



Introduction - we are at a turning point in history

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Since Seattle, tens of thousands of police, innumerable rounds of tear gas, batons, steel perimeter fences, vicious police dogs, exclusion orders, sealed borders, closed airports, blockaded roads, midnight raids all have been deployed by the capitalist governments to stop our voices being heard.

But the movement is growing despite all that.

Seattle, 30 November, was a defining moment when the movement became conscious of its power. But it did not come from nowhere. Years of grassroots collective action in the USA culminated in Seattle. Students had been at the heart of it, campaigning against the unleashing of corporate depravity that marked politics in the Clinton years.

A new generation of activists on campuses across the USA and Canada became politicised by the invasion of the mind-snatchers as the big corporations made their move to take over of education.

Faced with the hubris of money, student politics moved on from the politics of identity and introspection to anti-corporatism - to stem and turn back the agents of Nike, Coca-Cola and McDonalds dressed up as educationalists.

Heavy-handed attempts at censorship or blackmail in the face of criticism of the big brand names only radicalised them more. They investigated the operations of the big corporations away from their campuses and found that the money used to bribe their administrators was sucked out of sweatshop labour in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and China the one-dollar-a-day impoverished billions of the Third World. Seattle put it all together. As Manning Marable said:

"The demonstrations in Seattle showed that growing numbers of Americans are recognising that all of these issues ? Third World sweatshops, the destruction of unions, deteriorating living standards, the dismantling of social programs inside the US ? are actually interconnected."

But the campus campaigns in the USA were only one strand of the emerging anti-globalisation movement. The Zapatista uprising on New Years? Day 1995 in the Chiapas region of Mexico was a rebellion against land hunger and violent autocracy and for indigenous rights and the end of the country?s enslavement to US companies, exploitation and foreign debt.

Tens of thousands of new and old activists rallied to their call to support them and to open up many fronts of struggle against imperialism. A Zapatista internationalism was born in the Laconda rainforests and quickly formed cross-currents with the North American and then European anti-capitalists.

Another strand that emerged in the 1990s was the radicalisation of some NGOs. In Britain, 1997 and 98 saw Jubilee 2000 mobilise 70,000 and 50,000 respectively to demand the G7 cancel the debts of the Third World.

In the South, many of the smaller, more independent,1 NGOs who were closer to the suffering caused by government and business alike signed up to the anti-globalisation movement. Paradoxically, the ?privatisation? of healthcare and famine relief removed the shackles of apolitical humanitarianism and allowed a generation of NGO workers to become overtly radical.

But by far the biggest component of the emerging world anti-globalisation movement has been the millions of workers who have taken to the streets and gone on strike to resist the many attacks on them which originated in IMF ?structural

adjustment programmes? during the 1980s and 1990s.

The IMF has engineered cuts in health and education programmes, let rip state controlled prices for foodstuffs and fuel and downsized the public sector workforce.

But tens of millions have fought back time and again in South Asia, West Africa and Latin America. Sometimes they have won concessions. But often they have been betrayed by reformist and nationalist leaders. All too often they have not received active solidarity from trade unionists and leftists in the North.

Yet, until the mid-1990s, we were in an era of rearguard actions against the sweeping tide of globalisation and neo-liberalism. US imperialism swept all before it in the wake of its victory in the Cold War. As Walden Bello noted, this era peaked with the founding of the World Trade Organization in 1994-95, "the apogee of capitalism in the era of globalization."

But it spawned a movement against itself and this connected with other movements. Success in stalling the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) gave it confidence.

Then came the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998, which Bello has called "the Stalingrad of the IMF" when it became clear that the IMF itself, "with its prescription for capital account liberalization, helped create the crisis, and with its cure of tight money and tight budgets, converted a financial crisis into economic collapse in Thailand, Indonesia, and Korea."

Across the WTO, IMF and finally the World Bank a complete crisis of legitimacy set in during the closing years of the 20th century. Their defensiveness and confusion only emboldened the movement against them, leading to the turning point that was Seattle.

The broadening of the anti-globalisation movement has been accompanied since then by its ideological deepening, in particular a growing sense of practical internationalism and conscious anti-capitalism.

The phenomenon of "summit-hopping" is one expression of this, as is the proliferation of counter-conferences and teach-ins with representatives from all over the world.

The massive anti-Davos summit in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001, gathered together all wings of the anti-globalisation movement. The movement of "one no and many yeses" intensified the debate around alternative visions and programmes for a world free from exploitation and oppression and what alliances and tactics are necessary to get there.

That is welcome. But the course of the movement itself has posed the question of "which way forward?" far more directly than any forum could.

The buzz of success is giving way to a sharp debate over goals, strategy and tactics.

After the Gothenburg violence we are hearing loud pleas for moderation and compromise from a self-appointed layer of go-betweens in the movement. All they ever wanted was a place at the negotiating table - and their support for protests that put them there has to be understood in the light of that.

Susan George, an early icon of the movement who praised it last year for "doing more in one year than all her books have done in the last 25 years" was quick to "condemn plainly and clearly" the protestors' action on the streets of Gothenburg because "violence is invariably the game of our adversary. even in the case of provocation, even when the police is responsible for having opened hostilities"

Even those that proclaim to be revolutionary buckle under the pressure of bourgeois denunciation of street violence. The Socialist Party in Sweden "a so-called Trotskyist group - denounced those responsible for attacking police and property for "scar[ing] the life out of the population in Gothenburg". They criticise several so called left organisations

that still refuse to resolutely distance themselves from a direction which is totally stillborn . . . Instead of total repudiation and contempt these organisations try to fish in the swamps of political street violence, said the Swedish section of the Fourth international.

The Swedish SP counterposes 'work in mass movements' to street violence. The fact is, effective mass protest has always been met with police violence.

The fact is that those who denounce violence do not share our goal or that of hundreds of thousands of youth today: to smash the apparatus of capitalist repression that keeps our movement down and guarantees the continued rule of the big corporations.

Christophe Aguiton, leader of ATTAC, anxious also to distance himself from the violence at Gothenburg, claims that the coalition of peaceful forces inside the anti-globalisation movement has meant that 'the question is no more, as in the 1970s, in the great majority of cases, to conquer the Power via revolutionary organisations, but to find other ways for radical protest.'

We draw the opposite conclusion. The ferocity of the state shown in Gothenburg and Barcelona in June 2001, the removal or restriction of our democratic rights under way as we prepare for Genoa, show that this movement needs to raise its game. If we don't, we risk falling back to the isolated and fragmented protests over debt, pollution etc that characterised the 1980s and early 1990s. Indeed, that is where some of the NVDA activists are headed as if frightened by the power of the mass movement they helped create that is shaking capitalism to its foundations.

Today, this minute, we have the best chance since the 1970s to build revolutionary organisations that have a mass base among young people and organised workers.

Today the 'spectre' of anti-capitalism stalks the world's rulers literally it is just yards away from their pampered international gatherings. So it is time the movement outlined its goals clearly. Anti-capitalism means expropriation of all the MNCs, banks, and the other large companies and landowners too, so that economic power is put in the hands of the workers and peasants without which rational economic planning will prove impossible.

It means fighting for the overthrow of the bosses and bureaucrats in G7 and G77 countries alike. It means workers and peasants taking power into their own hands by means of general strikes and armed militias. It means working class people running their own lives - through the forums of elected and recallable delegates in councils.

Let's grasp the opportunity to build a revolutionary international movement. Globalisation has sounded an alarm call to the youth and activists at the base of the world's workers' movement.

The dramatic surge in the concentration and centralisation of capital, the size and velocity of capital movements, the power of the G8 dominated 'world economic institutions', the downsizing or privatisation of social welfare - all threaten workers and small farmers and a substantial proportion of the lower middle classes.

But enormous new opportunities also lie ahead. The greater unification of the world economy the higher levels of education and literacy called for by the introduction of new information and communications technology means that workers can spread the struggles and the lessons of struggles at the speed of thought, to use Bill Gates phrase.

'One no and many yes-es' will not destroy capitalism. A revolutionary fight that links the anti-capitalist movement with the multi-millioned organised working class will destroy capitalism. This pamphlet is an action guide for building that movement.