



Chapter 5 - From visions to reality: how the anti-capitalists can win

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Nothing is to be provided to the people as a right. Everything, from the water we drink to the medicines we depend upon, is to be bought and sold at a price determined by global corporations. There is now hardly a country in the world that is exempt from the extreme capitalist policies of the IMF/WB/WTO.

Every aspect of our lives has been affected by these changes. What we do at work, what we study in school or college, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the music we listen to ? everything is owned by mega?corporations and ruled by the global institutions. Are they satisfied? Never ? the more they consume, the hungrier they get. Their mantra ? profit before people.

Creeping privatisation

That is why the corporations are now invading spaces that have not so far been run for profit. Critical services like hospitals, schools, care homes for the sick, the aged and the disabled are being handed over to the privateers of the free market. This is sometimes done by outright privatisation, selling public property to private profiteers.

Even when there is mass opposition, hypocritical ?Labour? or ?Social Democratic? governments like Schroeder?s in Germany and Blair?s in Britain still bring private money into public services, to make huge profits at the people?s expense.

Under these schemes, the services remain under formal state ownership, but the state cedes ever greater management and financial control to the corporations. Step by step, social and public services are being taken out of the legal ownership of the electorate and placed under the dictatorship of a handful of private and corporate shareholders. Every national state, local government body, mutual or non?profit making organisation is being forced to hand over welfare, education, the media, recreation and entertainment to companies owned by a tiny band of billionaires.

In many countries political parties like the Socialists, Social Democrats and Labour have drawn support from voters made up of working class and lower middle class people. Because of this they once had to represent their supporters? aspirations, although they always did so in a moderate and strictly limited way, never challenging the actual right of big business to rule and to profit. But they also had to promise to meet some of the more important everyday needs of working class people.

No choice

Now these parties have been ? or are in the process of being ? transformed into pale copies of the traditional conservative parties of the rich and the powerful. The governments of Sweden, Germany, Britain and France carry out the policies of the IMF/WB/WTO, dressed up with just a few phrases to distinguish themselves from the conservative and neoliberal parties. Today it?s not just a few radicals who say, ?there is no difference between the parties, there is no real choice". Millions see it and feel it. Election campaigns have become ever more obviously empty charades.

In the oldest democracies, where millions of working class people fought for decades for the right to vote, voting levels are falling rapidly. The supposed free?choice of capitalist democracy that allows us to vote every five or so years is

nothing more than a choice between two or three versions of the same thing.

Every institution ? the press and the broadcast media, the curricula of the schools and the colleges, the Hollywood blockbusters, the big music corporations ? pumps out the same pro?capitalist ideas and values. The mind?numbing message is that there is no alternative to capitalism and the market economy. There is no alternative even to the right?wing neoliberal policy of cutting taxes for the rich and cutting spending on the poor. No wonder official politics meets with such apathy. Why should the exploited and the oppressed play this futile game?

In the meantime there has never been a more urgent need for change. Never in the whole of human history have so few stolen the wealth produced by so many. One?third of the wealth on this planet is owned by 0.15 % of the population!

A worker in a factory, office or fast?food outlet can expect neither job security nor rights. The citizen at the ballot box cannot change anything of real importance. What choice is left? Capitalism?s army of cynical public relations officers tell us there is always consumer choice ? real freedom!

You can choose which over?priced house to buy, which expensive car to drive, where to take your foreign holiday, which designer clothes to wear. And of course this choice is available to everyone. On one condition: that you have the money. And two?thirds of humanity do not. Only 600 million of us are considered by the big firms and banks to be ?in the market? for the goods they want to sell us ? about 15% of the world?s population! 85% of us have been written off!

But even for those who do earn a modest wage what a narrow and impoverished choice this is. A choice between Coke and Pepsi, between Nike and Reebok, between corporate images, mission statements, brands and ?values". First they rob us of the last vestiges of control of our own lives and then they offer us a choice of ?lifestyles", the chance to buy into a pathetic dream world of manufactured identities.

Of course these mocking badges of prosperity are keenly adopted by the exploited and oppressed all over the world as a symbol of an opulent lifestyle from which they have been cruelly excluded.

Modern consumerism plays a similar role to that played by religion over 150 years ago. Karl Marx described that role as: ?the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the soul of soulless conditions". Behind this veil of fantasy lies a harsh reality: super exploitation, poverty and the wanton destruction of our social and natural environment.

Exploitation is at the root of it all

How does this vast accumulation of money in the hands of a few billionaires come about? Why are the results of generation after generation of human labour concentrated in the hands of so few?

The answer was also suggested by Marx. The work of wage earners produces all the wealth, but we receive in wages only enough to bring us back to work day after day and to rear a future generation of workers. The remainder produced by every one of the wage earners goes to the capitalists. This is what we call exploitation.

Apart from a few household and personal possessions, ninety?nine out of a hundred workers have little or nothing to show for a lifetime?s work. We enter the world of work with nothing to invest but our physical and mental ability to do a job. Most never acquire a share of the factories, shops, or profits that all this work generates. In fact, wealth gets concentrated into fewer and fewer hands.

This can only be ended by taking back what this generation and all past generations of workers have ?given? free to the capitalists. This will be no minor reform. No wage rise, no matter how big, no redistribution from the rich to the poor by taxation, no matter how radical, can change this fundamental condition. For short periods of time and in certain countries working people have won serious improvements in their lot, but the capitalists have always, everywhere, tried to win them back and forced us to fight tooth and nail to defend every gain.

Imperialism

Capitalism rests on exploitation and growing inequality in its heartlands of North America, Western Europe and Japan. But it also relies on out-and-out plunder of the resources of the rest of the world. Mining, oil and gas corporations, agribusinesses and banks all use their technological, finance and trading monopoly powers to seize the raw materials and resources of the Third World. Other corporations shift production to underdeveloped countries where dictatorial regimes and lower standards of living mean they can exploit workers even more than they do "at home".

The weak and corrupt ruling classes of the Third World and former "Communist" states act as agents for the multinational corporations and the G8. Their local armies and police forces are trained and armed by the US and European powers, their secret police by the CIA and MI6. If any of these states steps out of line, a rapid reaction or "peacekeeping" force is sent in to "restore order".

The exploitation of the majority of countries by the rulers of a few major powers has a name. It is called imperialism. Contrary to western propaganda, it survived the dissolution of the old European colonial empires after the Second World War. Over the following decades the British, the French, the Dutch and eventually the Portuguese were forced by national liberation struggles, and some behind the scenes pressure from the United States, to abandon their huge Empires. But this did not mean the end of imperialism - just the colonial phase of it. Under the domination of the USA, the newly "independent" states remained, in reality, colonies of the multinationals.

Whenever the peoples of these "semi-colonies" resisted or forced their corrupt and oppressive governments to resist, the USA and its allies have always responded with brutality. Economic blockades, sanctions pushed through the United Nations, even full-scale wars like in the Gulf in 1991, are all unleashed to force "rogue states" into line.

But powerful as the world's rulers are, there is a mightier power. Against the concentrated strength of the planet's five hundred billionaires stand over five billion working people who they exploit.

We are many, they are few. But our potential power means nothing if it is not united, transformed into a single-minded force. We need to become conscious, in our millions, that it is within our power to defeat global capitalism and replace it with a system based on the needs and aspirations of humanity as a whole.

The capitalists relentlessly try to divide us, atomise us, to set workers of each nation against the others, to set men against women, white against black. That is why the slogan raised by Karl Marx in the Communist Manifesto, "Working People of All Countries Unite!" has been taken up by generation after generation of workers and youth.

The futility of reformism

The neo-liberals like to claim that they are against the state - that they want to "get the state off our backs". This is a lie. They only want to get some parts of the state off their backs. They want to free themselves from those aspects of state activity that have been forced upon our rulers by popular and democratic struggles - free, universal education and health services, social housing, public transport.

They do not want to pay even their present minuscule share of tax towards these essential services. The rich now want the full cost to be born by the poor and to make a profit by selling them back to us. And they want to salve their consciences by donating a fraction of their massive wealth to charitable foundations, like Bill Gates, so that they can decide which of the deserving poor and ill should have help. This is what they mean by freedom from the state!

At the same time they want to preserve and extend the weapons of repression that are the bedrock of every capitalist state. The police forces, armies and repressive laws, the restrictions on welfare and unemployment benefits, the cameras that spy on us and the spooks that tap our phones. These are the parts of the state they never "roll back" because they protect the property and the profits of the rich.

Reformist politicians used to claim that the democratic state represents the whole of society. Because of this, their argument ran, the "neutral" state could be used to achieve social equality gradually. To some, during the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s, it looked as if it might be true, at least in a few wealthy countries. But then, even in those

countries, recession struck. The rickety cart of social reform began to roll back down the hill it had been pushed up so slowly and painstakingly for twenty years.

Over the last two decades of the twentieth century, the neoliberals have begun to strip the state down to its bare essentials ? armies, police forces, the judicial and prison system, the top state bureaucrats. In short the state is an instrument of force in the hands of the ruling, capitalist class and their agents.

The neoliberals want to hide this killing machine under the cover of legality and democracy. Because all are entitled vote every 3?5 years, because elected representatives make the laws, their decisions are supposed to represent "the rule of the people". But where peoples or nations step out of line the real state intervenes to impose the will of the multinationals with smart bombs and high tech weaponry.

When anti-capitalists protest on the streets, robocops try to drive us back with rubber bullets, teargas, pepper spray and live bullets. All this is designed to beat us back, to frighten us off demos, to make us submit to their rule and their order. But ever more people are beginning to see the real nature of the system. This is what their democracy looks like.

The conclusion is hard but inescapable. Capitalism cannot be reformed.

The democratic assemblies, parliaments and debating chambers are not the real power in capitalist society. Behind these stand an apparatus of administration and repression that is tailor-made to defend private property. The generals, police chiefs, judges, civil service mandarins, who control this machinery are intimately connected with the ruling class and selected for this task. They will never obey orders to strip their blood brothers of their wealth and demolish capitalism.

Even if the working class and its allies were to win a majority for a social revolution, this apparatus of repression would revolt against the legitimate government and crush it and the working class movement. To move against the power of the capitalists with empty hands, whilst they are armed to the teeth, is a suicidal strategy. We have to mobilise a mass movement and arm ourselves, then demobilise and disarm the enemy.

An alternative power

The capitalist state cannot be taken over and used for the purpose of introducing socialism. It must be broken up, smashed, in the process of revolution. There is only one way this can be done ? by building an alternative power, one based on democratic mass councils comprised of delegates directly elected by working class people and subject to immediate recall. Only organisations of this type can both organise the struggle against the exploiters and begin to form the basis of a new regime that can organise society in place of the capitalist state.

Every time such councils are created the bosses attack them. The police and army break up their meetings and demonstrations, arrest their members and sabotage their activities. That is why, alongside such councils the workers form self-defence organisations ? workers' guards, community patrols, picket defence squads. Whatever they are called such bodies are also the basis of a new society, an accountable workers' militia in place of an unaccountable state machine.

Workers' councils are infinitely more democratic than any capitalist parliament, elected only once every five years and stuffed with unaccountable career politicians.

The emergence of mass councils such as these only ever happens in conditions of deep social crisis ? their existence is a sign that capitalist society is entering a period of revolutionary upheaval. They create a duality of power in society, with organisations of working class power existing alongside the instruments of capitalist rule. Such instability can only be resolved one way or the other. Either the capitalists will retain power and dissolve the workers' councils, or the councils will themselves seize the power and dissolve the capitalists' repressive apparatus. For the councils to take power the mass of the people must be ready to fight and the revolutionaries must organise an uprising to disarm the exploiters and drive them from power.

Building Socialism

The resistance of the exploiters will not stop when they have lost state power in one country. Every example of revolution so far shows that they will resort to civil war from within and urge the surrounding capitalist states to attack their own country. The patriotism of the capitalists is a fraud – it stops abruptly at the moment the workers take power.

For this reason workers' councils and a workers' militia will require a central body – one with the responsibility and the authority to co-ordinate a life or death struggle. This would be an organisation assuming power in society and using force to take the property of the capitalists into the hands of the majority class. In this sense it would be a state. It would exist for as long as it were needed to fight the capitalists.

But it would be completely different from the capitalists' state and government. It would be organised by and composed of the majority of the population – not a sealed unit standing over and against them. It would be answerable to the democracy of the workers' councils and defended by the armed people. Its elected representatives would earn the average income of the people; important administrative posts would be rotated to avoid the emergence of a permanent bureaucratic layer.

For the capitalists this would be an unmitigated disaster: a dictatorship of the majority rather than their minority. But the workers would have nothing to fear from it. It would need no special, separate apparatus of repression because it would not be based on a minority exploiting class. It would set about creating a new social system based on co-operation and solidarity rather than exploitation and competition.

The more that capitalism gets replaced by socialised production and distribution, the more the resistance of the capitalists will be broken and revolution spread to other countries. In this way the division of society into classes would be overcome. The need for an organisation of force, even one based on the majority, would fade away.

When no classes remain, no elements of the state would remain either. As one of the first communists, Frederick Engels, put it, the "government of persons" would be replaced by the "administration of things".

Can society really be organised without capitalism? Is it possible to secure a decent life for the entire population of our planet? Yes – there is already enough produced in the world to feed, house, clothe, educate and care for the whole of humanity. A rational allocation of resources and the abolition of wasteful, socially useless production would enable the working week to be drastically reduced by sharing the work that needs to be done among the adult population.

Global economic democracy

This cannot be achieved by a return to the past. We can only build a global economic democracy if we use some of the tools that capitalism has given us – science and technology, mass methods of production and distribution. But they will have to be changed and developed out of all recognition.

Technology and industry have given humanity the potential to free itself, en masse, from backbreaking toil. Unsatisfying, alienating work has excluded most people today from carrying out the creative functions of scientist, artist or planner. Creativity is cramped and restricted to private life. But a democratically planned economy could overcome the rigid division of labour that exists under capitalism. It would allocate and rotate tasks.

It would ensure that every new labour saving device or system would be used to shorten the working week rather than sack thousands of workers. And in this way it would allow everyone of us the time and opportunity to create, to invent, to plan, to free ourselves from the dehumanising experience of working on a single job for the whole of our lives.

All of this requires social ownership and democratic planning. Under social ownership the means of production and distribution belong to society, not to private shareholders or a bureaucratic state. Nevertheless, while capitalism still exists we should prefer state ownership to private ownership. Why? Because it turns all questions of hiring and firing,

quality of service and product into a political issue (a society-wide question of policy) and not just a question of a private contract between employers, employees and customers. It raises more sharply the issue of what is produced, and why, whether goods and services should be directed to meet need or profit.

It is for this reason that the capitalist class does not want state ownership. It only tolerates it to bail out losses for bankrupt services and industries that it needs to keep going. But these nationalised industries and services are not "socialist". They are not socially owned. The state that owns them is still capitalist, and tries to force them to serve the long-term interests of profit.

Democratic planning

A democratically planned and socially owned economy can only be constructed by a state based on workers' councils. When coercion against former capitalists is exercised by the armed people themselves and when there is no private ownership of the large-scale economy, then "ownership" will be vested in those who produce and those they produce for.

Society's needs would no longer be decided blindly in the market place. They will be decided on by the producers/consumers themselves. Unlike the former USSR, we would not have a single, monstrous, bureaucratic central plan, decided in one place by a caste of privileged bureaucrats. Instead we would have an ascending series of plans, each decided on after full and informed debate in a workers' and consumers' democracy.

Today the entire global economy – production, trade, finance and banking – is run in the interests of a tiny minority of the world's population. The World Bank, the IMF, the WTO all dance to their tune. These institutions cannot be reformed, they must be destroyed and replaced with something entirely different.

The international cliques of bankers and CEOs and the parallel gatherings of their politicians do their utmost to direct the world economy and the exploitation of the world's people and resources. But their control is far from absolute. In a fundamental sense no one really controls and directs it.

There is not some mystical "hidden hand of the market", working for the well-being of all, as the capitalists' favourite economist Adam Smith famously claimed. The drive for profit gives capitalism an uncontrollable, blind dynamic, which in its frenzied competition wipes out the livelihoods of millions, devastates the environment and even ruins thousands of capitalists themselves in regular, sometimes catastrophic, downturns, recessions and slumps.

Neo-liberalism claims that "There Is No Alternative" to this system. We should rename this argument, the Big Lie of the Era of Globalisation. There is an alternative – it is known to millions around the world and has been the rallying cry of revolutionary struggles on every continent for 150 years. It is called Socialism.

Utopias – real and imagined

"But that failed!", millions will reply. "Look at Russia, look at China. They are returning to market-based, capitalist societies. The attempt to buck the market – to plan production – led to chronic shortages, poor quality goods, growing economic stagnation and a terrible tyranny in the workplace and society."

This brutal fact – the collapse of the centralised planned economies of the twentieth century "Socialist States" – explains the timidity of most of the proposals and programmes offered in the anti-globalisation movement. If this was socialism, they say, we want none of it. This is understandable but based on a cruel deception. For this was not socialism.

Socialism means a society without classes that is moving steadily towards the goal of a stateless community that operates according to the maxim "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs". Measured against this definition the Stalinist states were a million miles away from socialism.

These economies were centralised under the absolute control of an unelected, unaccountable and privileged bureaucracy, which blocked the road to socialism and made its own peace with capitalism, first at the level of international relations and eventually by reintroducing a capitalist economy in their own countries.

It is no surprise that this experience has led many in the anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist movements to reject the idea of a centralised economy altogether. Instead they propose a network of autonomous decentralised communities, in which the local overcomes the global and dangerous forms of large-scale organisation are abandoned.

Such blueprints for a return to a localised, small scale, economy and society are utopian. Today the word utopia is widely regarded as positive in the anti-capitalist movement. This is, in one important sense, a justified reaction to the way that Blair, Schroeder and other reformists and post-modernist intellectuals reject any fundamental re-ordering of the basis of society, claiming it will lead to chaos or tyranny.

No wonder young people have rejected this counsel of despair. It is a reconciliation with poverty, inequality and environmental degradation and to their remorseless increase. The elaboration of utopias can highlight new answers to new problems.

The problem is that these blueprints, do not take as their starting point the real social forces (classes) in conflict within global capitalism, their fundamental interests and capacities.

Some of these blueprints are reactionary in the purest sense, in that they require a return to the economic and social conditions of the past, before capitalism took hold of the world. There is no possibility of going back to pre-industrial society to the life of peasants or hunter gatherers. This return to the past – which some deep ecologists and primitivist anarchists dream of – would be a squalid nightmare.

Neither is the ‘small is beautiful’ idea of a ‘fair’ market economy based on small-scale producers and barter any better. It would either collapse in poverty or simply repeat the whole process of human history, giving rise to new big corporations as an outcome of competition between smaller businesses.

Apart from the fact that ancient and small-scale methods of production could not sustain the billions of human beings that two centuries of capitalism has created, the truth is that the great majority does not want to spend most of its time growing food or making clothes.

The influence of the ecological movement – itself a response to a qualitatively ‘new’ problem, the fact that the globe’s entire ecosystem can be damaged by mankind’s blind expansion of production for monopoly profit – has been to generate such utopias. But it is not industry, technology, increased consumption in and of themselves that threaten humanity. It is the fact that they are not deployed rationally and ‘economically’ to meet the democratically agreed and prioritised physical and mental needs of ordinary people.

Capitalist technology and industry have given humanity the potential to free itself from a life of either joyless toil or enforced impoverished idleness. Only a humanity with the time to create, to invent, to plan can free itself from fetishising commodities, from national, gender and racial differences, from the power of the state. Only a truly free humanity can end all exploitation and oppression. The huge intercontinental banks, corporations or trading giants like Walmart exploit us today. But in the hands of the workers, with the use of high tech-communications and computers an entirely new system can be created.

Every step forward in science and technology has the potential to increase the amount of ‘leisure’ time and convert enforced toil into creative activity for the benefit and the pleasure of all human beings.

This potential can be harnessed to abolish the irrationalities of capitalist production – ending the overproduction of food in Europe and North America and malnutrition in Africa; shipping and flying products that could be produced near to those who want to consume them; stopping the degradation of the environment and restoring areas turned into deserts, the dead rivers and fished out and despoiled seas and oceans.

A whole new world is possible. But we have to find the human and material resources for it in the existing world.

This requires setting targets and creating the means of achieving them ? democratic planning with the goal of harmonising production and distribution to meet human need. What is needed is a whole series of plans. Information about resources, the needs of the people, the effects on the environment, and decisions already taken will be available to all.

The internet and modern electronic communications will make access to data ever quicker and broader; the interactivity of the medium would allow needs and preferences to be inputted by individuals and accounted for in the plan.

Anything that can be decided locally will be. Broader allocations of resources and exchanges of products will be done at a regional or world level.

This alternative ?vision? needs a strategy as well as tactics to realise it. The capitalist class has to be overthrown, completely deprived of its hold on the state power, and expropriated, deprived of its ownership of the means of production.

All past experience shows that the possessing classes will fight like tigers to protect their possessions. The idea that they will yield either to the force of argument or the mobilisation of democratic majorities is a non-starter. The argument of force will be required: a democracy armed not only with majorities but with weapons is needed.

The overall means chosen must, from the outset, be revolutionary, based on the total destruction of the economic and state power of the capitalist class in both G7 and G77 countries alike. Before, during and after this revolution organisations must be built which fight for control over the economy and for the disintegration of the power of the capitalist state ? organisations which themselves are the bedrock of the new society.

Without this, projects to create a really democratic economy and society are doomed to remain in the realm of dreams and blueprints ? utopian in the worst sense of the word. In the real world they will simply breed disappointment and disillusion. Only a mass popular revolution, which spreads outwards from its first points of triumph into a worldwide revolution, is capable of achieving this. Anti-capitalism ? if it is not to become an empty phrase ? must mean a war for the expropriation of all the MNCs, the giant banks and the medium sized, ?national? enterprises too.

Only by this means can economic power, power at the level of production and exchange, be vested in the hands of the workers, poor peasants and urban poor. Only in this way can the degree of control that workers and peasants establish over the capitalist class at the high point of their struggles be consolidated into the basis of a new form of production and distribution altogether.

The key force in such a people?s revolution must be the waged workers and their natural allies, the poor and landless peasants. These classes in their billions ? the great majority of humankind ? are the only people with no fundamental ties to capitalist society.

Learning from experience

While our goals and methods of struggle must be revolutionary, the road of struggle must be such that the millions of workers, peasants and youth who suffer from capitalism?s exploitation and oppression, but do not yet accept the necessity of a revolution, can learn this from their own experience.

Together we can fight for measures that meet our burning everyday needs: the cancellation of the debt, an end to privatisation of vital services, a living wage, equal rights for all. But in this struggle we must identify the real enemy. We must win the present anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist movement from its timidity on the question of ownership of industry, commerce, communications. We must go beyond declaring our hatred for the millionaires, go beyond dreaming up blueprints to organise society independently of them.

An alternative society cannot be built behind the back of the old one. It cannot be constructed with the tiny resources which the anti-capitalists or even the workers and poor peasants currently possess. The property of the mega corporations is the product of our unpaid labour. To turn one's back on it and start again from the leftovers of our wages is ridiculous. We will never succeed in building an alternative society as long as they possess all the wealth and power. We have to dispossess them of it all.

Now, in the era of globalisation, we have to struggle from the outset on an international level as well as locally. The working class, as producers and consumers, must struggle to establish not so much old style 'government regulation' and 'nationalisation' as real socialisation - collective, democratic social ownership, rooted in every workplace, laterally extended through every, national, international or multilateral enterprise.

Such a method must include drawing up emergency plans to meet the needs of abolishing unemployment, precarity, restoring or creating social services, reconstructing the ravaged 'second world', developing in a sustainable manner the 'third world', rescuing the global environment degraded by capitalism.

We must fight for basic social rights: the right to paid employment, for an income that will give each and every person a decent standard of living without discrimination on grounds of age, gender or ethnic origin.

The move to taking common action across borders against multinationals, financial institutions and gatherings of the governments that serve them, is immensely progressive. But that action also needs to be rooted in the factories, offices and schools, and on the streets.

The trend to international organisation is creating new favourable conditions for renewing the national labour movements that have suffered heavy defeats and have declined in numbers and power as a result. We should now press forward to give a conscious and militant expression to this kind of international/intercontinental solidarity between workers in countries as different as Colombia, Germany, Bolivia, Russia, South Korea and Indonesia.

An immediate community of class interest can exist between workers in the imperialist countries, trying to save jobs being lost to cheap labour destinations, and workers in those countries with staggeringly low wages and brutal repression against trade union activists. There is one enormous proviso: the unions in the imperialist countries must drop completely their protectionist slogans (embargoes, high tariffs etc.) and instead provide financial aid without any strings to workers fighting for union rights and higher wages in the semi-colonies and the former Stalinist states.

Only on this actively internationalist basis can links can be forged within the multinational corporations or between workers of similar industries when they are called to strikebreak or undermine one another's struggles.

These links can and must be built not just between official trade unions but also - and most importantly - at workplace level, between ordinary rank and file workers. But to do this effectively it must be around an ever clearer anti-capitalist strategy.

Anti-racism

The enslavement of millions of Africans from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries gave a massive impulse to capitalist development. It also gave birth to modern racism. The civil rights movement in the USA in the 1960s and the anti-colonial liberation struggles of the last fifty years struck heavy blows at official racism. The downfall of apartheid in South Africa destroyed almost the last state explicitly based on the doctrines of racial/ethnic superiority. A powerful trade union and popular movement achieved this victory and continued to press for social and economic equality - goals which were denied to the black working class majority by the terms of the final settlement.

These South African unions and movements are a powerful part of the growing anti-capitalist movement. A series of linked trade unions and democratic movements - in countries like Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe - have led to the weakening or collapse of one-party or military regimes. There has been a rapid growth of mass popular movements across the continent.

At the same time the economic exploitation of the continent, its enslavement via debt repayments to the banks and international financial institutions, the exploitation of the cruel AIDS epidemic by international drugs companies, means that these movements still have a huge amount to achieve.

The waves of immigration from Africa, Asia, Latin America and since 1989, Eastern Europe, into the NAFTA and EU countries has led to an outburst of racism, both from the states and from populist and fascist forces. Whilst globalising capitalism wants to export capital to wherever it can make the highest profit and import the raw materials and the skilled and semi-skilled labour it needs at home, it is not willing to grant a "free movement of labour" to complement a "free movement of capital".

We should be and should raise in our struggle against racism and persecution the fight to abolish the whole range of immigration laws that stain the statute books of so many capitalist countries.

Women and children fight back

Women have been drawn more and more into production by globalisation. This is in itself a positive fact insofar as it draws new fighters for freedom into the struggle. But as always capitalism does not do this for the benefit of women workers.

It does so because it believes women will work for less, will continue to look after children and the home for free. The fight for real equality is nothing unless it is for access to free, safe abortion and contraception and for free access to social facilities such as childcare.

These steps can diminish the double burden women face "work at work, work at home" and must be integrated with our struggle against global capitalism.

As in the nineteenth century in Europe, global capitalism today is only too willing to use child labour to make its superprofits. Sweated Labour has become a major issue once again with clothing, electronics and agribusiness all making billions out of it.

A movement has arisen both amongst the sweated workers themselves and amongst trade unionists and youth to combat this in united struggle across continents. This movement has drawn in trade unionists from the "first world" too and has partly broken from the protectionist approach of the past.

The immediate answers to these interlinked issues are: an immediate worldwide ban on child labour, a decent living wage for sweated workers, free primary and secondary schooling for children, the right to organise in trade unions, full democratic and civil rights for all.

Fighting oppression and militarism

Since 1989 more and more oppressed nations, racial and ethnic groups, indigenous peoples, have demanded freedom from their oppression and domination. The compulsory unions of peoples such as the USSR or Indonesia have broken up or are beginning to do so. Compulsion, national oppression, stand in the way of international solidarity.

The working class, youth, the popular masses of the oppressor nations must take up the cudgels on behalf of the oppressed. They must fight for the right to self-determination of all peoples "including their right to form separate states.

At the same time since small states are even more at the mercy of the mega corporations and the US superpower and its allies and agents we need to fight for regional and continental federations of states under the rule of the working class and the poor peasants.

The working class "especially workers of the imperialist countries themselves" have a duty to support the resistance of all semi-colonial countries to the dictates of Washington and the other major world powers, even if their regimes, like

that of Iraq, are brutal dictatorships.

What is at stake is not the political regime but the country's absolute subservience to imperialism. The USA, Britain, France support equally vicious dictatorships as in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Their rulers spend most of their time in Paris, London and New York, where they are fawned upon by the leaders of the world's democracies. Their states - like Qatar - even become 'safe havens' from anti-capitalist demonstrators for the WTO and IMF conferences. This too is what their democracy looks like.

At the same time we must step up the fight against militarism by the imperialist governments. This has taken the form of sending their troops into places like the Gulf and the Balkans - to 'maintain' capitalist order. Their 'peacemaking' or 'peacekeeping' interventions have delivered neither peace nor democracy, let alone prosperity. All of us must fight to get the troops of the big powers out of those countries they oppress directly.

Now Bush junior is in the White House another threat has resurfaced - the national missile defence system that the big defence MNCs have been lobbying for to keep their profits up. No matter that it doesn't work, and threatens political and military conflict with China and Russia - those that paid for Bush to get into office must be rewarded with big contracts for research and hardware development.

The anti-capitalists need to campaign against the real and growing threat to peace through the further militarisation of space. Its only function is to guarantee the continued rule of the USA as the world's only super power - enforced by the most deadly means imaginable. It must be stopped by huge protests and working class action before it is put into place.

Free trade, fair trade or planned trade?

We stand for planned social exchange instead of 'free trade'. The WTO has one sole aim: expanding corporate globalisation at the expense of the workers and working farmers of 'North' and 'South'. For this reason it must be destroyed - not reformed.

Yet the WTO is set on a further round of expansion. Its meeting to be held in Qatar on 9-13 November 2001 is cynically misnamed the 'development round'.

The big corporations and the G7 governments want the WTO to adopt rules on government procurement, food and water, energy distribution, social services, education, health and safety, genetically modified organisms and environmental sustainability.

In all of these areas they seek rules which will compel governments to admit private capital into these spheres. Enforcement of free trade rules on such areas undermine the struggles of unions and environmental organisations to use public ownership or protective regulations to limit the destructive and inhumane effects of unbridled private enterprise.

The General Agreement on Trades in Services (GATS) is a particular threat in these areas. There must be no limit on the ability of governments and people to regulate in order to protect, health, safety, public services and the environment.

We must put an end to corporate patent protectionism. Seeds, medicine, the results of the study of plant, animal and human genetics should all serve human needs, not the profits of the multinationals. The patenting of life forms including micro organisms must be prohibited. Essential medicines and other goods, must be made available free to those in urgent need - especially to people with AIDS.

[b]Agriculture

The Agriculture Agreement subsidises industrial farming while small farmers suffer import liberalisation which wipes out their livelihoods and incomes. All support for export-oriented agribusinesses must be ended in Europe and North America. The dumping of their surplus products in Africa, Latin America and Asia must be halted.

The semi-colonial countries must be free to feed their people in a way which maximises their own food production, maintains employment, and prevents the flood of expropriated peasant farmers to the shantytowns of the ever growing mega cities.

Only in this way can these countries achieve "food sovereignty and security", encourage small farmers' co-operatives and practice sustainable agriculture which does not destroy the environment.

The WTO's Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) agreement must be junked. Third world countries must have the right to use locally produced goods to develop their own productive sectors. The WTO dispute settlement system enforces undemocratic and unfair rules which usurp the legislative role of third and second world nations and of local government.

The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the regional development banks supervise structural adjustment programmes to force trade liberalisation in third and second world countries. Workers in the first world must expose and campaign against the actions of their "own" governments in this area. The aim must be to force them to write off 100% of the debts owed to them by these countries. Instead huge compensation funds for past exploitation must be levied from the big banks and corporations "run under workers" inspection and control. With these funds "under the control of third world workers and peasants" organisations to prevent corruption by the elites "the problems of poverty eradication, development, health and education can begin to be tackled.

But an environmentally sustainable, economically adequate, socially just and democratically accountable trade system cannot be achieved under the world rule of corporate capital.

Only social ownership of the means of production can lead to a genuinely democratically planned exchange of goods and services across the world. But struggles to achieve some or all of these goals will expose to millions the neo-liberal "free trade" assault on the poor and train us to take over the world economy from the billionaires and the mega corporations.

[b]International solidarity

Solidarity action has been vital component of effective struggles in the era of globalised capital. The international actions in support of the Liverpool dockers in 1996-7, the recent attempts to co-ordinate car workers' resistance to plant closures and the cross European actions against sackings and closures by Marks & Spencers' " must be replicated from the first day of each and every struggle.

Likewise when whole national labour movements in the second and third worlds take action to resist the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the IMF or the rulings of the WTO, unions in the "first" world must support them. Rapid solidarity actions are necessary whenever unions are victimised by their own national governments. A mounting wave of solidarity action will not only create a new international conscious identity within the world working class, it will signal to the corporate bosses and politicians that the era of givebacks, privatisations and deregulation is at an end.

Strengthening anti-capitalism

In the anti-globalisation movement the revolutionary left wing should fight for a series of key policies to develop both the movement's militancy and to build a mass base amongst workers, youth, the poor and oppressed.

We propose the following:

- Fight the "race to the bottom" of corporate globalisation. Instead level up labour, environmental, social and human rights conditions to the highest levels so far achieved. Campaign to force corporations, the national states, the regional blocs, the international financial authorities to concede demands for minimum conditions " charters of labour rights, working conditions, minimum wages, social conditions, trade union and democratic rights.

- Create an International Commission to investigate and expose the whole process of globalisation, mobilising experts from the trade unions, the NGOs, political and social movements. This should draw on direct reports from rank and file workers, peasants, urban poor and the indigenous peoples on their exploitation and oppression. The spread of these findings via alternative media, the web, independent and community radio, independent TV projects and papers will generate new struggles and broaden networks of solidarity.
- Open up the national and international forums, where decisions are really made, to inspection by the representatives of workers, peasants, communities and so on. We must fight for the right to access the computer records of the banks and multinationals. This means a not only a frontal attack on business secrecy but encouraging and defending whistleblowers from within these secret corporate strongholds as well as Internet hackers from without.
- Enforce common safety, welfare and education standards on global corporations via trade unions in all countries they operate in. We need a charter of rights and conditions. We need to combine our actions to achieve it through the unions and their local and international allies.
- Oppose the mega corporations' closures and relocations by international campaigns of direct action to halt them. Launch political campaigns for the immediate seizure of their property, without compensation, if they refuse to concede to the workers' demands.
- Expose the domination of local, national and world politics by the big corporations' crony capitalism on a grand scale. We must denounce big businesses' buying of governments and local authorities by legal means (lobbying) and illegal ones (corruption). Discredit the parties paid for by corporate cash by exposing the vast scale of the donations by the super-rich and big business. We should fight to break away the workers' organisations and those of the poor peasants from such parties and build new parties pledged to implement the interests of the workers and poor peasants, to centre their activity on mass direct action, not on elections. Contest elections not to spread the illusion that capitalism can be reformed but to popularise our demands.
- We demand the right to work, but totally oppose compulsory workfare schemes which impose low wages, and poor working conditions on the unemployed. For secure, permanent jobs that are socially, culturally and ecologically useful. For an immediate, general and massive reduction in working hours without loss of the pre-existing level of real wages, without "flexibility" or "annualisation". For the right to a retirement pension at the level of the average wage.
- Total opposition to all forms of casualisation of working conditions and wages and against imposed part-time work and insecure jobs. For equal pay and equal legal rights for men and women. Total opposition to any form of discrimination that prevents equal access to jobs and salaries to women.
- Free access to all essential services, paid for from a wealth tax: free health care for all; cheap good quality state or municipal housing for all' guaranteed by the state and municipality' free education and training courses.
- Develop the infrastructure of society' transport, electricity, gas, water and communications by massive public investment raised by taxing the rich. Development to be planned democratically to ensure it is sustainable and for the benefit of all, under the control of the workers and poor peasants.
- For the right to justice; free access to the law, judges to be elected by the people, for the right to be tried by a jury of your peers in all criminal cases.
- For full freedom of movement for people and the abolition of restrictions on residency and work on grounds of nationality or citizenship. Total opposition to the exploitation of immigrant workers, youth and children in undeclared jobs
- We must open up the media to the masses. A new weapon of struggle is already being created from below, the independent media movement in the "first world" and the media of the unions, peasant organisations, communities in the third world. We must link them together via the web and launch a struggle to expose and take over the multimedia

corporations of the Murdoch's and Berlusconi's. A media for the millions not the millionaires must be our battle cry.

- Fight for the planned, environmentally sustainable, development of the second and third worlds. As long as the majority of humanity does not have clean drinking water, sanitation, electricity, healthcare, primary and secondary education it is sheer first world arrogance to talk of a "freeze on development" or "zero economic growth".

We can decrease the living standards of the rich. We can decrease the enormous waste of hyper-consumerism in the first world. We can make enormous savings through cutting out the waste of blind production for profit.

But we have to raise up the majority of humanity to the levels of a decent life which they themselves want. We can only do so by making this the planned goal of workers, peasants, the unemployed and underemployed world-wide.

- Stop global warming, which is a real threat to the future of civilisation. For a planned global shift away from energy production based on the burning of fossil fuels. All workers to be reallocated to other, environmentally sustainable work. Expropriate the oil, automotive and aerospace industries under workers' control and without compensation. For massive spending on alternative safe sources of energy - solar, wind and hydrogen power. For a vast expansion of public transport to reduce dependence on the private car.

- In agriculture we must end the domination of corporate agribusinesses and the landed estates of the rich. Overproduction for an unknown market is a terrible waste of resources - a source of food mountains in Europe and the US and famine in Africa and Asia. Make agriculture serve the total well-being of humanity within its natural and social environment. Instead of the goal of profit for the shareholders of the agribusiness corporations - the Chiquitas and the Monsanto's - agriculture must meet the social goals of providing enough food for all, ending starvation and malnutrition, mass crop failures and man-made diseases (BSE etc.). Agriculture must be planned to provide employment for a substantial part of the world's rural population, plus those who have been driven from the land. We must restore the devastated natural environments and preserve biodiversity as a treasure for future generations.

- End debt slavery - compensate the south for the plunder over centuries of its natural and human resources. In the G7 countries we must fight for the unconditional and total cancellation of the debt to all the countries of Latin America, Africa, South and East Asia. This is not a gift but only a first step in compensating them for the exploitation they have suffered for the last two hundred years. In these countries themselves we have to fight for the renunciation of the debt by their own governments.

Free trade?

Neither free trade nor protectionism under capitalism can meet the needs of human beings and their well-being on this planet. As long as capitalism exists we are opposed to protectionism by the developed countries against the products of the global south. Here we are in favour of free trade. The answer to employers taking advantage of "cheap labour" in the second and third worlds is not to exclude their goods by tariff barriers but to use trade union and democratic pressure to raise the wages and social conditions of these countries towards the levels of the "first world".

First and foremost this means defending the right to form trade unions and political parties to fight for these goals. However we should oppose the forced opening of the markets of the second and third worlds to the big banks and corporations of the first. For these countries we defend their right to protect their economies. The best means to do so would be by a democratically organised state bureau of foreign trade.

- End the drive to privatise social services where they are at present provided by the state. We must defend and extend these services at the expense of the rich.

- Create a new form of democracy out of today's struggles - destroy the power of the capitalist class over the economy and over society (the state). To achieve this we need workers' and peasants' councils, general strikes, land occupations, militias, uprisings, the establishment of council power are all needed to achieve this.

- Break up the repressive apparatus of the capitalist states: disband the police, army high command, the top echelons of the civil service and state bureaucracy, the secret police forces and spy networks. Place all authority in the hands of working class and peasant councils and the armed people themselves.

A party of protest, a party for power

Our aim in the coming months and years must be international days of strike action, co-ordinated support for particular struggles, the fight to stop the passage of neoliberal treaties and prevent free trade blocs eroding our gains. For all this more is needed than just reliance on spontaneous militancy.

A permanent organisation is necessary that keeps the conditions, the struggles, the lessons of working class struggles around the world in full view of the workers in every country.

We urgently require an organisation that fights nationalism in all its forms and propagates working class internationalism ? a global working class socialist consciousness.

We need a political organisation ? a party ? active in the unions and in all working class and popular organisations. To defeat our global enemies once and for all we need a party that fights for an international revolutionary action programme ? elaborated to meet the needs of a world dominated by globalisation. Such an organisation must confront, weaken and ultimately oust the reformist bureaucracy that limits and controls the mass labour movements of the world.

It must offer a path of struggle not just to resist but to defeat global capitalism and create a new world. It must be a revolutionary, international, political party. It must combine united activity and the discipline of struggle with the fullest internal democracy. It must be a party "of a new type": different from the parliamentary reformist parties of social democracy or the monstrous bureaucratic tyrannies of the Stalinists.

But it will be a party nevertheless, because it will be an organisation fighting for power, but this time for the power of the majority, not the power of an elite.

As well as being based on the working class, such a party needs to win to its ranks the activists of the anti-capitalist movement, the radical students, the poor peasants, the landless-poor in the "third world".

Revolutionaries reject the idea that such parties will arise one-by-one on their own national terrain with their own one-sided and specific national "roads" to socialism.

This would be to repeat the worst aspects of the reformist Second International and the Stalinist Third International ? precisely the features that led to their bureaucratisation, their absorption into imperialist society and their collapse.

The conditions of the twenty-first century make possible the simultaneous creation of parties from below (nationally) and above (internationally). The anti-capitalist movement is a vast network of interlinked campaigning forces. The breadth and combination of its "single issue" struggles should be celebrated-not greeted with sectarian distaste. In its early stages its political heterogeneity is inevitable. Within this movement there must be no exclusions of particular trends, whether anarchist or socialist, no refusals to debate and discuss the issues that the struggles we are involved in throw up.

But the confusion and political incoherence of the movement should not be celebrated. This is a weakness, not a strength. It can hinder our ability to fight successfully, not just on one demonstration, but on the many fronts where we are obliged to fight global capitalism.

Today our struggles are converging ? in large measure because of the savagery of the big corporations and the USA's unchallenged hegemony on the world stage. To develop this convergence, deepen our common goals and struggle, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International is presenting these proposals for debate.

We do not believe we have all the answers, but we firmly believe that the more our movement can unite and combine in

action for defined goals, the greater will be our prospects for success.

As our name suggests, we believe that the global anti-capitalist movement that is shaking our rulers today must now start to take a step further: towards assembling the forces and defining the activity of a new world party of social revolution.

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