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Workers Solidarity Movement
Capitalist Globalisation and Imperialism
A Workers Solidarity Movement Position Paper
July 2004

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Capitalist Globalisation and Imperialism

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1. Imperialism is the ability of countries to globally and locally dictate trade relations with other countries. This means the term can only be usefully applied to a few countries, in particular those composing the permanent members of the UN security council and the G8.
2. The policy of these countries in this as in other respects is largely driven by the major companies based there and not their peoples. Almost all of the worlds top 200 companies are based in these countries. These interests are defined on the regional and global level by bodies like the World Economic Forum and the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT). These bodies bring together the top 'decision makers' in the corporations with the relevant ministers and civil servants of national government and the European Union. These companies and their governments have in the last decades attempted to construct a neo liberal order by which their wishes can be imposed on all the

worlds populations and through which inter-imperialist disputes can be resolved. This is the purpose of global bodies like the WTO, G8, World Bank, IMF and UN, all of which are structured so they can only act with the permission the major economic powers.

3. Imperialism was not and is not just about the search for markets. On a daily basis the imperialist countries seek to gain access to raw materials, to gain military bases, to control the flow of scarce or vital raw materials (including genes), cheap labour. It may even be to insure sufficient imports of finished goods or heavy machinery.
4. In any specific region one country will be more powerful than others. They will attempt to use their dominance to gain favourable trade and territory concessions. They are however subject to the major imperialist nations, and are probably retained as client states by one or more of them. It is not therefore not useful to refer to such countries as imperialist.
5. The countries that are not themselves imperialist show a continuous spectrum of forms from those which are absolute colonies of one power to those that although ultimately answerable to the imperialists are for the most part independent junior parts of world capitalism and may have considerable local power. Today almost all the national governments of the world are promoting neo liberalism as it also provides benefits to the local ruling class, even though this is at a cost to their population.
6. A colony is a country under the direct military or administrative control of an imperialist country. Although the post war period saw many of these countries gaining some self rule in more recent years new colonies have

been created, for example Bosnia, ruled through the UN. The WTO, World Bank, IMF and UN are all bodies that disguise this function but in all cases their internal structures are set up to allow the powerful countries to not only determine their agendas but to decide which policies are accepted or fall.

7. Today the ruling classes of most countries are prepared to go along with this neo liberal program although they may have reservations around particular issues. In some cases these countries have developed their own industrial base (eg South Korea) so that they are not dependent on primary agriculture, or the export of raw materials for their foreign trade. They have developed a sizable home owned industry. They act not only in the interests of the multinationals but also of indigenous capitalism. Commonly to act as local enforcers for imperialist rule and/or partake in more global police actions through the UN or similar agencies. Like Ireland they have become junior partners in the neo liberal imperialist order.
8. In other cases, particularly in parts of Central Africa, the local ruling class are little more than the local agents of multinational industry or the major imperialist powers. Here the state exists almost completely in order to maintain a high level of exploitation on behalf of these powers. These countries may be formally self governing but they are effectively a new form of colony where a local elite with no popular mandate has replaced the direct rule of the imperialist powers.
9. There are a limited number of countries whose ruling class are unwilling for one reason or another to become partners in this order. In 2001 Libya, Iraq, Cuba and North Korea were the most obvious examples. In some cases like Cuba the ruling class are unwilling to open

their markets fully to the global economy. In others regional military conflict has resulted in the hostility of the major powers to the current rulers.

The imperialist powers have militarily and economically attacked those states that try to follow their own agenda. Today this often disguised as 'peace keeping' or 'peace enforcement' under the UN flag. While we oppose the imperialist powers we recognise that the states that defy them do so in the interests of their own ruling class rather than their people. So rather than supporting, critically or otherwise, these local ruling classes we look to support the working class (including rural workers) of those countries in their struggle against imperialism and their own ruling class. We make this concrete by offering solidarity including material aid to independent working class and libertarian organisations.

10. We argue that to win any permanent improvements anti-imperialist / anti-neoliberal struggles have to be transformed into the struggle for the international anarchist revolution. That said we recognise that short of this any military defeat for imperialism will not only reduce the ability of the imperialist powers to engage in future interventions but is also an encouragement for those involved in similar struggles elsewhere.
11. The National liberation movements of the 20th century were an attempt to defeat imperialism through an alliance of the "progressive" bourgeois and the workers. The bourgeoisie always dominated these movements, ensuring that even the 'left' element within them become no more than support for a project of state capitalism. Where an independent workers movement threatened to appear which might have sought an alternative the bourgeoisie quickly reached a temporary or permanent

6. We are opposed to any involvement in military alliances including the Rapid Reaction Force & partnership for peace.
7. We support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement in solidarity with the people of Palestine

2. But large parts of this movement were influenced by anarchism or by ideas that have organisational similarities with anarchism like Zapatismo and radical environmentalism.
These often defined themselves in opposition to the party building strategy of Leninism and social democracy.
3. The Zapatista encounters of 1996 and 1997 represented an attempt by activists from these strands, recognising what they had in common, to look at ways of building informal networks of communication and solidarity. These meetings and more regional ones like them along with new communications technology has helped create an informal global information and solidarity network that in a large part led to the successful protests against capitalism in the City of London, J18 and the WTO in Seattle, N30 in 1999.
4. There is a real tension between this libertarian strand of the movement and the more top down stands represented by most of the NGO's, trade unions, religious groups and after Seattle the Leninist left. This tension is exposed by the debates about tactics in the aftermath of most of the major protests and the frequent division on the protests into confrontational and non confrontational blocks or areas. The reality of this debate is between those who argue for a bottom up autonomous affinity group structure on the one hand and a top down, 'majority' rule, representative committee on the other
5. The Grassroots Gathering has managed to draw together many of the groups who favour a bottom up autonomous affinity group structure. We must now start to look to encourage the creation of regional co-ordination structures.

agreement with imperialism in order to suppress this movement.

12. Today with the great reduction in inter imperialist rivalry which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union the room for such National Liberation Movements is greatly reduced. This is the reason why many made peace with their governments in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Most of the few that remain now call on the US and the other imperialist powers to resolve their local situations on their behalf. In that context while they may indeed be struggling for a fairer division of the local cake they can no longer be considered anti-imperialist in any sense of the word. Their calls for intervention may reflect a certain 'natural justice'. But the imperialist powers will only intervene where it suits them. They do so in a way that not only furthers their own agenda but frequently results in far more death and destruction and a far more divided society than that which previously existed. This of course results in the need for 'peace keeping' and hence direct imperialist control into the indefinite future.
13. Without necessarily supporting each and every project of resistance we see our role as undermining the idea that the neo liberal order is inevitable and that resistance to it is both futile and criminal. In the case of National Liberation Movement we defend the struggle against imperialism while attacking the nationalist basis of this struggle.
14. In relation to each situation we will seek to discover and promote the anti-authoritarian strands within that struggle, particularly those that seek to organise on a class rather than national, religious or ethnic basis and win these to anarchism. We will argue that the interests of the ordinary workers of the imperialist countries lies

with the promotion of such strands and not with their own rulers. We will argue for and where possible build working class resistance to the imperialist strategies of their own ruling class and direct links with those in struggle.

15. In countries where NLM's come to power the role of anarchists there would be not to support them but rather to organise for a revolution would replace government with a federation of urban and rural workers assemblies and councils. In Ireland and the European Union our role would be to undermine any imperialist intervention and argue that the workers of such countries are natural allies of the European Working Class.
16. The current neo liberal phase of capitalism is a product of the interaction of the capitalist and political systems with working class resistance and technological development. As such it is a logical form of organisation from the point of view of capital. We don't see any progressive content to advocating alternative forms of capitalism on the national or international level. This includes attempts to isolate countries from the global economy and develop national capital on environmental, religious or state socialist lines.
17. We are against the intervention by the UN or any other collection of imperialist 'peacekeepers'. Ireland's role within the UN and common EU defence arrangements demonstrates how it has become a junior partner of international imperialism. The UN provides a manner in which it can intervene alongside the big imperialist powers.
18. There can be no 'just settlement' that involves any imperialist power or the UN or similar bodies. Such settle-

ments will be designed in order to protect the interests of the imperialists. Therefore we always oppose intervention in any region of the world for whatever reason by the imperialists.

19. We are for the unconditional withdrawal of troops of the imperialist countries from any country they are occupying. Imperialism is the primary cause of most of the national and ethnic conflicts imposed on the world's population. No imperialist can play any part in solving these conflicts.
20. Wars between countries are a symptom of the battle for control of markets etc which is an essential part of capitalism. We therefore do not decide who is right or wrong in any given situation on the basis of who is the apparent aggressor.
21. In conflicts between two imperialists or regional, ethnic or religious groups we argue that for the workers in the countries their enemy is their own ruling class. Their allies are the working class of the enemy state. On this basis we would seek to undermine the war effort.

Short Term Perspectives; The movement against neoliberalism

1. In the 1990's an international movement started to emerge that brought together a broad coalition against neo liberalism, linking people in struggle all over the world outside of the control of political parties. This broad movement, as yet, has no common purpose beyond a wish to address the unfairness of global capitalism and a general sense that people rather than national governments or multinationals should be in control.