intend to access it. But it does have to do with control. So that's in the background. If Iraq was somewhere in Central Africa, it wouldn't be chosen for this test case. So that's certainly there in the background, just as it's there in less crucial regions, like Central Asia. However, it doesn't account for the specific timing of the operation, because that's a constant concern.

DB: A 1945 State Department document on Middle East oil described it as "...a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history". The US imports 15% of its oil from Venezuela. It also imports oil from Colombia and Nigeria. All three of those states are perhaps, from Washington's perspective, somewhat problematic right now, with Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and serious internal conflicts, literally civil war, in Colombia, and uprisings in Nigeria threatening oil supplies there. What do you think about those factors?

NC: That's very pertinent, and those are the regions where the US actually intends to have access. The Middle East it wants to control. But, at least

This interview has unfortunately had to be trimmed due to space requirements. It first appeared in Monthly Review – the longstanding US left periodical, and you can see the full version at http://www.monthlyreview.org/0503chomsky.htm



according to intelligence projections, the US intends to rely on what they regard as more stable Atlantic Basin resources - Atlantic Basin means West Africa and the Western Hemisphere - which are more totally under US control than the Middle East, which is a difficult region. So the projections are: control the Middle East, but maintain access to the Atlantic Basin, including the countries you mentioned. It does, therefore, follow that lack of conformity, disruption of one kind or another, in those areas is a significant threat, and there is very likely to be another episode like Iraq, if this one works the way the civilian planners at the Pentagon hope. If it's an easy victory, no fighting, establish a new regime which you will call democratic, and not too much catastrophe, if it works like that, they are going to be emboldened on to the next step.

And the next step, you can think of several possibilities. One of them, indeed, is the Andean region. The US has military bases all around it now. There are military forces right in there. Colombia and Venezuela are both, especially Venezuela, substantial oil producers, and there is more elsewhere, like Ecuador, and even Brazil. Yes, that's a possibility, that the next step in the campaign of preventive wars, once the so-called norm is established and accepted, would be to go on there. Another possibility is Iran.

DB: Indeed, Iran. The US was advised by none other than that, as Bush called him, "man of peace", Sharon, to go after Iran "the day after" they finish with Iraq. What about Iran? A designated axis-of-evil state and also a country that has a lot of oil.

NC: As far as Israel is concerned, Iraq has never been much of an issue. They consider it a kind of pushover. But Iran is a different story. Iran is a much more serious military and economic force. And, for years, Israel has been pressing the United States to take on Iran. Iran is too big for Israel to attack, so they want the big boys to do it.

And it's quite likely that the war may already be under way. A year ago, over 10 percent of the Israeli air force was reported to be permanently based in eastern Turkey, that is, in huge US military bases in eastern Turkey. And they are reported to be flying reconnaissance over the Iranian border. In addition, there are credible reports that the US and Turkey and Israel are attempting to stir up Azeri nationalist forces in northern Iran to move towards a kind of a linkage of parts of Iran with Azerbaijan. There is a kind of an axis of US-Turkish-Israeli power in the region opposed to Iran that may ultimately, perhaps, lead to the split-up of Iran and, maybe, military attack. Although there will be a military attack only if it's taken for granted that Iran would be basically defenseless. They're not going to invade anyone who can fight back.

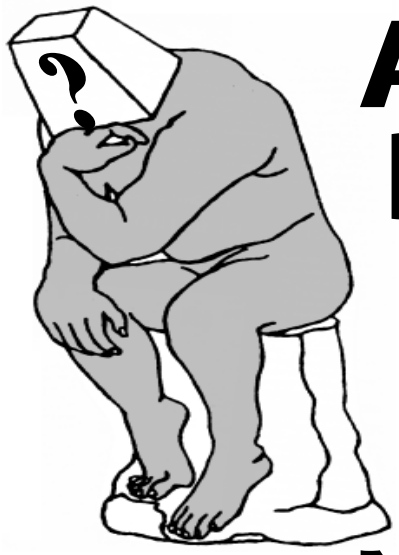
DB: You've described the level of public protest and resistance to the Iraq war as "unprecedented"; never before has there been so much opposition before a war. Where is that resistance going?

NC: I don't know any way to predict human affairs. It will go the way people decide it will go. There are many possibilities. It should intensify. The tasks are now much greater and more serious than they were before. On the other hand, it's harder. It's just psychologically easier to organise to oppose a military attack than it is to oppose a long-standing programme of imperial ambition, of which this attack is one phase, and of which others are going to come next. That takes more thought, more dedication, more long-term engagement. It's the difference between deciding, "okay, I'm in this for the long haul" and saying, "okay, I'm going out to a demonstration tomorrow and then back home". Those are choices, all of them. The same in the civil rights movement, the women's movement, anything.

DB: What do you say to the peace activists who laboured for so long trying to prevent the invasion of Iraq, and who are now feeling a sense of anger and sadness?

NC: That they should be realistic. Abolitionism. How long did the struggle go on before they made any progress? If you give up every time you don't achieve the immediate gain you want, you're just guaranteeing that the worst is going to happen. These are long, hard struggles. And, in fact, what happened in the last couple of months should be seen quite positively. The basis was created for expansion and development of a peace and justice movement that will move on to much harder tasks. And that's the way these things go. It isn't easy.

Iran is a much more serious military and economic force. And, for years, Israel has been pressing the United States to take on Iran. Iran is too big for Israel to attack, so they want the big boys to do it.



A Lower Class Degree

What the HE White Paper really means.

New Labour has left a trail of broken promises over the last term and a half since it came to office. Six years on from its "Education, education, education" election refrain, what does the lie detector say about New Labour and its Higher Education policy?

The overall aims of the Government's recent HE White Paper seem to be:

- To continue to compete well worldwide in the HE sector.
- To do something about class disparities in participation.
- To get 50% of 18-30 year olds into HE.
- To make HE (degrees) more responsive to the needs of business and the economy overall.
- To ensure high professional standards and 'excellence' in teaching and research.

The methods of achieving this, it claims, will partly be by changes in funding, where institutes will be able to charge students 'top-up' fees. These 'top-ups' will range from nothing (for those institutions that don't attract the better-off students), to £3,000 for those that do. This means that there will be more freedom for the attractive ones and more criteria laid down for the 'lesser' institutes. There will be pressure on them to cut costs, and government funding will be based on a move from the degrees we know, to 'Foundation Degrees' that are 'work focused'. The work bit applies not to what students will do, nor whether the system will 'work' effectively, but to the fact that they will be job-fodder courses. The extent of the pressure for these is evident in the government's statement that *"we will drive forward with Foundation Degrees"*.

...government funding will be based on 'Foundation Degrees' that are 'work focused'. The work bit applies not to what students will do, nor whether the system will 'work' effectively, but to the fact that they will be job-fodder courses...

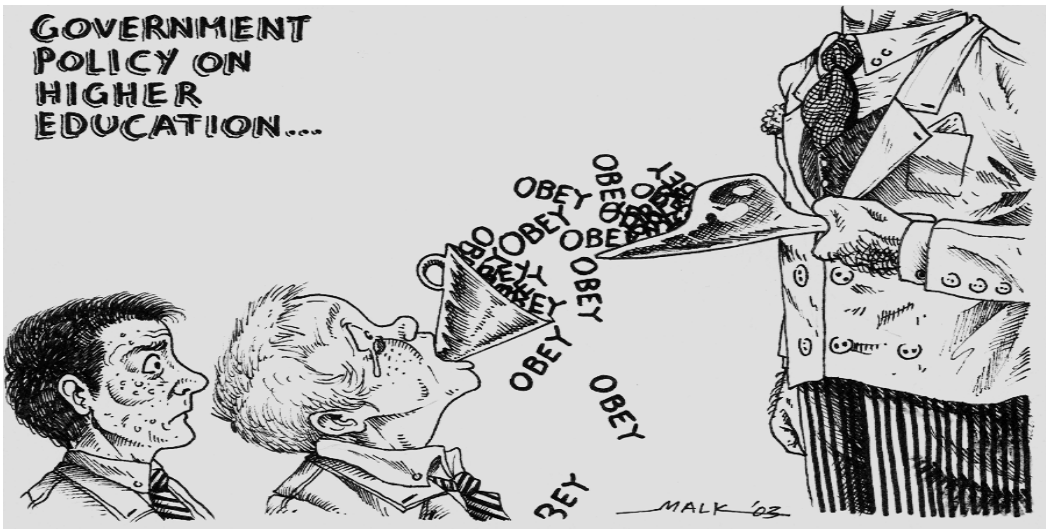
This means a 'binary' system (it's actually a tripartite one as we shall see), with the top institutes continuing to offer degrees, as we know them, and having the bulk of research, along with increased wages for researchers to match the level in the US. The bottom ones will be restricted to 'teaching', and the title of 'University' will be restricted to those achieving 'excellence' in it; those lecturers who are 'only' teaching will not, apparently, need more money.

Ensuring 'excellence' is to be achieved through the use of 70 'centres of excellence' disseminating 'best practice' through a new 'professional body' (to replace the ILT by 2004), laying down the criteria for teaching by the use of courses for lecturers.

Another method of achieving 'excellence' is through the use of bonuses for certain people (to be decided by HEFC) and by tying 'market supplements' to 'human resource strategies'. 'Management' develops these strategies, and will play the 'key role in 'leadership' and have scope to 'rationalise' and negotiate 'mergers' between institutes. 'Excellence' will also be maintained by 'training' external examiners in it, so that they can monitor the degrees on offer and oversee the lecturers.

For these at the lower end of this new scale, degrees will become more responsive to business and the economy by developing in students the skills needed by business and the wider economy. This is to be achieved by a high level of involvement from Research and Development Agencies in each region. They will ensure that the new 'teaching institutes' match the supply of students to the economic demands of the region, by bringing them together with business and encouraging them to work together. Out of this comes a third layer of institutes, some to be called 'New Technology Institutes' (as they are mainly concerned with the technology needed by industry), and others to be called 'Knowledge Exchanges', where the knowledge coming out of the 'research institutes' is matched to the regional economic demands, and 'transferred' by some miraculous process to the teaching institutes.

The class aspect is dealt with by giving grants of £1,000 to poorer students and some bursaries. These will be linked to the nature of the degree and the vocational skills they are likely to acquire through the foundation degrees they will be encouraged to go on. To help them choose, the NUS will be producing forms of advice (counselling, publicity, etc.) on the best places and those best for certain forms of work.



Also, to make sure students are not away from work for too long, degrees will be done over a three-semester year. This is possible, since lecturers in 'teaching institutes' will no longer be doing research over the summer. Degrees will, therefore, be studied over 2 years instead of 3.

At a meeting which included a question and answer session on the White Paper, Margaret Hodge, Minister for Higher Education, reiterated these points. She said there was a desire to expand the numbers of 18-30 year olds in HE to 'skill-up' the labour market and develop the 'knowledge economy'. *But,* as 'New Labour' are 'good socialists', there is a focus on the class divide in HE which, she said, had become wider recently. They need to close the gap to achieve an 'inclusive society'. She also argued that there is a need to further develop the research base, as 'UK Plc' has to compete in the global economy, and too many top researchers are being 'lost to the States' (hence the need for a wage rise for them). There also needs to be more links with the 'local and regional economies' in order to develop a stronger 'civil society' (this is where the RDAs come in).

All this means a need for more funding, and she said that they intend to increase funding for the HE sector by 6% each year for the next three years. But this won't be enough to make up for the 'loss under the Tories' (what's happened for the last six years under 'New Labour', she didn't say); therefore, they have to look to the students to pay more. They will do this because students, apparently, achieve a 'personal benefit' of '50% higher wages' through doing a degree and, as they can't raise taxes because they might lose votes (they are already worried about the rise in April), this can only be done by making students pay more through increased loans. She also mentioned that these loans are 'only about £13,000', and assumed that we are becoming used to going into debt and that loans don't count against public expenditure, whereas grants do. She did accept that there is resistance to loans from the poorer students; therefore, there will be a sliding scale of means tested grants, from nothing up to £1,000. Institutes will also be able to charge 'variable fees by 2006'. There will be bursaries for the young people of low-income families. This will, therefore, 'open up access'. They can't afford to go back to grants 'as in her days at university', as there only used to be 6-7% of young people in HE, and now they want 50%. Loans are the tool to extend and widen participation.

She didn't say what happens to the other 50% of 18-30 year olds or those over 30. Nor did she mention the 'foundation degrees'. I began my questioning with the over 30s aspect. She replied that they would still be able to access low-income grants and so on, and would not be pushed out, as she has a strong belief in 'lifelong learning'. On reflection, I can only assume that when a major proportion of young people gain degrees, then there is an assumption that there will be less need for older people to take them as the years go by.

I then got onto the key question of the nature of the new degrees by quoting the White Paper and its 'work focused' nature. She confirmed this to be the case, saying that they were 'more like the old HND's', i.e. over two years, but based on the 'skills and competencies' needed by the local and regional economies. The White Paper makes it clear that the curriculum will be guided by large corporates and companies through the RDAs, and, clearly, far from having a problem with this, she is enthusiastic about it.

Most 'normal' people can see the fact that business control of the curriculum is not only 'anti-social' and unfree, but also results in a very narrow curriculum, more in the realm of training than education. Obviously, the idea is to re-inforce a tiered degree system, where the elite still do 'proper degrees' and the working class do a poorer version which merely trains them for work. It seems that Margaret Hodge and New Labour don't want working class people to do proper 'educational' degrees.

At this point in the debate, the chairman stepped in, saying that he went to one of the 'old tech's' in the 1940s and it didn't do him any harm. He then granted Hodge the last word, which came straight from the IEA version of 'education for the

(cont'd over page...)

**"Some people in the education system are paid by the state, but produce nothing of any use to society...
...but, enough about me..."**

Margaret Hodge, Minister for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning (HELL)

(cont'd from last page...)
market place'. She pointed out that tying learning to business needs allows for the development of the 'skills and competencies' which improve profits; this encourages investment and, therefore, more employment, the 'trickle down effect', in other words.

Of course, talk of the new degrees and targets leads on to the missing 50%, and whether they may be washing cars (and other minimum wage jobs) all their lives (as they'd missed the boat), and whether she expected this to get votes from people other than the Daily Mail letter writers who New Labour base their ideas of public opinion on. However, another chap chipped in with a question about the size of the loans. He pointed out that for poorer students, with no access to funds from their parents (he may have been eluding to the young 'two flats Blair'), the debt they end up with is more like £24,000, as they even have to borrow to buy food. This meant that he doubted whether they'd get the 50%, asking 'did they really expect young people to go into so much debt?

No problems for Margaret, she quoted figures off the top of her head (perhaps proving that 'proper' degrees are lost on the likes of us), showing beyond doubt that the debts 'only amount to about £13,000 at the most, and they'll only have to start paying it back when they earn over £15,000 a year. Perhaps those with the 'new' degrees will struggle to get more than this, since they'll be so shite... With that, the meeting had to end, as 'she'd had a long day', and had to drive back to London stuffed with free food, a worn-out mouth and an ever-growing nose.

An interesting aspect of the meeting was the presence of 'toady, pretend high-flyers'. The audience was very small (about fifteen, in accommodation for two hundred) and, along with Bolton Institute's Principal, there were a few be-suited young people taking pictures of Margaret Hodge with the latest digital cameras. The extent to which some people go in order to ingratiate themselves never ceases to amaze – one young man in a sharp suit asked a totally irrelevant supportive question (he had one quibble about a post graduate tax to show his flair). However, it served the purpose of demonstrating the sickening and pitiful depths to which some people will stoop to show their allegiance to the 'blessed Margaret'. Of course, he hopes it shows he's a prime candidate for elevation up the ranks of 'New Labour'. He is, obviously, a 'moderniser' and 'one of them' - prime tosser, more like. I couldn't help thinking, on the way home, what on earth he has in common with us, and how he could possibly expect us to vote for him. It's no wonder less and less people are voting; there are only so many Daily Mail readers.

Many people may feel that the White Paper on HE makes sense. After all, lecturers get far too many holidays; lots are bone idle; degrees bear no resemblance to the real world; and students only spend their fantastic amounts of money on beer, drugs and going out. It will do us all good, the economy will grow, there'll be more jobs, and the 'trickle down effect' will really blossom.

Others, however, with a bit more sense (and not complete sycophants) will see this for the totalitarian piece of legislation that it is. They are supported in this by the fact that there is no reference, in the White Paper, to any consultation with students to see if this is what they really want for *their* money. There is no reference to any research that will be undertaken into teaching styles to find out what 'teaching excellence' actually is. Discussion has ended since theories of education were dropped from teacher training. The whole project is 'top-down' and is a simple continuation of Thatcherite IEA-led initiatives designed to mould the world into their image.

Many lecturers can see this in operation with their own eyes at work, which is a bit closer to reality than the Daily Mail campaigns about 'thick' working class people wasting their time doing degrees. Foundation degree tutors have been taken on at a higher rate of pay for a lower level of teaching. We are continually assured that our students are a 'problem', as they are mainly working class, and we are solving the problem with 'widening participation'. We at Bolton Institute have been told on several occasions that our students really want to do a 'Youth and Community' degree, when those of us who deal with admissions have never been asked for it.

In fact, all of the evidence on the ground supports the view that potential students want to do a 'proper degree'. Indeed, many working class people see NVQ type qualifications (Foundation Degrees are actually NVQ level 4) as 'not worth the paper they are written on'.

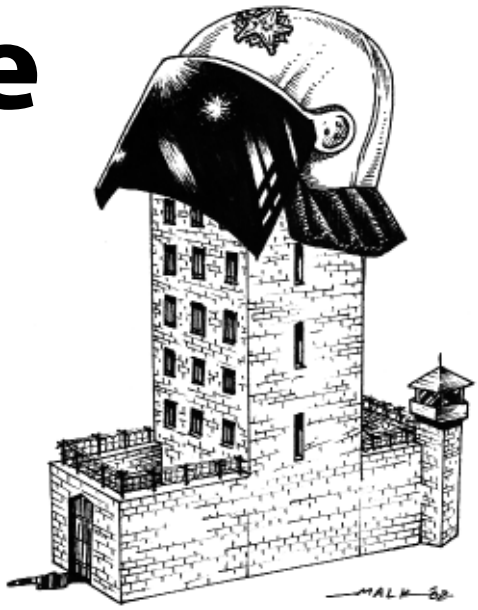
The reality is that the government and its lackeys in institutes like ours are already implementing the White Paper before it has become policy. This totalitarianism mirrors the management style many of us are seeing in our workplaces. Moreover, the project is based on the myth of Plato's three kinds of people; those intelligent enough to lead, those in the middle who implement the decisions of the elite, and those at the bottom who are only fit to learn how to follow instructions. It seems our students fit into the latter 'type', and therefore should not be encouraged to think and question. Hence, vocationalism is the right way to go for working class education, and those who embrace this will get paid more for becoming Foundation degree tutors. Higher rewards come to those willing to play blind acceptance of government policies.

For the better-off, it is status quo, as we need leaders who can think. The working class, on the other hand, will be allowed into HE as long as it is restricted to training and *doesn't* make them think. Real degrees will be for the 6-7% again, just as in Margaret's days. The rest of us can wait for the 'trickle down', like we've been told to for over 200 years.

...the sickening and pitiful depths to which some people will stoop to show their allegiance to the 'blessed Margaret'. Of course, he hopes it shows he's a prime candidate for elevation up the ranks of 'New Labour' - prime tosser, more like.

For further information about issues raised in this article, contact: Education Workers' Network, PO Box 29, Southwest PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

Voice from inside



The most famous of all current political prisoners, Mumia Abu-Jamal, has been busy writing some excellent articles on the war, justice, media and propaganda. Here is an extract just so you get the idea.

The battle for empire

By the time this is read, the flames of Baghdad may be cold; the bombing may have faded into memory.

By the time these words are heard or read by others, the war in Iraq may indeed be over. In this age, with the naked power of the United States military, there is no telling. It may be so. But if so, it can only be said to be an end to one war; there is little serious question that it is the beginning of other wars.

It may be the precursor of other imperial wars, with laser-guided targets training their cold, green metallic sights on North Korea, or Iran, or Syria, or ...?

It may be that the adventure in Iraq has sparked other wars against other Western targets.

What is virtually certain is that this is not a war to stop other wars (remember 'World War II'? Our parents and grandparents foolishly called it 'The War to End All Wars' - uh huh), but a war that will make the waging of more wars far more certain, and far less containable.

Once more, Arab people have been humiliated by the West, under the propaganda fig leaf of 'human rights.' We are assured, by the voices in the Pentagon, as well as the White House and their sycophants in the media, that this is a 'War of Liberation.' Any honest student of history can cite a half dozen examples of foreign nations claiming to invade another nation for their own good, to 'liberate' them. When the US fought Spain for Cuba and Puerto Rico, they claimed the right to 'liberate' it from Spanish cruelty. The US wanted to make it into a colony in which to expand American slavery. Americans even supported an armed invasion of the island of Cuba, headed by a Cuban rebel and mercenary named Narciso Lopez, for whom they raised money, and some 600 Americans (mostly Louisianans).

Governments often offer up pretexts to cover the real reasons for war. Those who fight the wars, or even those who support the wars for patriotic reasons, rarely know the real reasons.

In this age of the Internet and widening literacy, however, more and more people are able to pierce the veils of state propaganda, and therefore able to do the historical and economic research to perceive the real reasons behind the Iraqi Adventure.

The safest site in all of Iraq is most certainly the areas around the oil fields of Rumaila. What does that tell you? This is not about 'weapons of mass destruction'; it's not about 'liberating' Iraq; nor is it about bringing democracy to the Middle East. It's about gaining the oil in the desert. It's about the expanded American Empire, which has no real competitor in the realm of military might.

It's about a New Colonialism... a kinder, gentler, 'democratic' colonialism. There never was, in this world's history, a kind, gentle rule of one people over another people. Rome was feared; not loved. America is no different.

http://www.iacenter.org/maj_battle-emp.htm

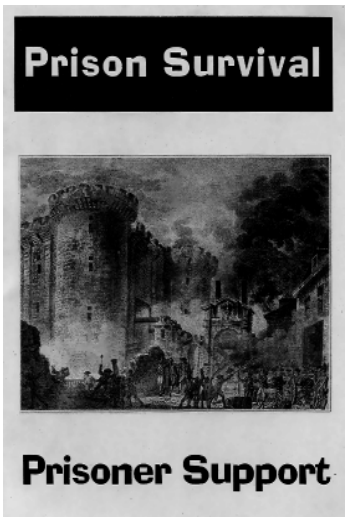
If that has whetted your appetite, try these:
www.iacenter.org/maj_protests.htm - essay on Iraq
www.iacenter.org/maj_iraq.htm - media and propaganda
www.mumia.org/pdf/antiwar.pdf - downloadable pdf book, "Imperialist wars: anti-war commentaries".
email: iacenter@action-mail.org
check out: www.mumia2000.org
donate at: www.peoplesrightsfund.org

Prison Survival – Prisoner Support

This recent 32-page booklet has been written by a range of political activists across Britain. Split into two parts, the content is thus divided between personal experiences of prison and punishment, and essential information on prisoner support, including a list of contacts and prisoner support groups. The end result is a poignant yet practical pamphlet from both sides of the prison walls.

While Prison Survival is particularly relevant for anyone facing imprisonment, it is also invaluable for anyone involved in prisoner support, or who wants to find out about both support and prison life. Let's face it, this means it is relevant to all solidarity activists, since if each of us can't provide solidarity and support for political prisoners, then we need to seriously re-examine our motives and actions. Prisoner solidarity is at the core – if political prisoners do not deserve our solidarity and help, then who does?

The booklet costs £1 from: Justice for Mark Barnsley, PO Box 381, Huddersfield HD1 3XX, England (cheques/postal orders payable to 'Justice for Mark Barnsley').



Giannis Serifis

The Greek anarcho-syndicalist Giannis Serifis is still in the new "white-cells" of Korydallos prison, following his arrest in October last year. Serifis is 63 and is known in Greece as an anti-authoritarian trade union militant who, during the past 35 years, has taken part in many struggles, mainly in the name of the autonomous working-class movement.

The magistrates ordered his detention on the basis of the false claim that he had confessed to the offences of "participation in a terrorist group" and "secret possession of weaponry". In a written declaration distributed before entering the court, Yannis Serifis said: "Throughout my case, the authorities have tried to cast aspersions against all those who took part in the resistance against the military junta (1967-74), and who, instead of selling out, have chosen to continue to resist. Their real target is the growing autonomous class movement. They want to hinder and attack the revolutionary left and the anti-authoritarian and anarchist movements." During the 7-year military dictatorship, Serifis was twice sentenced in absentia for alleged participation in the resistance organisation "Movement of 20th October".

Yannis Serifis must not stand alone against state repression!

Sign the petition:
http://www.yserifis.org/solidarity.php

letters

Send letters to:
DA-SF (letters),
PO Box 1095,
Sheffield S2 4YR.
All letters are welcome, but space is always very short. Make yours incisive, brief and questioning if you want it printed in full.

Bakunin debate

(In answer to a letter in DA26, and an article in DA25)

While I very much regret TC's confusion over the meaning of my recent article (I hope always to be clear and lucid in anything I write), I do not find a need to revise my ideas in the light of the comments made. I see very little difficulty in understanding the idea of anti-social violence: it is that kind of violence for which Bakunin calls. It is, as violence must always be, irrational rather than rational, and destructive rather than productive. Rendered concrete in contemporary terms, one can easily imagine Bakunin applauding joy-riding [sic] and ram-raiding, even football hooliganism.

This is the kind of anti-social violence which he hoped to put to political ends. As an absolutist pacifist (a point which, I confess, I did not make clear in the article), I of course cannot approve of any violent action[s]: including TC's violence in self-defence, but that is perhaps an argument for another time and place. I am pleased to hear that TC has outgrown a youthful tendency towards anti-social violence (of whatever sort[s]), and only hope that the sadly anti-intellectual attitude implied by the dismissive reference to the work of 'some academic' is the next thing to go.

DL

Hypocrite corner

Is Polly Toynbee, Guardian journalist, the most mendacious, two-faced hypocrite in the country today?

She has just published a book, "Hard Work" (Bloomsbury, £6.99), excerpts of which were published in the Guardian recently, detailing the working conditions endured by millions of workers since their jobs in the private and public service sectors were outsourced and privatised; millions of jobs lost, millions of people suffering wage cuts averaging 60%, days lengthened from 8 hours to 12, casualisation, no union representation, and sweating; what she doesn't reveal is her own part in bringing this situation about!

Toynbee was one of the first to desert the Labour Party (staying only long enough to vote against Tony Benn for deputy leader), for the SDP, a spurious so-called party created and maintained in existence by the right-wing media, solely for the purpose of splitting the anti-Tory vote and keeping the Tories in power long enough for them to privatise all those service-sector jobs! Since the early '80s, Toynbee has consistently attacked trade unionists as "dinosaurs", exhorting them to forget any ideas of job security and to learn to live with "flexibility" (i.e. insecurity & casualisation).

She attacked the local government left of the '80s, who tried to combat discrimination and inequality, as the "loony left", and congratulated Thatcher for her anti-trade union laws, and for destroying what she calls "The male-dominated trade union establishment". She even stood as an SDP candidate in the 1987 general election; she didn't win the seat but she succeeded in Splitting the anti-Tory vote and handing a hitherto safe Labour-seat to the Tories.

Will Toynbee apologise for her inglorious role in creating the working conditions she criticises? Or will anyone reading her book notice the same smell I did from the serialisation in the Guardian? KA

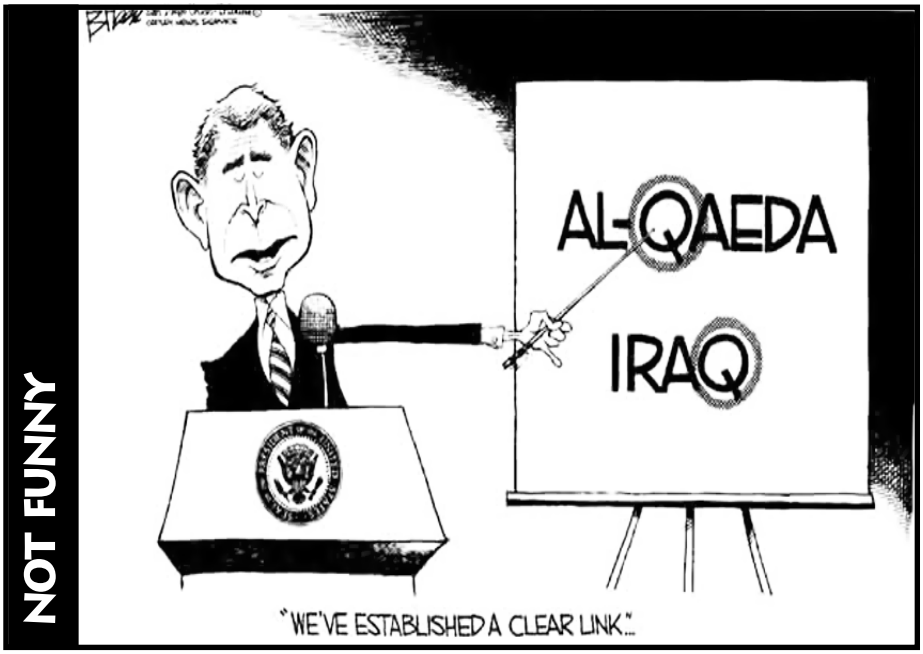
4-letter words

As the television 'watershed' becomes ever earlier these days, profanities don't seem to have the same shock value they once had. For example, anodyne and overused, the 'F word' has lost all meaning; it just doesn't seem to 'do it' anymore. As for the 'C word': a harsh, monosyllabic obscenity, which is gradually becoming more and more commonplace. Turn on the TV most nights, and it's full of them. Recently ten were seen on ITV trying to survive the wilds somewhere in an Australian rain forest!

In 1967, Mary Whitehouse, that so-called arbiter of good taste declared; 'this is the end of civilisation as we know it', after the BBC broadcast an episode of 'Till Death Us Do Part' which had used the word 'bloody' a total of 44 times. The Osbournes must have her turning somersaults in her grave.

As in all areas, familiarity gradually removes impact, particularly within the media. So it's time a new obscenity was created. Something foul, loathsome and detestable?

Having just witnessed a totally one-sided illegal invasion of Iraq, I've had a think and come up with a new addition to the English language. A four letter word meaning evil, corrupt, and deplorable. A word that should worry the hell out of all of us: Bush. A f****** c*** if ever I saw one. AL

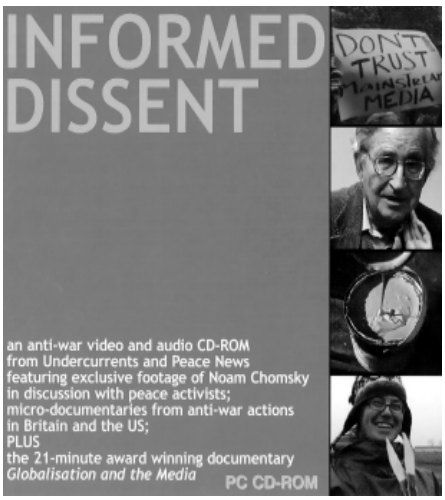


Note to stop the war

I am 16 and I find it disgusting that the USA can hold people younger than me without legal representation, contact with the outside world or family. The American was tried and he had legal representation; some of the Afghans will be freed soon, but not the British. Along with this is the fact that some of the worst Ba'ath party henchmen are not being prosecuted at all and are being used to suppress the Iraqi populous. Truly hypocritical - I do not trust those bourgeosie ****s further than I could throw them. They are truly the scum of the earth!!

These people are human beings and how they can treat some nationalities above others is beyond me. I say no countries, no nationalism; nationalism is truly disgusting!!! It pits, worker versus worker in a horrific fight for the benefit of the few. Yours in peace. CB

Informed Dissent



Video CD

£6.50 from Peace News, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1 9DY
(You are invited to borrow one and copy it. All sales profits from the glossy version go into anti-war work.)
Organisations or broadcasters requiring a full resolution copy on DV or BetacamSP of any video, contact Undercurrents Archive by E-mail underc@gn.apc.org or Tel. 01865 203661.
Undercurrents works on tiny budgets and all donations of video or computer equipment, padded envelopes, messages or offers of free CD duplication greatly appreciated.

This is an unusual item - a compilation Video CD with footage of anti-war actions, music videos and Noam Chomsky interviews, totalling 13 tracks, and an hour and a quarter of running time. In short, it sounds great, and it lives up to the prospect. The Chomsky interviews don't make smashing viewing (unless watching Chomsky talking does it for you), but the audio is Chomsky's usual clear and concise dismantling of western propaganda.

Obviously, you have to have a PC to view the CD, and I found that the interspersing of the more visual films, such as the demo at RAF Fairford, with Chomsky interviews was fine on paper but didn't work so well in reality. It might have been better to put all the less visual stuff – i.e. the Chomsky interviews, together, and the actions together, so that you can listen to several Chomsky pieces or watch several actions. However, this is a picky point, as the PC format means navigation is dead easy, and it is the content which really matters, which is excellent. The sound levels vary, but the quality of video and sound overall is excellent considering the problems of getting outdoor action footage.

In other words, this is not one of those benefit CDs that you get and then realise you might as well have given a donation. While some of the events covered will date slightly, there is plenty to extend its shelf-life, and once you've watched the lot, you can pass it on. Definitely in the long shelf-life category is the 21-minute award winning documentary 'Globalisation and the Media', which is also included in the CD.

There is no real, solid, creative politics – I guess the ultimate CD would have the analysis, the actions and a coherent set of ideas about how we might organise to make our informed dissent part of a long-term strategy to replace capitalism. Still, two out of three ain't half bad, and this is a seriously inspirational piece of circular plastic.

Contents:

No More War
Naked protests, direct action and mass demonstrations. The British public are using every tactic to stop a war on Iraq. Running time, 5 minutes.

"The US is one of the leading terrorist states in the world"
An intimate interview with Noam Chomsky, one of America's most prominent political dissidents. Running time, 8 minutes.

Paint protest - Graffiti Night Out
Activists knock the gloss off the government spin and present their message direct to commuters. Running time, 1 minute.

US i[redacted]th and Latin America
Noar[redacted]ing time, 8 minutes.

Wea[redacted]
Civili[redacted]ectors armed with humour and clipb[redacted]o Britain's RAF Fairford to view the US s[redacted]unning time, 5 minutes.

The [redacted]mpaign
The [redacted]and Iraq's response to an invasion.
Noar[redacted]ing time, 8 minutes.

Glob[redacted]Media
Unde[redacted] how the media is involved in shap[redacted] during the 'War on Terrorism' and Glob[redacted] a wide range of viewpoints from broa[redacted]ts, media activists, and news edito[redacted] World Film Festival 2002. Running time, [redacted]

Education and Military: The New Economy: The battles to control oil resources
Noam Chomsky. Running time, 7 minutes.

The Marshall plan and oil
Globalisation means a resulting increase in Terrorism.
Noam Chomsky. Running time, 2.40 minutes.

New York
US students and youth take to the streets of New York City to voice their concerns about war. Running time, 5 minutes.

A comparison of the anti-Iraq war movement with the Vietnam and other anti-war campaigns.
Noam Chomsky. Running time, 6 minutes.

Seize the Day
Inspiring music video about the Ploughshare women who disarmed a warplane sold to Indonesia. Running time, 8 minutes.

Iraq Journal
The words "we" and "us" and "our forces" are used so frequently by major corporate media personalities that it has become difficult to figure out if it is the Bush Administration or Rupert Murdoch and Fox, Ltd. that are gearing up to bomb Iraq. Running time, 28 minutes.

For further information on video activism, check out: www.undercurrents.org
To purchase political videos, check out: www.cultureshop.org
Watch the latest activist videos free online: www.beyondTV.org

The activist toolbox

CD Minidisk

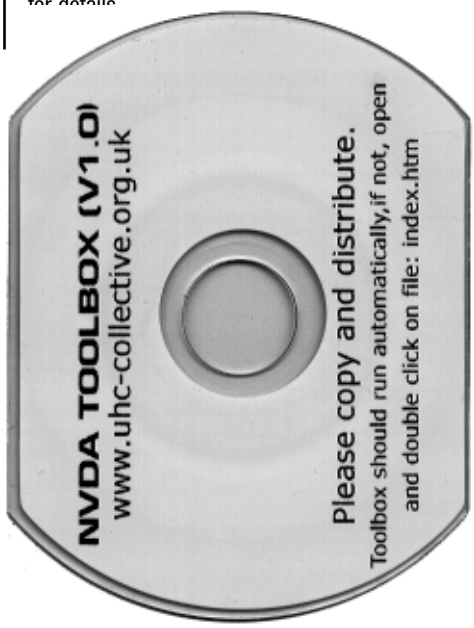
Avaible from the UHC Collective at www.uhc-collective.org.uk

Manchester-based UHC Collective recently celebrated its 1st birthday with a party – but this mini-disc/web based resource is evidence alone that life is more than just a party. The background ranges from political art and propaganda to eco-action and anti-capitalism.

The idea for the NVDA toolbox came from UHC Collective people meeting lots of new activists in the anti-war protests – it seemed natural to produce a 'self-trainer pack' to enable people to quickly pick up the skills of effective action and learn from the mistakes of others.

Everything from CCTV to GM, taking in eco-defence, office occupations, squatting and subvertising, plus everything else you can think of. More direct action ideas and techniques than you can shake a stick at. From organising in groups without leaders to how to set up a road blockade, it's all here - over 200 files taken from sources worldwide, compiled onto one CD that fits in your wallet. Subjects covered include; organising and decision making, tools for taking action, public order situations, dealing with the press and legal resources.

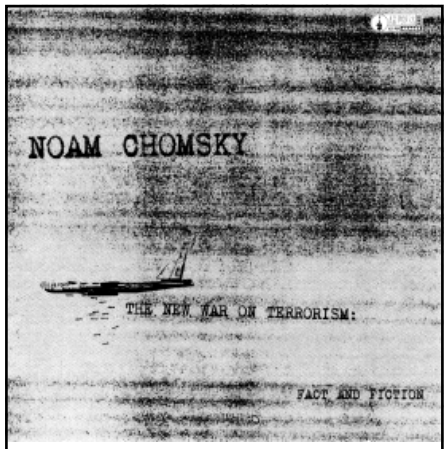
The result is stunning in its simplicity and utility – a must for old hands and new shoots alike. Take a look at: http://www.uhc-collective.org.uk/toolbox/index.htm or contact DA for details



[redacted] of your toolkit!

Chomsky on terrorism

Chomsky's most anticipated lecture ever, delivered a month after 9/11, and still just as razor-edge relevant.



Noam Chomsky - The New War on Terrorism: Fact and Fiction
CD, ISBN 1902593626 £10.00 from AK Press: www.akuk.com
AK, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh EH89YE

Starting with the atrocities of September 11th and the even worse and much larger scale atrocities which followed in Afghanistan, inflicted by the US State, Chomsky presents a clear, accessible, incisive and uncompromising view of the world. If you have heard or seen Chomsky speak, you know what I mean, if not, this would be an excellent place to start. In fact, even if you are weary of the whole Middle East analysis thing, this CD is likely to re-inform and re-invigorate on this crucial part of global history in the making.

On familiar territory, Chomsky starts by charting the background; the US State's slaughter of indigenous people and excursions into slaughtering other populations, such as Mexico and the Philippines. He also highlights 9/11 as the day the backlash hit the US mainland.

In more detail, he summarises the US State-sponsored carnage in Nicaragua, how Nicaragua went to the world court and the UN security council. The US State is the only organisation to have been found guilty of international terrorism by the international court. After the judgement, the US State treated it with contempt and ignored it. Then, Nicaragua took their case to the UN Security Council, and asked it to call on all states to observe international law. The US vetoed the resolution, thus becoming the only country to have rejected the idea that the world community should observe international law. The US responded to these legal issues by immediately escalating the war and turning its attention to 'soft targets' (i.e. unarmed civilians), such as agricultural collectives, etc. Of course, the result was a long and deadly campaign which left Nicaragua in a permanently disabled state.

Terrorism works. The US has proved this - it uses terrorism more than anyone else, and it remains the prime superpower. Terrorism is held to be a weapon of the weak, but it has always been the weapon of choice of the strong. The strong not only do most terrorism, but they also control what is described as terrorism, so they choose not to refer to what they do as 'terror', only the actions of their enemies. All regimes have always done this - the Nazis justified their actions as a war against the terrorism of communism and the allies – and of course, to them, the allied resistance movements were terrorists using terrorist methods. The Nazi manuals and methods of counter-insurgency were of course subsequently captured and have been applied by the US State since the Second World War.

The war against terrorism is "a struggle against a plague, a cancer, which is spread by depraved barbarians and opponents of civilisation itself." These are the words of the Reagan administration. He followed this up by creating a huge terrorist network never before seen; the core of US foreign policy. Now, according to the US army manual, terrorism is; "the calculated use of violence, or the threat of violence, to attain political or religious ideological goals through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear." The problem with this is that if you follow this definition, the US chosen method of foreign policy, what they call low intensity warfare, is almost exactly defined in the same way. In December 1987, the UN passed a strong resolution on terrorism, calling on all states to oppose it. Only the US and Israel voted against it. Why? Because there was one paragraph in it saying that people retain their rights to struggle and continue their resistance against racist, colonialist regimes or foreign military occupations, and that they could enlist the help of other countries in this. Enough said. So, the US State, as the world superpower, is the only agency which can decide what is terrorism and what is 'legitimate' military action - since the US is the only and final arbiter as to what legitimacy is.

Having assembled his historical evidence base, Chomsky then comes back to 9/11 and talks of the direct agents and the wider causal links behind the attacks. While he highlights the lack of evidence for the alleged direct agents, he also goes into detail into the background - the way in which the US created and sponsored the development of the global network of radical Islamists, collectively now best known as Al Qaeda. From here, he then articulates the recent history of the Middle East and background to Iraq. As per usual Chomsky form, the detail is stunning, yet the message is neither too complex nor demanding to listen to.

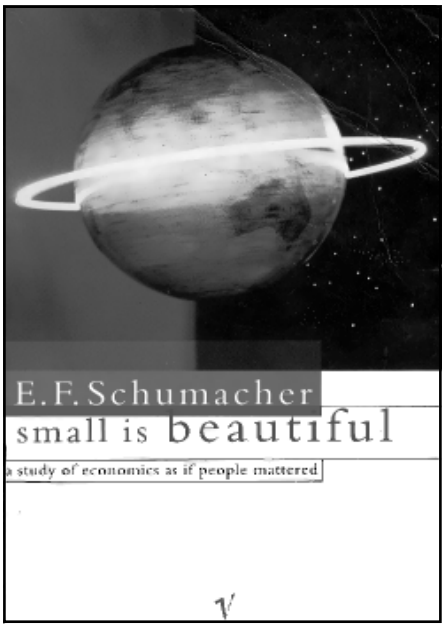
A central plank of US State foreign policy is to assume that in the 'war against terrorism', the perpetrators are mad and nothing the US State does will make any difference to their actions. This allows it to bury its collective heads in the sand, and go around murdering, bombing and whatever, while pretending that its actions do not create reactions, such as escalating the cycle of violence. This is perhaps one of the most disturbing aspects of post-war US foreign policy today, since it highlights the fact that the US State is like a destructive, angry 8-year-old boy, complete with 'I'm not listening' headphones on. The difference is it has all these buttons to press, and millions die as a result.

In fact, violence has been the leading principle of European States (and latterly, the US) for hundreds of years. Why? Because it works. The problem with the alternative – following justice and evidence-based channels – reveals too many skeletons in the cupboard, not to mention raising questions about the legitimacy of the agenda [redacted] e nation state itself.

The message is clear; the US [redacted] its own analysis - cost benefit ana [redacted] it balances the costs in terms of like [redacted] lives and carnage created, against [redacted] e of a US-friendly regime being crea [redacted] er positive benefits accruing to the U [redacted] the analysis balances up in favour [redacted] US embarks on the terror [redacted] ratio [redacted] summarising and paraphrasing Ch [redacted] which is a disservice, as he is far [redacted] eloquent and persuasive.

30 years on

Small is beautiful – a study of economics as if people mattered
E.F. Shumacher
Originally published in 1973 by Blond and Briggs. Now available e.g. by Vintage, £6.99, or in second-hand bookshops.



Schumacher's landmark work, Small is beautiful, is 30 this year. So what was it all about, and are we any nearer to beauty or smallness?

The principles of industry have been applied to agriculture since the end of the Second World War. Now, we have mountains of food and more poverty in the world than ever. It is time for change.

On virtually every part of the earth, humans have lived and multiplied, and created some form of culture. Civilisations have been built and have flourished and, in most cases, have then declined and perished. From this, it is clear there must have been some breakdown. However, in most instances, new civilisations have arisen on the same ground, which would be incomprehensible, if it was simply the material resources that had given out. How could those resources reconstitute themselves? History and current experience point to the fact that it is humanity, not just nature, that provides the primary resources.

The key factor of all economic development comes from the human mind; there is daring, initiative, invention, constructive activity, and not just in one field, but in many, all at once. It maintains itself and even strengthens through education. Education is the most vital of all resources. If western civilisation is in a permanent state of crisis, it isn't far-fetched to say there must be something wrong with its education. No civilisation has ever devoted more energy and resources to organised education, so it stands to reason at least some of us certainly believe it is important.

These words are basically those of Schumacher. A crucial conclusion he came to was that western civilisation is too production-oriented and not process-oriented enough. For example, take land use and farming. The classical economist-dominated western view is that the only thing we care about, as far as farming is concerned, is productivity. However, this output-centred thinking is all wrong. Instead, we should concentrate on what Shumacher calls health, beauty and permanence, or in more modern parlance, organics, conservation and sustainability. Land and soil management are crucial – if they are right, productivity will follow naturally.

Related to this are the key concepts of poverty, democracy and appropriate technology: Poverty, because as Schumacher points out, western capitalism can mass-produce, but has led to new heights of poverty in the process; democracy, because capitalism leads to centralised decision making; and appropriate technology, because to maximise process benefits, technology use must be appropriate for users in production, as well as for users of products.

Large scale technology is inappropriate because it has led to decades of economic migration, into unsustainable, massive urban areas. However, across the developing world, while these mega-urban centres provide promises, they also deliver the twin evils of mass-unemployment and mass-migration. The result of this technology is a fortune for a minority, while those who really need help are more helpless than ever before.

Linked to this, local, regional and district level politics are crucial. Every local area needs its own development, economic activity, and technology. It also needs to organise its own local democratic structures to allow socialised decision making about use of technology, based on needs and processes, which then lead to appropriate technology and production.

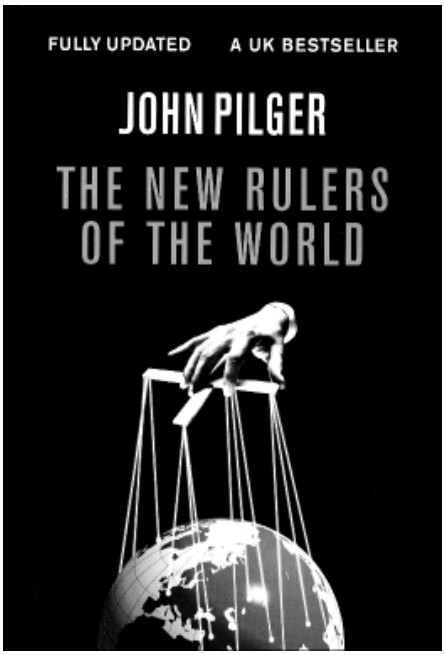
Almost every day, we hear of mergers and take-overs, from corporates to currencies. Large scale markets are serviced by large scale organisations. The majority of economists and efficiency 'experts' support the trend towards vastness. In contrast, most sociologists and psychologists would instantly warn of its inherent dangers to the individual, when he or she feels like little more than a small cog in a large, dehumanised machine. Not to mention the dangers of losing efficiency and productivity, stemming from ever-growing bureaucracy. Nobody likes large scale organisations; nobody likes to take orders from a superior, who takes orders from a superior, who takes orders…

Even if the rules devised by bureaucracies were somehow to be outstandingly humane, nobody likes to be ruled by rules, that is to say, by people whose answer to complaints is; "I didn't make the rules, I am merely applying them". By contrast, people who live in highly self-sufficient local communities are less likely to get involved in large-scale violence than people whose existence depends on the vagaries of global stock markets. Therefore, production from local resources for local needs is the most rational way of economic life, while dependencies on imports from afar, and the consequent need to produce for exports to unknown, distant people, is alienating and, therefore, only justifiable in exceptional circumstances, and then only on a small scale.

The fact that we can drive huge distances and use masses of resources on our journeys to work is not a sign of a high standard of living, it is a sign of poverty – poverty in terms of our lack of control over basic efficiencies and daily life. Similarly, to attempt to satisfy daily mainstream human wants from far away sources rather than from those nearby is a sign of failure rather than success.

In short, then, within Schumacher's ideas are critical grains of truth which remain as relevant to our predicament and solutions today as they were 30 years ago. The terminology may have moved on, capitalism has moved on, but here we are with the same problems, only worse. The anarchist movement is a diverse one, and it draws on various ideas, without singling out god-like icons in the way the Marxist left does. In so doing, we recognise that no-one is perfect, and the fact that history changes everything means that the most appropriate analysts of today are the working class people of today. However, we need inspiration, ideas and to draw on experience from our forbears, and Schumacher, who was by no means an anarchist, nevertheless contributed ideas which are acutely positive and meaningful to us today.

The new rulers of the world



John Pilger
Published by Verso, £8

Another excellent book by Pilger, in which, through a serious of four essays, he attempts to expose the nature of modern day imperialism.

First, he shows how the slaughter of the Indonesian people in the 1960s and the subsequent carve up of the country's resources was an early example of the global economy in action. Then, he exposes the brutality and cost in human lives of the aftermath of the Gulf War and the decade-long attacks on the Iraqi people that led to up to the invasion of Iraq. In the third essay, importantly for those of us involved in the anti-globalisation struggle, Pilger highlights the real power of the state and its continuing relevance to western capitalism. The final essay is devoted to the struggle of the Aboriginal people in Pilger's native Australia.

As ever with Pilger's work, everything is both well-researched and easy to read. Though there may be books around that better explain the nature of modern imperialism, few will explain with more passion the effect on people's lives. For me, this is the gift of Pilger's writing; his rage against the oppressor. The mass of evidence he presents is never allowed to obscure the pain and suffering inflicted on so much of the world's population.

The common thread that runs through the four essays in the book is basic humanity. Pilger clearly sees this as central, whether writing about the exploitation of Gap workers or the daily horror of aboriginal lives, and, of course, it is this which touches those who read him. Another result of keeping humanity central is that we don't just see the suffering of the people – Pilger also illuminates the dignity of their resistance, set here against the book's common theme – the brutality and power of the state and multinational companies.

Though this can make distressing reading, the result is a powerful exposure of modern day capitalism and the pain and suffering it brings.

Subversion in call centres

Hotlines | call centre | inquiry | communism
Published by kolinko, £5 for 1 book (p+p within UK inc.), £40 for 10 books. Get more information on ordering etc. by writing to: [kolinko.uk@gmx.net]

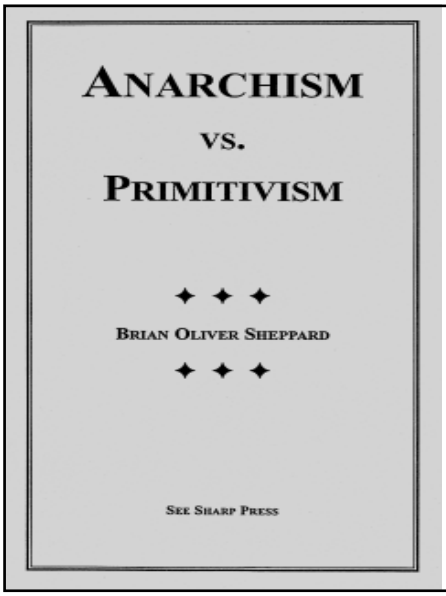
This book records members of a German collective working in call centres.

They engage their fellow workers in discussion, record their experiences, research the mechanisms of the industry and chart the forms of struggle within it. Through this, the book honestly attempts to find ways forward for struggle in the industry.

Most of the research into working conditions I found unenlightening - switch the name of the company to Corus Steel (which is not a call centre), and you will find exactly the same stories and exactly the same issues. If you want job insecurity, intensification of work, casualisation and union collaboration, you can find it in any sector, not just call centres.

Another criticism is their arms length attitude to struggle. They consider it a virtue that they cannot precipitate action, that the workers' struggle is a struggle for the workers alone, strangely forgetting that they too are workers. They observe, question and network. They should educate, agitate, organise as well.

Criticisms aside, there are lots of plus points which make the book very much worth reading. The clearness and honesty of the writing are refreshing. Their insistence that self-organisation, solidarity and direct action are our only saviours is good. Their analysis that the political and the economic are the same thing and should not be divided is, again, good. Their concentration on evidence from workers in the industry as opposed to professors is good. What is so strange to me is that this Marxist group are post-left and anti-work, with none of this party [redacted]itarian, rationalisation of labour [redacted] are sick of.



Anarchism vs. [redacted]vism

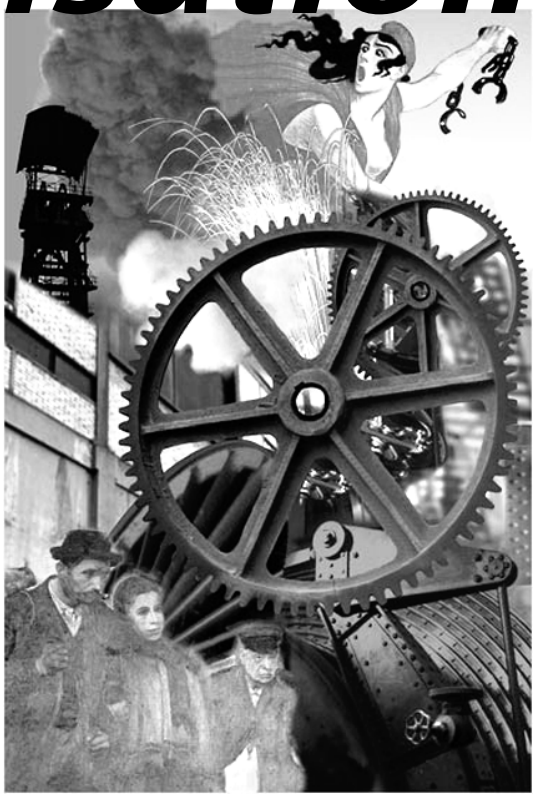
Brian She[redacted]
See Sharp Press, PO Box 1731, Tuc[redacted]02, USA.

As this pamphlet argues, over the past few decades, primitivists have successfully assimilated themselves into the anarchist movement. The corporate media, in its infinite wisdom, has often decided to present primitivism as 'the new anarchism'.

Primitivists would destroy, not re-distribute, industry and technology, and much primitivist theory relies upon wild speculation about how humans organised social life in eras for which we have no written records. When primitivists advocate eliminating [redacted] they advocate the [redacted]aughter or starvation of [redacted]mans worldwide. At the [redacted]y argue against language, [redacted]nd agriculture, and they [redacted]unter-gatherer lifestyle. [redacted]at anarcho-sydnicalism [redacted]geois ideology. However, [redacted]t imperative is an all-out [redacted]much against coercive [redacted]ns as anarchism is, but [redacted]ical structures. Their broad [redacted]troy all modern civilisation, [redacted]uld rather destroy [redacted]nd help create a more [redacted] of society.

Anti-globalisation

...and the myth of the 'good' oppressor



The anti-globalisation movement has spawned a number of writers' attempts to articulate its aims and rationale. At the heart of some of the more popular arguments lurk suspect theories that mistake the symptom for the cure.

Noreena Hertz argues that under globalisation, "governments are reduced to playing the role of servile lackey to big business", whilst George Monbiot, from a more radical perspective, argues that liberal democracies will be overtaken by a "corporate dictatorship" and they will have "the money, they will have the power, they will have the security apparatus and we have very little indeed".

These writers in no way speak for what is, after all, a broad-based movement, but many agree with these comments. However, such views have a number of problems attached to them, mainly relating to the role of the state at global level.

It is argued that technological change has led to the growing internationalism of production, resulting in the emergence of all-powerful multinational companies which can no longer be controlled by the nation state. This argument holds that powerful multinationals are able to impose their will on governments by threatening to transfer production to a lower cost location within the global economy. In opposition to this global economy, an anti-globalisation idea has emerged which argues that, due to the weakness of governments in the face of all-powerful multinational companies, electoral politics has become increasingly irrelevant. Alongside this, the wider anti-globalisation movement practices direct action on an international scale, as the only effective means available to fight globalisation. This latter response is fine, but there is a problem with the globalisation theory of declining state power.

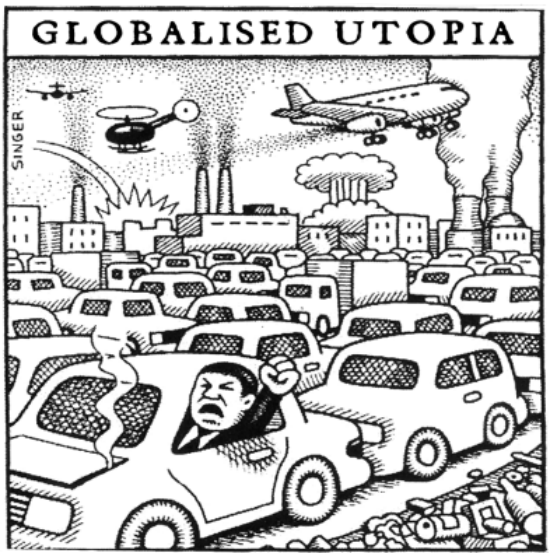
A key problem with this 'enfeebled state' argument is that it carries the assumption that, before the rise of the global market, the state acted as a benign force of democratic control in the interest of people against the power of capitalism. This, in turn, leads to accepting the idea that the state has checked the power of capitalism in the past, and can do so again in the future. Before we know it, direct action is actually a means of re-establishing state control of capitalism. Thus, we have Hertz arguing that direct action is the only alternative, until "*the Government regains the trust of the electorate, the people will continue to scorn democracy*", while George Monbiot argues for a democratic world parliament, presumably to police the world economy from an 'anarchist' perspective (a rather contradictory notion).

In order to put the 'benign state' idea in context, it is worth referring back to the history of the state and its relationship with early capitalism. We have only to look at the birth of capitalism in England in order to reveal the nature of that relationship. England only emerged as the world's first industrial imperial power because of state support. The state sheltered England's manufacturing base from foreign competition through a whole host of draconian measures, including wrecking the manufacturing base of the countries it invaded to make them dependent on British finished goods, and introducing laws that forbade the newly-colonised countries from exporting raw materials to anywhere but England. The export of raw materials from Britain was either taxed heavily or banned outright to ensure virtual monopoly supply, while the import of finished goods was either heavily taxed or banned, and the state subsidised the export of manufactured goods. At a stroke, this ensured a cheap supply of raw materials and new markets for England's emerging manufacturing base.

It was the power of the state, too, that ensured the emergence of a disciplined workforce essential to the factory system. The state moved against the power of skilled workers by breaking the monopoly of the guilds, which dominated production in the towns. Peasants were run off their land, and ruined craftsmen were driven into the horror of the factory system by laws that persecuted, punished and even executed the 'vagrants' who had been driven out of their living. State power made sure the maximum wages payable were fixed and the price of corn, the staple diet of workers, kept high. This was not only to ensure profit, but to turn the workers into a disciplined class of wage workers (or early 'stakeholders'). The early factory workers dismayed employers by working a couple of days until they had enough money to live, then devoting the rest of the week to "carousing and drunkenness." Over two centuries, as working-class resistance grew, a whole barrage of laws, backed by brutal state force, were deployed in order to break the working class challenge to capitalism.

Above all, it was the coercive powers of the state that overcame competitors and maintained rule of the colonies - without which the English capitalist class would not have emerged as a world power. In the 16th

Firstly, given the bloody history of the state, how exactly has it been transformed into a force for good? Secondly, as the state has played such a supportive role to capitalism in the past, why has it suddenly dispensed with its services? Sadly, the answer to both lies more in the flaws of the globalisation argument than in what is taking place in the world.



century, the English State waged war against the Spanish, defeating them and driving them out of their colonial acquisitions. The 17th century was taken up with defeating the Dutch, another colonial power, while in the 18th, the French were routed. By 1797, Britain had been at war for 66 years - the outcome being that England emerged as the foremost seafaring and colonial commercial power in the world.

two key questions

This quick delve into history raises two important questions concerning the globalisation thesis. Firstly, given the bloody history of the state, how exactly has it been transformed into a force for good? Secondly, as the state has played such a supportive role to capitalism in the past, why has it suddenly dispensed with its services? Sadly, the answer to both these riddles lies more in the flaws of the globalisation argument than in what is taking place in the world. Whilst demonising the more rampant elements of corporate globalisation, the more moderate wing of the anti-globalisation movement has also tended to accept as given some of the key elements of free market thinking.

The whole global market idea started out as a free market construct which envisaged a conglomerate of powerful companies, strong enough to undermine government intervention and organised workers' struggle. In response, some anti-globalisation arguments took on board the idea of the state as a positive force, citing the loss of state control as the cause of rampant free market capitalism. Given the rise of state welfare, the notion of state intervention in the economy coupled to the whole social democratic notion of the democratic state, it is not hard to understand the attractiveness of the idea of the elected government seeking to control capitalism in the interest of society. However, to accept this is to ignore the mutually supportive relationship in which both state and capitalism exist.

nanny state nonsense

The notion of the 'benign' and 'protective' state acting as a check and a balance against rampant capitalism is rooted in the 1930s, when governments allegedly stepped in to manage the economy, not in the interest of profit, but as a means of boosting the economy in order to alleviate mass poverty. This is a touching picture, but one based more on social democratic myth than on reality. In the late 1920s, there were socialist governments in England, France and Germany, all determined to tame capitalism through state control. They all came to nothing. The limited attempt at boosting production to alleviate poverty, both before and after the war, ended in relative failure and was quickly dropped.

It was the state acting in its more traditional role of providing military hardware for the benefit of capitalism that dragged the capitalist economies out of recession. It was not until the arms race began in earnest in the run up to the Second World War that recession lifted and living standards improved. After the war, military Keynesianism proved most effective in boosting economic activity. The war in Korea gave powerful stimulus to European and Japanese economies. Later, the war in Vietnam further enriched Europe, while helping to raise Japan to a major industrial power and sparking the rise of what were to become the 'Asian Tiger' economies.

These wars also formed part of the general capitalist fight against the threat of communism. The aim of the state was not to boost military production as a means of raising living standards; far from it. Rather, it was to support the US in the fight against communism while boosting the profits of the arms and related industries within its borders. In short, the state was pursuing its familiar historical role in support of capitalism.

The fight against communism was not the only thing occupying the US state in the mid-20th century. America emerged from the war as the world's dominant military power, and the US government set about ensuring that the US capitalism was able to take full advantage of its dominant position.

war state profits

Awash with profits from the war, the US lent Europe the dollars with which it could purchase US manufactured goods. The US government also attempted to reconstruct Europe specifically to suit US interests. The European industrial nations were to be rebuilt as a check on the Soviet empire, but in a way that did not challenge US dominance. Part of the deal was based on relieving the European countries of their colonies - most notably in the Middle East, where Britain was forced to relinquish its hold over oil rich countries in return for being allowed to play the role of a client state, doing the US bidding in the region. This is a role it still plays today.

Nor was Europe the only area occupying the US government. The world was carved up in the interest of US capitalism and to meet the needs of US foreign policy. In the areas of the world deemed essential to US capitalism, most notably South America, the US state embarked on a brutal campaign of repression. As early as 1948, a comprehensive defensive review argued that; "*we should cease to talk about vague and unreal notions such as human rights, the raising of living standards and democratisation*. [We must] *deal in straight power if we are to maintain the position of disparity that separates our enormous wealth*

At least multinationals are not armed to the teeth; the branding power of Coca-Cola fades into insignificance when placed besides the military might of the US. This is precisely why the multinationals need a powerful state. As one commentator said; "*the hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist of the state".*

from the poverty of others". Like the British Empire before it, the US Empire sought to maintain, by the most brutal means, the whole of South America as an area that "*sold raw materials to the US while absorbing US surplus".*

Instead of mourning the loss of state power, as many of those within the anti-globalisation movement do, it should be a cause for celebration. At least multinationals are not armed to the teeth; the branding power of Coca-Cola fades into insignificance when placed besides the military might of the US. This is precisely why the multinationals need a powerful state, as one commentator said; "*the hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist of the state".*

home truths

At this point, the whole globalisation argument breaks down. The idea of the footloose multinational company heading overseas to escape the civilising clutches of the state is a joke. All the evidence shows the opposite; the assets of companies remain at home, located within the country in which they are based. For instance, in the US, 70% of company assets remain within the US, while in Japan, the figure is even higher at 90%. In Europe, the situation is more complex due to the emerging nature of the European economy; for example, 31% of French manufacturing and 31% of service assets are relocated, but only within Europe. A survey conducted in the early 1990s confirms that the European economy acts in similar ways to the US and Japan. Some 200 of the biggest European companies state that over the next five years, they expect 93% of production to remain in Europe, to buy 80% of inputs from within Europe, and sell 83% of their output in Europe.

nanny state reality

So, the evidence points to companies operating within clearly defined national borders. This is hardly surprising, given the amount of subsidies, both hidden and direct, that the state provides for the corporates. Hidden subsidies range from providing the basic infrastructure through to the provision of an appropriately trained workforce. Given the technological advances of capitalism and the need for an ever more skilled group of core workers, there is plenty of evidence that the multinational is even more dependent than ever on state education provision. Further, whole industries remain dependent on government contracts, not only the defence industry, which in advanced countries is little more than a subsidised arm of the state, but in sectors such as IT, electronics and aviation, which rely largely on government and defence contracts to underpin profits.

More direct forms of state subsidy include the government bailout. In the last 20 years, over 20 companies in the Fortune 100 owe their prolonged existence to government bailouts. During the same period, several financial crises which had the world financial system reeling were all bailed out by the advanced states via the IMF and World Bank, including the saving and loans scandal in which the US banking system was bailed out by the US government.

Overall, this is hardly a picture of globe-trotting companies imposing their will on enfeebled states. Rather, it is that of powerful companies rooted in defined national borders reliant upon state subsidies at home, while looking to use the economic and military power of the state to extend themselves in the growing international markets. Nor is there much evidence that the power of the state is set to wane in the future. With the threat of the Soviet Union gone, the old post war alliances amongst the advanced capitalist states are starting to fry. The US is attempting to use its massive military power to ensure its dominance in the Middle East, while Europe is looking to turn economic muscle into wider political and military power. The fall-out over the Iraqi war is symptomatic in the changes that are taking place.

the problem, not the cure

For all the welfare benefits post war social democracy brought, the state's primary role remains that of a powerful supporter of capitalism. To argue that current world inequalities are the result of the ability of multinationals to dictate to governments simply does not wash. The state has always acted in the interest of capitalism, and capitalism is dependent on a strong state in order to survive. In other words, the state is the problem, not the cure.

Not only is the anti-globalisation argument of declining state power simply wrong, it is dangerous, since it has within it the potential to rejuvenate the failed ideas of the pro-worker state. Instead, we need ideas based on the reality of the world we inhabit, and rooted in the day-to-day struggle. I am not alone in going on demonstrations as part of a movement that seeks to put much of the world's ills down to the loss of state power, only to be attacked on the demonstration by the forces of the state.

For further information about issues raised in this or other close-up articles, contact:
da@direct-action.org.uk
DA, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR, UK.

SF Contact Point:

SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF.
Answerphone 07984 675 281
Email; solfed@solfed.org.uk

www.solfed.org.uk

Networks - make contact with others in your type of work-

Education Workers' Network, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF.
Public Service Workers' Network, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.
Communication Workers' Network, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.

Locals - get involved locally in regular meetings and action-

North & East London SF, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE. Tel. 0208 3745027 jacob16@btopenworld.com
Red & Black Club, PO Box 17773, London SE8 4WX. Tel. 0207 3581854.
South West Solidarity and **Solidarity Bristol**, Box 43, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB. www.southwestsolidarity.org.uk
South Herts SF, PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW. Tel. 01727 862814.
Lancashire SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8XF. Tel/Fax 01772 734130 solfed@solfed.org.uk http://mysite.freeserve.com/LancashireSF/index.jhtml
Manchester SF, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW. Tel. 07984 675281. www.manchestersf.org.uk
Sheffield SF, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. da@direct-action.org.uk
West Yorks Solidarity Federation, PO Box 77, Leeds LS8 3XX.

SF includes contacts across England, Scotland and Wales. Use the SF Contact Point above to make contact with people near you.

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About Solidarity Federation...

Solidarity Federation was formed in March 1994. It is a federation of groups and individuals across England, Scotland and Wales. Everyone involved is helping to build a non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian solidarity movement. The basic foundation used for doing this is the Local group.

Locals

People are getting together to form Locals – Solidarity Federation groups. Locals put solidarity into practice. Locals are organising or getting involved in local campaigns across a wide range of issues – both in the community and in workplaces. Issues are wide-ranging: defending our natural and local environment and health; opposing racism, sexism and homophobia; in fact, anything which defends or contributes to our mutual quality of life. It is all part and parcel of building a solidarity movement.

Direct Action

Apart from being the name of this Quarterly, Direct Action is the tool which Locals use in all their work. At a basic level, this can be simply the spreading of information through leaflets, local bulletins and public meetings to raise awareness and involvement locally.

However, Direct Action is not limited to spreading information. It means a physical presence in defending and promoting a better quality of life. Fundamental to Direct Action is the reality that we can only rely on ourselves to achieve our goals. While we reserve the right to take opportunities to fight for improvements to our quality of life now, the solidarity movement must always remain independent from those we are demanding from. Solidarity Federation will accept neither leadership, charity, nor guidance from government or business – instead, we must couple our principle of solidarity with the practice of self-reliance.

Networking

Solidarity Federation members who work in the same work sector have formed Networks. Their purpose is to promote solidarity amongst workers. Networks also use Direct Action to fight for better pay and conditions, forming a basis for a completely new labour movement, nothing like the Trade Unions, which are weakened by having to abide by ridiculous laws, and by hierarchical power structures and self-interested paid officials. The fundamentally different nature of Networks fits their fundamentally different aim.

Where next?

As Locals and Networks grow, they practise community and workers' self-management. Eventually, industries will be run by producers and consumers. In other words, by workers (in Networks) and people in the wider community (Locals), who want the goods and services they provide.

And this is no flight of fancy or text-book dream. As the solidarity movement grows in members and influence, so does the scope for action. Both the Locals and Networks have already established a reputation and are showing real results in membership and effectiveness.

Global Solidarity

Capitalism is international, so we need to be organised globally to oppose it and build a viable alternative. Nationalism and patriotism lead to pointless and false divisions, used as tools to fuel economic and bloody wars. Solidarity Federation opposes these in favour of a movement built on global solidarity.

Solidarity Federation is the British section of the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers' Association (IWA). This gives it essential international solidarity and experience from much larger sections, such as the CNT (Spain) and USI (Italy). Founded in 1922, the IWA has a long history of solidarity in action; by the 2nd World War, over five million people worldwide were affiliated. A combination of war, fascism, and soviet 'communism' all but destroyed the movement, but after the Spanish CNT re-emerged in the late '70s, the IWA had a new lease of life. Today, there are sections ranging from a few dozen to thousands of members, and growth is rapid. At the last IWA Congress in Granada, Spain, three new groups were welcomed into the IWA, to add to the seven new sections welcomed at the previous Congress.

Getting Involved

A global solidarity movement can only gather strength as many more people who share the same aims get involved. Contacting Solidarity Federation offers the possibility of contributing to this growing momentum.

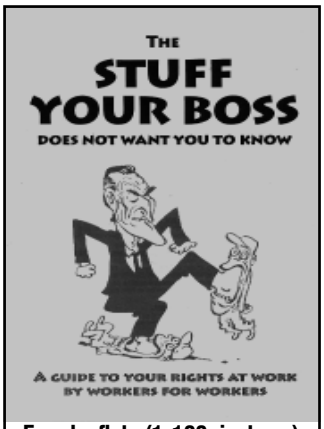
It is not like joining a club, union or political party – rather, it is an opportunity to channel your efforts for change and, at the same time, benefit yourself from the experience.

For more info, write to the SolFed Contact Point (above left).

Events/Campaigns/Gatherings...

Solidarity Federation

South Herts SolFed
St Albans Discussion Meetings, 8pm, 2nd Wednesday of the month (near main railway station). Contact; see p.34. or Tel. 01727 862814.



Free leaflets (1-100, just say) from: Sheffield SolFed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR

North & East London SolFed
Free Solidarity Bulletin out now. Socials: Last Thursday of the month, 8pm, near Camden Tube. Plus, advice surgeries/discussions. Also for people SE of London and along the S. Coast. Contact details p.34.

SelfEd Collective
Self-education - developing and sharing ideas and skills. Download pamphlets FREE in FULL VERSIONS from the SelfEd website. SelfEd, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. www.selfed.org.uk

Catalyst

Freesheet of the Solidarity Federation - IWA

If you like DA, you'll like Catalyst.
New issue out now.
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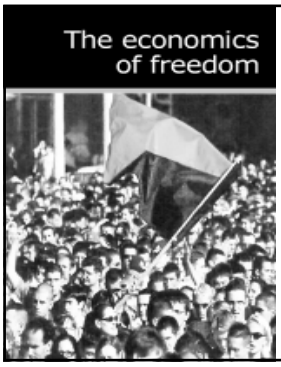
Catalyst, PO Box 29, SW PDO, Manchester M15 5HW.
Tel. 07984 675281. Email; manchestersf@manchestersf.org.uk

SF **Manchester SolFed** SF

Discussion - info. - solidarity - support

Summer 2003 discussions:
Weds 2nd July - Education & the working-class
Weds 6th August - Casualisation
Weds 3rd September - Politics without politicians
All meetings first Wednesday of the month, 8.30pm. All sessions open & free at; Hare & Hounds, Shude Hill, Manchester.
Any queries, contact Manchester SF (address in contacts, p.34).
www.manchestersf.org.uk www.solfed.org.uk



The economics of freedom

New reading for Summer 2003: Democracy from the bottom up - no party politicians, corporate managers or union leaders. What might a future, decent economy look like? Here is a detailed model (but not a straightjacket) of how it could work.
£2.50 (payable to Solidarity Federation) from SolFed, PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR. solfed@solfed.org.uk

Hazards 2003
The 14th National Hazards Conference is 5-7 Sept at the London School of Economics. Hazards has been exposing Government's complicity in corporate killing for decades – this is to add to the effort, and couldn't come at a more relevant time. Sponsorship needed (payable to Hazards 2003), plus info: Hazards 2003, GMHC, 23 New Mount St, Manchester M4 4DE. Tel. 0161 953 4037

Manchester Anarchist Youth
Organising group, meetings every other Sunday, Cafe Pop, Oldham St. 07816 420391 manchester@anarchistyouth.net

56a Infoshop
Bookshop, records, library, archive, social and meeting space. Anarchist, eco-activist, queer, feminist, DIY, squatting, class struggle. Open Thur 2-8, Fri 3-7, Sat 2-6. Near Elephant and Castle/ Kensington tube: 56 Crampton St, London SE17 3AE

Friends and Neighbours

[To get listed here, write to; DA (F&N). PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4YR, da@direct-action.org.uk]

Kate Sharpley Library
Dedicated to recording and revealing the history of Anarchism - send SAE for new detailed catalogue, donate documentation, reports, etc. KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1 N 3XX. www.katesharpleylibrary.org/ index.htm.

Loombreaker
Send a stamp for a copy- c/o Manchester EF!, Dept 29, 22a Beswick St, Manchester M4 7HS. Now online - www.earthfirst.org.uk/ loombreaker.

SchNEWS ANNUAL 2003
SchNEWS are after articles, pics, cartoons, photos, subverts, and stuff from April 2002 onwards. News of stuff you've been part of globally or locally - send it in. SchNEWS distribution help also needed.

Cultureshop
Online shop for independent/radical/ political issue-based videos. Recent films include; The Summit (filmed during the Earth Summit in Johannesburg); Zapatista! (first-hand account of the Chiapas struggle; Mark Thomas Live in Brighton (recorded after campaigners successfully stopped the Turkish Ilisu Dam), Devonport Nuclear Safety Lecture (exposure by John Large, nuclear consultant). www.cultureshop.org

Networking Newsletter
Networking in Greater Manchester working for positive social change. Tel: 0161 226 9321. www.networkingnewsletter.org.uk

Toxcat
Essential exposures of polluters, polllution and cover-ups. £2 or sub £12 from ToxCat, PO Box 29, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 3TX.

Resistance
Freesheet of the Anarchist Federation. Ana
and comment fr
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7QX. www.afed.

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Punk, anarcho, s
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Crampton St, Lo
Tel. 07890 3504
eroding@erodin

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from Glasgow M
Glasgow G41 1Y
mwr.org.uk info
http://www.mwr

Menwith Hill
Women's protest and peace camp 14-15 June against the National Missile Defence System. Bring banners, placards, drums, whistles, tent, sleeping bag, warm clothes and food. Menwith Hill is 7 miles west of Harrogate on the A59, minibus from Harrogate train station. Details Helen John on 01943 468 593 or Email helenmenwith@yahoo.co.uk
Also, annual Menwith Hill 'Independence from US' demo on 4 July organised by CAAB, 8 Park Row, Otley, West Yorkshire, LS21 1HQ, England.
Tel/Fax: 01943 466405; Email: anniandlindis@caab.org.uk
Website: www.caab.org.uk

Big Green Gathering
July 30 - 3 August Big Green Gathering on new site near Cheddar, Mendip Hills, Somerset. 01458 834629 www.big-green-gathering.com Also Aug 29-31 Eastern Green Gathering near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk 01284 728253 www.easterngreengathering.com

EF! Gathering
Aug. 13-17 - Earth First! Summer Gathering. Time to talk, walk, skill share, learn, play, rant, laugh and conspire on ecological actions. Everyone helps out, from food prep to cleaning the toilets. North Yorkshire, £10 on the gate. Food provided by the Anarchist Teapot (about £3 a day). No dogs except by prior arrangement. EF! Summer Gathering, c/o Cornerstone Resource Centre, 16 Sholebroke Avenue, Leeds LS7 3HB. www.earthfirstgathering.org.uk

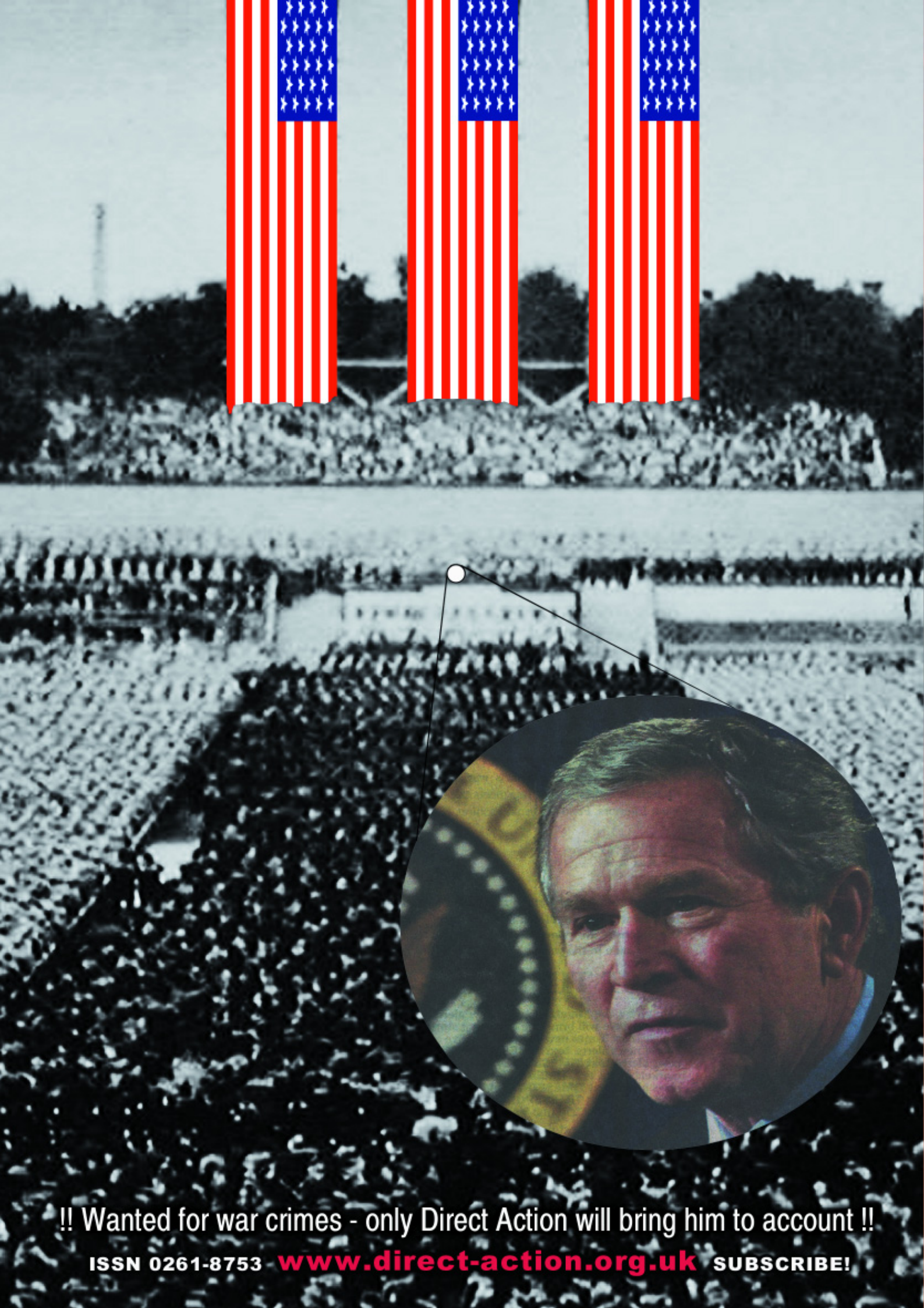
Save That Leaflet
The Working Class Movement Library wants anything produced by the Stop The War movement, plus books, pamphlets, leaflets, videos, photographs, press releases, placards, posters, cuttings, etc. etc. Jubilee House, 51 Crescent, Salford M5. Tel: 0161 7363601; Email; enquiries@wcml.org.uk

Slender Means
Read reviews from punk to Chomsky - order books, get info, etc. from www.slendermeans.org.uk Slender Means, PO Box 1251, Sheffield S11 8XG.

Rebel Bull
Hereford's freesheet, from Hereford Anarchists, c/o PO Box 7, Pontypool, Gwent NP4 8YB. herefordanarchists@hotmail.com

The Bristolian
Bristol's freesheet, from Box 3, Greenleaf Bookshop, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 8BB. 07779 076998 localnews4us@yahoo.co.uk

Shortcutz
Students fighting for social change thru' direct action. 07754 880382 shortcutz@yahoo.co.uk



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