

Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism

50p

inside**AFTER GENOA:**

**INTERVIEW: Jailed Irish
protestor Joe Moffat
PLUS Italy in revolt**



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Solidarity price £1

As Celtic Tiger threatens collapse...

Resist the job cuts

EVERY major computer firm in the Ireland has started to slash jobs. It is a sign that the Celtic Tiger is coming to a dead end.

In the boom years US companies made huge profits. They claimed that they got a 25 percent rate of return on their investment in Ireland.. That was supposed to be double the rate of Portugal and five times the rate of Britain.

The figures were exaggerated for tax purposes — but still the profits were huge.

Now at the first sign of recession they want us to pay — with wrecked lives and longer dole queues.

Our answer must be resistance. We need a major campaign to unionise workers in multinational plants. We need to occupy plants to force the bosses to cough up. We need to force them to cut their profits — not our jobs.

Axed to save profits

‘ **Gateway:
900 jobs**

‘ **Hewlett-
Packard:
6,000 jobs
worldwide**

‘ **Compaq
Computers:
3,400
layoffs in
Europe**

‘ **Lucent:
20,000 jobs
worldwide**

‘ **Intel:
Cuts staff
by 5%**

★ **COFFEE** chains are now charging nearly £1.50 for every cup of coffee. Yet farmers in many developing countries are facing disaster because prices are falling.

The price of the coffee beans has reached a 35 year low as a direct result of the policies promoted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

They pushed Vietnam to double its production of coffee in the past five years. 120,000 acres of woodland was destroyed and indigenous people were driven off the land to make way for new coffee production.

Multi-nationals like Nestle then played the new Vietnamese producers off against growers in Brazil and elsewhere to drive down the price.

But instead of cutting the prices in the new coffee shops, they pocketed huge profits.

Meanwhile coffee growers are being driven into ever deeper poverty.

Just one more example of what 'globalisation' really means today.

.....

★ A McDonald's restaurant in the UK has been fined more than £12,000 for employing schoolchildren.

A franchise of the US fast food giant was found guilty of working teenagers late into the night on school days, often without rest breaks.

One 15-year-old had worked 16 hours one Saturday, seven hours over the legal limit. Another 16-year-old had worked from 5 p.m. until 2 a.m. on a school day.

.....

★ Despite the rejection of the Nice Treaty the Irish government continues its commitment to increased military spending.

They are buying four helicopters: two are for air sea rescue—which is reasonable—but two are for the Irish contingent of the Rapid Reaction Force. The cost is to be around £80 million.

One of the two main contenders is US firm Sikorsky, which had secret meetings with Mary Harney at the recent Paris air show. Sikorsky also gained the backing of the *Sunday Business Post* after buying expensive full page ads in the paper.

The other contender is Atron Electronics. This firm has the distinct advantage of being run by Fianna Fail 'supporter' Nick Fitzpatrick.

EPA cover-up for multinational

People in west Limerick are outraged that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is attempting to blame local farmers for the unexplained deaths of large numbers of livestock.

The area where hundreds of livestock have died without explanation

is close to Aughinish Alumina plant in Askeaton.

In the same area the Cappagh Farm Support Group have found at least 45 occurrences of cancer in the area.

It claims that:
 ■ The EPA investigation is a whitewash.

The area most likely to be affected by emissions from the

Alumina plant was not even included in the investigation.

■ The Mid Western Health Board 'lost' blood samples of sick people in the area so they weren't included.

The investigation has attempted to blame farmers for bad practices to explain the deaths of a large amount of livestock.

Yet a study by the *US Journal of Human*

and *Veterinarian Toxicology* found that sick animals in the area had unusually high levels of aluminum in their tissues.

Some 43.3 tonnes of sulphur dioxide were released by Aughinish Alumina per day.

Owners

The owners of Aughinish Alumina are Glencore

International.

Glencore are an enormous multinational with a turnover of US\$ 48.0 billion and assets of \$10.2 billion.

They are key campaigners against controlling global warming because of their huge coal mining interests in Indonesia.

They are supporters of Plan Colombia — the US backed scheme to crush left wing guerrillas —

because it defends their mining interests in the country.

As well as minerals, Glencore are one of the leading exporters of genetically modified soya.

At one hearing an EPA scientist said 'someone must defend industry...'

When it comes to people's lives and the protecting the environment the EPA have done just that.

FF bribes to deport refugees

THE IRISH government is stepping up plans to deport hundreds of refugees.

In a sinister move it is giving a bribe of £8.8 million to Nigeria to fast track the removal of asylum seekers from Ireland.

The deal is supposed to be about an 'enhancement of aid to Nigeria'.

Regime

But a spokesperson for the Nigerian embassy admitted that the aid is being given in return for co-operation in sending asylum seekers back to Nigeria.

The Nigerian regime has a terrible history of working closely with the multinationals and persecuting opponents of

the oil companies.

Last year police burnt down homes in the village of K Dere and killed one person after local people protested against road building by Shell.

In the town of Olugbobini, eight youths were shot dead after similar protests.

According to Amnesty International 1,000 people have also been killed in ethnic violence recently.

The violence occurred mainly in the Northern provinces and arose from clashes between Muslims and Christians.

The agreement has given rise to huge level of fear in the African community. Gabriel Ohkenla from the Pan-African Community centre in Moore Street said that 'People are wondering who's going to go

first.

'The police come to your house, give you few hours to pack and then you're taken to prison.'

Visas

A ruling by Supreme Court judge, Adrian Hardiman, will also help to speed up the process of deportations.

Hardiman is a former Progressive Democrat support.

Meanwhile after the Gateway closure Mary Harney gave a broad hint that immigrant visas can be cancelled quickly if the Celtic Tiger starts to go down.

The stage is being set for a state sponsored campaign to scapegoat immigrants and asylum seeker for the ills of the Irish economy.

Fantasy illness...

GIANT DRUGS firms have a new scam — make up a disease and then sell a "cure".

Social anxiety disorder, an acute form of shyness, has become a popular disease over the last few years in the US.

Magazines, newspapers and TV programmes repeated the "fact" that it is the US's third most common mental disorder, with ten million sufferers.

Except it doesn't exist. The drugs firm SmithKlineBeecham, before its merger with Glaxo, hired a pub-

lic relations agency to promote awareness of this "common disorder".

The agency promoted Paxil as the "first and only approved medication" to treat social anxiety disorder.

Paxil was made by SmithKlineBeecham.

Experts

Some of the medical experts on TV talking up the wonders of Paxil were paid consultants for the drugs company.

Sales of Paxil, an anti-depressant, rose by 18 percent last year.



Thousands of people took to the streets in Germany to fight against Fortress Europe's treatment of refugees

Coca-Cola's link to death squads

COCA-COLA stands accused of using right wing death squads to assassinate trade unionists in Colombia.

US United Steelworkers of America union is suing the company on behalf of Colombian union Sinaltrainal for the "systematic intimidation, kidnapping, detention and murder" of workers in the South American country.

Sinaltrainal says that five of its members working in Coca-Cola bottling plants have been killed by right wing paramilitary groups.

Controls

The union's lawyers argue that the company closely controls the activities of contractors which run bottling plants, and was well aware of the brutal intimidation of workers in the factories.

Those murdered include Oscar Polo, a union activist at the Monertia bottling plant.

He was shot by a right wing death squad while walking in the street with his young daughter in June.

The Colombian government, backed by bodies like the IMF and the US government, is pursuing neo-liberal policies—privatising public services and opening up the country to multinationals.

... and profiting from the Intifada

THE Palestinian people have faced 53 years of homelessness, poverty and oppression, and now months of economic blockade because of Israel's response to the new intifada. But they can still get Coca-Cola.

An article in the pro-market *Business Week* magazine reports on how Coke will improve the lives of Palestinians.

"It is expected of us to lead the way during this difficult time, to inject some energy into the economy," says Farouk Fannoush, the general manager of National Beverage which imports Coca-Cola into the Occupied Territories.

"We are running promotional campaigns. At local exhibitions I put the Coke label in one corner with a Palestinian flag."

what we think

When boom turns to bust



ONE OF Spain's longest running industrial disputes has ended in victory for the workers. Telephone engineers celebrated in the centre of Madrid last weekend after their fight forced the country's right-wing government to concede most of their demands.

Over 1,000 of the engineers had been camped out in the heart of Madrid's business district for over six months after being made redundant.

The workers set up a pavement shanty town and used their skills to connect up the huts they lived in to electricity and water supplies.

Their Sintel company was privatised five years ago by the state owned Telefonica phone com-

pany.

It was sold to a US company, which then laid off the entire 1,800 workforce last December.

The workers' resistance became a celebrated cause for workers across Spain and finally the government was forced to intervene.

The workers will get 11 months back pay.

Some have been promised new jobs, and older workers will be allowed to draw a full pension early. "We have shown that the small man can beat the giant," said workers' spokesman, José Antonio Vaquero. "One thing is for sure," said another worker, Aniceto Diaz, as the workers celebrated victory. "We are all better people than when we arrived here."

THE SHOCKING news that 900 workers at Gateway are to lose their jobs shows just how fragile the Celtic Tiger is.

Ireland was supposed to have a miracle economy based on computer technology and a deregulated free market economy.

The new "information age" was said to have eliminated the boom-bust cycle that had characterised capitalism since its early beginnings.

Recession

Yet the growing world recession started in the information technology sector.

In the last week in July 100,000 jobs were lost in the global telecommunications, media and manufacturing industry.

Almost every major computer company that has a base in Ireland has announced savage job cuts.

Compaq, for example, will cut 8500 jobs worldwide and that is bound to affect its 2,300 workers in Ireland. Dell, Intel, Hewlett Packard, Lucent have all announced redundancy programmes.

It shows that computers can no more escape the savage logic of the market than steel plants or textile mills.

The greed for profit means that companies poured money into computers and telecommunications at the height of the boom. They expected that markets and

profits would grow and they would get a high rate of return.

But the anarchy of the market brought a crisis of over-investment. These firms are now saddled with so much investment that they cannot make a high enough level of profit.

At a time of recession all talk of social partnership disappears.

Bosses cut back drastically on production and let go workers rather than take a cut in their profits.

Even though the bosses made mega bucks in the boom years, they still expect workers to shoulder the sacrifices in a recession.

All of this is set to get worse because all the major economies of the world are simultaneously entering a downturn.

In the US growth has slumped to its slowest rate for ten years.

Japan's industrial production has plunged by an annual rate of 17 percent.

Up to a few weeks ago a chorus of economic experts were predicting that Europe wouldn't be affected.

In fact, the impact of the US slowdown has been much more rapid than in the past.

Manufacturing in continental Europe has fallen for three successive months.

The Celtic Tiger is particularly vulnerable.

Its new industrial base is concentrated in computers and pharmaceuticals. And most of these firms are US owned.

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Ticket booking ring 087 9090166

Contact Peerless Rugs workers at 0507-31828



news of the world

Israel steps up war on the Palestinians

ISRAEL SENT F-16 fighters to flatten a Palestinian police station in the West Bank town of Ramallah, after a Hamas suicide bomber blew himself up along with 15 others at a pizzeria in central Jerusalem.

Israel troops then took over Orient House, the PLO headquarters in east Jerusalem, and other Palestinian offices in and around the city.

They had moved into the symbol of the "peace process". Orient House was the building from which the Palestinians set out to the 1991 Madrid peace conference.

Beaten

The same day European and American peace demonstrators, including Christians, Jews and Muslims, holding Palestinian flags outside Orient House, were beaten off the road by Israeli mounted police.

A young British woman briefly arrested and taken behind police barriers described how she had seen two Palestinian protesters brutally beaten by two Israeli policemen.

"They beat them with batons on the spleen and liver," Angela Zelter said.

"One of the policemen pushed his fingers into the eyes of one of the prisoners."

Palestinians who have mainly used stones against the might of the Israeli army wanted revenge for this sort of cruelty.

Over 540 Palestinians have been killed

since the beginning of the intifada, many of them children.

Even before the suicide bombing in Jerusalem, Israel was preparing for full scale war against the Palestinians.

Before the suicide bombing Israeli helicopter gunships destroyed a block of flats in Nablus in the West Bank.

They killed eight people, including two leaders of the Islamic group Hamas.

The attack also killed Ashraf and Bilal Khader, two young boys aged ten and seven, a local journalist, and three Hamas workers.

The bombing came as a desperate response to the wholesale slaughter that Israel has inflicted on Palestinians.

Israel has assassinated over 40 Palestinian activists with death squads and



Demonstrators defy violence and intimidation by police to voice their opposition

missile attacks since the intifada began last September.

Israel has named seven Palestinian

activists as the next targets on its death list.

US vice-president Dick Cheney came out in support of the poli-

cy. "If you are an organisation that is planning some sort of suicide bomb attack, there is some justifica-

tion in Israel trying to protect themselves," Cheney said.

Disgracefully the media call these assas-

inations "targeted killings"—the phrase the Israeli government uses for these state murders.

—Latin America

Bertie Ahern went to Brazil last month, he praised the economic policies of the Latin American continent. Those very policies were bringing misery to million across the continent. But workers and the poor are fighting back.

ARGENTINA

A government reform package means 13 percent cuts in public sector workers' salaries and major cuts to pensions.

After four years of recession and seven previous "reform" plans, some 16 percent of all workers are unemployed and one in three people live below the gov-

ernment's official poverty line.

Austerity

The new austerity plan has been demanded by the International Monetary Fund as the price for loans to stave off a financial crisis.

Workers and the unemployed reacted to the cuts plan by throwing up road blocks across the country, affecting more than 40 cities.

The protests came just weeks after a general strike against the cuts paralysed the country.

"In the face of growing repression we must mobilise and strike," said union leader Victor de Gennaro.

ECUADOR

Two premature babies died after police fired tear-

gas into their special hospital unit at the beginning of the month.

The gas was targeted at a protest march by health workers, who were in the fourth week of a strike demanding more funds for healthcare.

The gas seeped into the Isidora Ayora hospital in the capital, Quito.

"The entry of gas contributed to the deaths of two premature newborns," said the hospital director.

The government has been cutting back workers' salaries, and health and education spending, in or-

der to meet an IMF-backed austerity plan.

The 26,000-strong health workers' strike ended after the government appeared to make significant concessions.

GUATAMALA

A one-day strike shut down much of the country at the beginning of August.

Protests erupted against a government tax "reform" which would put up the price of many basic goods.

Dozens of protesters were injured and hundreds arrested in clashes

with police.

Small farmers and peasants in Guatemala and neighbouring countries face a severe drought.

This has led the United Nations to declare a food emergency.

The effects of the drought are made worse by the neo-liberal policies being pushed by the government.

Control

The richest 2 percent in Guatemala control almost two thirds of all national wealth.

Some 90 percent of people live below the government's official poverty line.

Eamonn McCann

What the IRA announcement really signifies

THERE IS disagreement among commentators as to whether the IRA's announcement that it will put its weapons beyond use amounts to a "hugely historical development".

Some say it's meaningless. Others say it means everything has changed.

What's certain is that it marks another major step by the Provos away from armed struggle and towards conventional politics.

The first IRA statement after the Belfast Agreement in April 1998 declared that, despite the passage in the Agreement envisaging paramilitary disarmament by June 2000, the IRA had no intention of decommissioning, full stop. Danny Morrison said that he didn't believe there'd be decommissioning by June 2000— "nor by June 3000 either".

Now the IRA says it has agreed the method by which it "will" decommission.

It didn't say when. It could withdraw the undertaking if things don't go to its liking. It could decommission some weapons and then replace them. It could keep enough of its arsenal back to resume war at some opportune point in the future.

None of this subtracts from the fact that its stated intentions today are diametrically different to the intentions it expressed just three years ago.

The sources of the pressure behind the change are obvious enough—the Dublin Government, corporate Irish-America, the Catholic Church, the Catholic "business community", various sponsors and funders of Republican and Republican-supported projects. What they all made clear was that full acceptance of Sinn Fein as a political partner for the future was dependant on the Provisionals distancing themselves from non-State violence.

Dogmatic

None of these elements has been dogmatic about how Republicans should demonstrate they'd moved away from armed struggle, or about the timing of the move. The various deadlines and insistence on particular "methodologies" have come from the Ulster Unionists—many simply putting obstacles in the way on account of a sectarian distaste for rubbing shoulders with "Fenians". To the extent that external forces have joined the Unionists in imposing deadlines, it's because they need the Unionists on board for stability's sake, not because they share the Unionist view of the matter.

It has also become clear that aside from the Republicans' association with paramilitarism, the establishment interests see no other problems in the way of partnership with Sinn Fein. There has been no hint from any of the conservative parties in the South, from any business institution North or South, from any corporate US interest, or indeed from the Ulster Unionists, that Sinn Fein, in terms of political ideas, stands for anything which they regard as dangerous or unacceptable.

In the South, Sinn Fein presents itself as a party of the Left, striving to associate with anti-capitalism and complaining about economic injustice. But in office in the North, in the perspective of big business and parties tied to big business, Sinn Fein hasn't put a foot wrong.

If we leave the sectarian concerns of some Unionists aside, this is true even of policing, often presented as both the most sensitive and the most divisive issue of all in the North. Crucially, Sinn Fein wants powerful local policing boards: in areas like west Belfast, this would give the party major influence on law and order locally.

Unionist and RUC elements howl with outrage at the prospect. "Former terrorists to run police", shriek the headlines. But we can take it both from their own statements and from their involvement in "restorative justice" schemes, that in terms of day-to-day operation, a Sinn Fein-influenced police force would be perfectly "proper" and conventional. A no-nonsense zero tolerance policy towards "unsocial behavior" can confidently be expected.

In all of these matters, Sinn Fein is still portrayed by Unionists and Unionist supporters in the media as a dangerous outfit, not to be trusted with a share of political power. And Sinn Feiners are sometimes happy to be depicted in this light.

In fact, the party is well on the way to completion of its journey from an unrespectable past to an unremarkable future in conventional, bourgeois politics.

Sectarian violence

'We want an alternative'

WHILE MOST the media focussed on IRA weapons, the rise in loyalist violence has continued, with nightly attacks and intimidation.

Socialist Worker spoke Angela Boyle and Sean McVeigh, who live and work in one of the worst affected areas, North Belfast.

Sean is a teacher in North Belfast. He describes the rise in loyalist violence.

"Over the last few weeks Loyalists have been subjecting people in North Belfast to nightly intimidation and forcing people out of their homes. Loyalists recently murdered Gavin Brett, a Protestant lad out with his Catholic friends.

"Near where I live a Catholic and Protestant couple's house was attacked for four hours by Loyalists.

"They threw bricks and other missiles. But the RUC did nothing, even though the couple phoned them several times.

"The two were forced to move. The Loyalists openly call this 'ethnic cleansing'—they want to get Catholics out of the area.

"The Loyalist paramilitary group the Ulster Defence Association is behind the violence.

"For the last two years the Loyalists have not let up in their sectarian campaign of intimidation, but it has grown worse in the last few weeks around the Orange marching season."

Picketed

Angela's children go to Holycross primary school, a Catholic school in Ardoyne, which was picketed by loyalist thugs in June.

She recalls what happened: "On the Friday at about 2pm, a whole lot of army jeeps blocked off the road up by the primary school.

"I was worried for my daughter who was in the school at the time.

"The children coming out were distressed and crying their eyes out.

"Later on, we learnt that men with baseball bats, who were obviously paramilitary types, were standing by the windows



Parents and children blocked from going to school in North Belfast

taunting the children inside the school.

"The next school day you could see the same men leaning against the fence all the way up to the school.

"When more parents came, the men organised themselves into a picket, stopping the children going to school.

"Nowadays the school is more like a prison. You have shutters on every window, which are only let up when the children are inside.

"That environment is not healthy for anyone, yet alone a child"

Other Catholic schools have also been

targeted.

Sean says, "My partner works at a Catholic school in a Protestant area. There has been a Loyalist campaign to shut it down.

"They set fire to the gymnasium and a store-room. The place is covered in razor wire.

"People say they haven't seen this much violence since the 1981 hunger strikes."

Poorest

North Belfast is one of the poorest areas in the UK. Angela and Sean both see a direct link

between the sectarian violence and the deprivation of local areas.

Angela: "Definitely, poverty is a problem here. You don't see rioting in Cultra or on the Malone Road.

"All the riots you see in north Belfast are in the poorest areas, the same with Lurgan and elsewhere."

Sean says "North Belfast is one of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland. Recent figures have shown that out of a population of 70,000 people some 44,000 officially live in deprivation.

"It's important to understand that only a

minority cause the violence. Many people are desperate for an alternative.

"In the Whitewell area an independent candidate came second to Paisley's Democratic Unionists in recent council elections.

"He stood on an Old Labour ticket of fighting for hospitals, schools and jobs. The votes came equally from Protestant and Catholic housing estates.

"The Loyalists are only able to get a hearing because none of the politicians are tackling the social issues that could make a difference to people's lives."

Ulster Unionists who jeopardise the peace

THE ULSTER Unionists are once again jeopardising peace in Northern Ireland and encouraging the rise of loyalist violence.

Ever since the peace process began, the Ulster Unionists have demanded that the IRA decommission its weapons.

Yet General John de Chastelain, head of the decommissioning body, says he is "satisfied" that the IRA will put its weapons "completely and verifiably beyond use." Trimble now says he wants to see "actual weapons destroyed" and complains about any further changes to

the RUC.

The demand for decommissioning and complaints about "concessions to republicans" are in fact simply the updated form of the old Unionist refrain "the Catholics are getting everything."

Minority

The result is to give credibility to the tiny minority of loyalist thugs in the UDA, who do the dirty work of terrorising Catholics while the politicians keep a safe distance.

Unionism is in crisis today. They have nothing to offer ordinary Protestants and can only hold together by nursing

a sense of grievance and directing the despair of run down areas like the Shankill Road onto their equally poor Catholic neighbours.

The Agreement locks in this sectarian logic.

Virtually every issue, from a hospital closure to the design of the RUC cap badge, is pushed into the sectarian mould and presented as a concession from one community or the other.

An end to sectarianism won't come from the Assembly. It can only come from united struggles of working class Protestants and Catholics against the rotten conditions they both face, which offers real hope instead of feeding despair.

Racist murder in Glasgow

Bloody price of scapegoating asylum seekers

FIRSAT YILDIZ fled to Britain from Turkey in fear of his life. He hoped to find sanctuary from violence and terror. He was murdered. At the age of 22 he bled to death in a Glasgow park.

Griffin said in the July issue of the BNP's rag, "We are spearheading a campaign against asylum seeker placements in the Sighthill area."

His mother, desperate to see him safe, sold most of her possessions to get him out.

Wherever the BNP has an electoral success or a presence, racist attacks increase.

Dispersal means refugees get dumped in run-down housing areas with no proper facilities and support.

Officially, 40 percent of the population are living in poverty. It has the highest level of unemployment in Scotland.

RESISTANCE Ireland's socialist magazine

After genoa - Eye witness reports and analysis, Palestine - A year of intifada, Cuba, Waste management crisis

ITALY IN THE 1970's

by TOM BEHAN

The strategy of tension

SOME OF the events witnessed in Genoa in July uncannily resemble what happened in Italy 30 years ago.

What became known as the "strategy of tension" began in December 1969 when a bomb exploded without warning in Milan, killing 16 and wounding 90.

Just as young people today look to the Zapatistas in Mexico for inspiration, in 1968 young people looked to Che Guevara or the Chinese leader Mao Zedong.

The rebellion of blacks in the US opened many people's eyes to the reality of the American Dream, which quickly fed in to a massive campaign against the Vietnam War.

During 1968 student-based organisations which called themselves Marxist and revolutionary were created. And, crucially, some of them started talking systematically to workers.

These groups had a vital influence on the explosion of workers' struggles in the second half of 1969—the "Hot Autumn".

Strikes multiplied four-fold during 1968-9, often involving non-manual workers. But the key revolts were centred in the factories, and by the autumn of 1969 many bosses had lost control.

Decisions on what action to take were generally made at mass meetings, which were often called spontaneously.

One FIAT worker recalled, "People just jumped on the tables in the cafeteria during lunch break, and that's how mass meetings started."

In the most militant factories managers became targets: "Hunting for the bosses

soon became a habit. "Sometimes we caught them and threw them out over the gates, other times we roped them up, stuck a red flag in their hands, and forced them to march along in front of the rally."

The Milan bombing in 1969 was an attempt to stop all this. Just an hour after the explosion police began arresting anarchists.

The aim of the strategy of tension was to boost the right in the hope that people would demand a clampdown.

Initially the far right did gain ground. The fascist MSI's vote doubled from 4.4 percent in 1968 to 8.7 percent in 1972.

Small anarchist groups were occasionally infiltrated by neo-fascists and the secret services who tried to persuade, bribe or blackmail them into carrying out their own acts of low-level terrorism.

Workers' strike action was declining, student activism was a shadow of its former self, and the revolutionary groups which arose after 1968 had disbanded.

Meanwhile the right wing bombings reached a crescendo with the blowing up of Bologna railway station, and photographs showed police disguised as students using revolvers to kill a demonstrator in Rome.

And at the Stefana steelworks in Brescia, workers went on strike against "the ferocious violence of the police", and demanded the release of one of their shop stewards who had been arrested.

In Genoa the Italian state threw everything it had at anti-capitalist demonstrators and ultimately lost.

Despite its "strategy of tension", and the murder of protester Carlo Giuliani, the movement came out of it more united, mature and determined.



THE BOLOGNA bombing (above) was part of the Italian state's "strategy of tension". Photographs showed police disguised as students killing a demonstrator in Rome (bottom)

MACEDONIA:

Ethnic hatred stoked up by NATO

AFTER THE killing of ten Macedonian troops in an ambush by the Albanian based National Liberation Army, a wave of ethnic murders have taken place.

The war in Macedonia is building pressure for another NATO intervention in the Balkans.

Socialist Worker spoke to Panos Garganas of our sister organisation in Greece about prospects for the country.

Macedonia is on the brink of becoming a second Bosnia. NATO and EU leaders are saying they are doing their best to prevent this sort of thing happening.

In reality they hold the same responsibility in Macedonia as they have in Bosnia for setting each community at each others' throats.

It's important to have this picture in mind because the poverty that lies behind the tensions in Macedonia was created by western intervention.

The Albanians suffer discrimination. But the Albanian guerrillas' aim is about more than challenging that.

It is calculated to provoke a repressive response from the Macedonian army, so deepening ethnic divisions and driving more of the Albanian minority behind the guerrilla forces.

That is the same strategy Albanian guerrilla forces used in neighbour-hood Kosovo in 1998.

The Albanian forces are really calling for deeper NATO intervention in Macedonia.

The West is caught in a trap of its own making. It wants the guerrillas in Macedonia disarmed.

But it fears clamping down on them itself because that could lead to conflict between Albanians and NATO troops in Kosovo.

The same Western governments that have fuelled ethnic tensions in Macedonia are also insisting on a crash programme

forces used in neighbour-hood Kosovo in 1998. The Albanian forces are really calling for deeper NATO intervention in Macedonia.

Well, the Guarantor Powers are there but Cyprus has been in a mess for 40 years. It's a formula we have to reject. The experience everywhere proves that imperialist intervention under the guise of balancing rival populations is only a formula for protecting their own interests.

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Is this today's Communist Manifesto?

“NOTHING LESS than a rewriting of the *Communist Manifesto* for our time.”

“The sharpest description of globalisation ever written.”
“The hot, smart book of the moment.”

These are just some of the comments about a new book about globalisation, the world system and how people fight back.

It is called *Empire*, and it is written by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.

There is so much interest in the book that its publishers have just increased the print run for the paperback edition from 5,000 to 20,000 copies.

Hardt, a lecturer in the US, was recently the subject of a big profile in the *Observer* newspaper and was interviewed on television about the protests in Genoa.

Negri is a political philosopher and activist who is currently serving a prison sentence in Italy connected to his association with the Italian left in the 1970s.

Together Hardt and Negri wrote a response to the Genoa protests, published in the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*. In it they said: “The protests themselves have become global movements, and one of their clearest objectives is the democratization of globalising processes.

“This should not be called an anti-globalisation movement. It is an alternative globalisation movement, one that seeks to eliminate inequalities between rich and poor and between the powerful and the powerless, and to expand the possibilities of self determination.

“If we understand one thing from the multitude of voices in Genoa, it should be that a better future is possible...the realistic course of action today is to demand what is seemingly impossible—that is, something new.”

Both Hardt and Negri clearly want a better world and identify with those demonstrating on the streets. What, then, does *Empire* actually say? *Empire* is a far cry from the grand claims that are made about it.

It is a big book, lots of which is philosophical and historical, and draws on many obscure thinkers.

It is also quite tough to read—this is definitely not the place to start reading about capitalism and the world system. It may put you off for life!

At the core of *Empire* is a reworking of Marxism. This reworking involves two central and mistaken ideas.

New global order

THE FIRST is the whole idea of “Empire” itself, both the title and the heart of the book.

Hardt and Negri accept the widespread view that we are living in a new era of economic globalisation which has rendered the nation-state powerless.

There are lots of problems with this view. But Hardt and Negri don't leave it there. They go even further and argue that the new era of “Empire” has also transcended imperialism and any conflict between nation-states.

The world is now ruled by an impersonal structure of economic and political power that has no centre and cannot be identified with any particular state—not even the US.

We have entered into an era of the “universal rule of capital without a centre”.

by SAM ASHMAN

“Along with the global market and global circuits of production has emerged a global order, a new logic and structure of rule. *Empire* is the political subject that effectively regulates these global ex-changes, the sovereign power that governs the world.”

The authors paint a very dramatic and dark image—a bit like something out of a science fiction novel. They are clearly describing a world that is oppressive and destructive.

But the book is also frustrating because there is virtually no concrete analysis of the world today.

There is no analysis of the workings of the world economy, of multinational corporations and organisations like the WTO, or of nation-states. *Empire* ignores completely the very serious conflicts and rivalries that exist between nation-states, such as that between the US and China.

There is no discussion of how George Bush's “Son of Star Wars” plan has “transcended imperialism”.

Every argument is put at a very abstract and general level.

There is no discussion of who rules, or how.

Multitude

THE SECOND central idea of *Empire* is that of the “multitude” or the people at the bottom of society.

It is the multitude, a vast and amorphous mass, which resists Empire at every point.

The multitude is something different from the working class.

Negri is hostile to the organised working class. Elsewhere he has referred to trade unionists as “kulaks”—the word for rich peasants in Russia who lived off the backs of poor peasants.

In *Empire* Hardt and Negri accept that “the composition of the proletariat has transformed”.

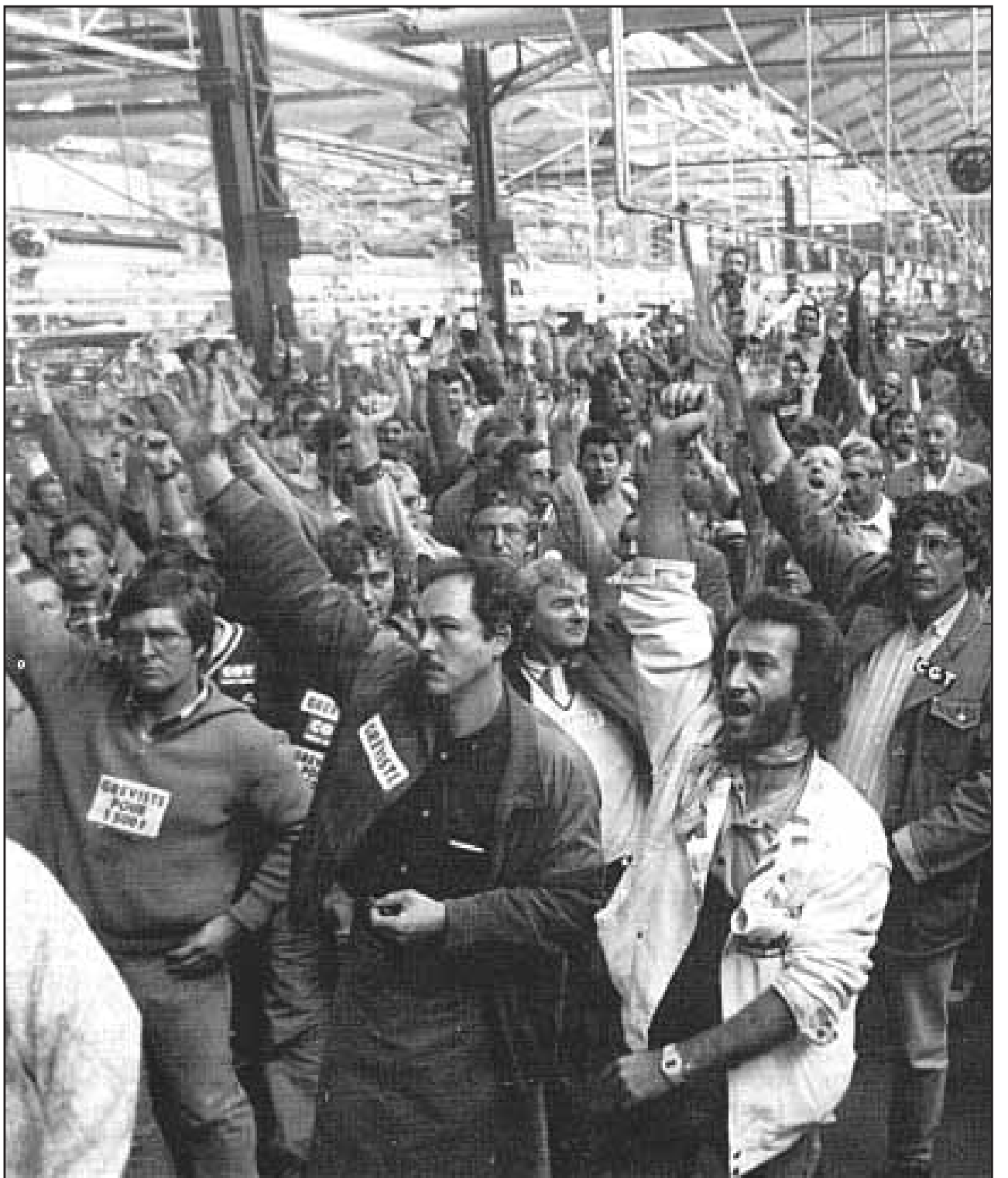
Today the industrial working class “has all but disappeared from view. It has not ceased to exist but it has been displaced from its privileged position in the capitalist economy.”

But this is not so. The working class is not only a growing force. It is the one force with the power to disable the system.

Today there are 20,000 more auto workers' jobs in the US than there were in 1979. Globalisation has created a million new garment workers in Bangladesh, mainly women, who are fighting and building union organisation.

Many workers battling against neo-liberalism and privatisation know that they are not alone.

But Hardt and Negri argue that



THE FORCE for change. Workers voting for action.

events like the Palestinian intifada, the 1992 revolt in Los Angeles, the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, and strikes by workers in France and South Korea cannot be linked together.

“None of these events inspired a cycle of struggles, because the desires and needs they expressed could not be translated into different contexts.”

This is ludicrous. The Zapatistas may not have provoked similar risings, but they have certainly provoked international inspiration and solidarity.

Who's the enemy?

HARDT AND Negri, having defined Empire as the “universal rule of capital without a centre”, argue there is no longer one clear enemy.

So the capitalist class, the employers and the armed might of the state are no longer the enemy.

As such, they also give up on any notion of political strategy.

They do outline three general demands:

> The right to global citizenship (free movement of all peoples across the globe).

> The right to a social wage (and a guaranteed income for all, including the unemployed).

> The right to reappropriation (control over language, communication and production).

There are also vague calls to be a “radical republican”, and at other times for “revolutionary political militancy” and the need to be “communist”.

But what does this mean?

Their only guidance is to suggest

“posing against the misery of power the joy of being”.

Empire's final paragraph even gives St Francis of Assisi as a possible role model for those who want to fight for a better world!

Revolutionaries need to do a lot more. We need to build the day to day struggles of workers against privatisation and job losses and link them with battles against neo-liberalism around the world, as well as the big demonstrations outside institutions like the G8 and the International Monetary Fund.

There is no doubt Hardt and Negri want a better world.

But they do not understand the world we live in today, nor do they provide a guide for action to win a new one tomorrow.

> *Empire is published by Harvard University Press*

in my view

Sleepwalker awakes

"FOR THE past ten to 15 years we've been asleep. I hope we are once again awakening."

These are the words of Gillo Pontecorvo, who at the age of 82 was one of the oldest protesters in Genoa.

But he is also better known as one of the greatest Marxist film directors, responsible for such classics as *The Battle of Algiers*, *Burn!* and *Kapo*.

Pontecorvo was one of 35 of Italy's most talented film directors who came together at Genoa to make a documentary about the anti-capitalist protests against the G8 summit.

Pontecorvo's agenda was clear when he told reporters, "It's our duty to roll up our sleeves and work with others on such an important occasion, when the quality of life of the future is being decided."

The producers of the documentary expect the film to be broadcast on TV across Europe next year.

Pontecorvo is a fascinating character. He joined the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in 1941 and became a commander in the resistance movement against fascism.

Any illusions he had in Stalinism were destroyed when Russia invaded Hungary in 1956.

He left the PCI and became an independent socialist, and threw his lot in with the national independence movements that swept the world in the 1950s and 60s.

He even ran money that had been collected for the FLN, the Algerian liberation movement, between France and Switzerland.

It was this movement which inspired his greatest film, *The Battle of Algiers*.

The Algerian war for independence was one of the most hard fought. The film reconstructs the main political events in the city of Algiers between 1954 and 1957.

Shot in black and white, it feels like you are watching a documentary. The film, shows the brutality of French imperialism, with harrowing scenes of torture and execution.

Out of a population of nine million, over one million would die.

Uprising

However, it is in the final scenes of the film, during the uprising in Algiers, that Pontecorvo shows the power of mass action. He takes the camera into the crowd so that the audience feel they are involved.

The narrow streets filled with teargas, the tanks trundling down the street, and the voice of the radio commentator combined with the cries of the demonstrators make you believe you are witnessing the event.

It was such a powerful film the French government banned it.

Every socialist should see it. Fortunately the film is widely available to buy on DVD and video.

After *The Battle of Algiers* Pontecorvo made *Burn! (Queimada!)*, a brilliant film about a slave rebellion in a Portuguese colony in the 18th century. It stars Marlon Brando.

But then his films dried up. Over the last 20 years Pontecorvo has failed to complete a film. In an interview he gave to the film magazine *Sight and Sound* he explained that his disillusion with the governments of the newly liberated nations left him demoralised.

He added, "Nothing inspires me any more!" He has spent those years making TV commercials and organising the Venice Film Festival.

The magnificent protest at Genoa has reignited the passions of one of the greatest filmmakers.

This is just a very small indicator of the power and depth of the anti-capitalist movement that is sweeping the world.

by MARTIN SMITH

book

Coming clean on a dirty war

A FORGOTTEN war is raging on Russia's southern border.

Russia is taking revenge on Chechnya for defeating its troops in the 1994-6 war. At stake is control over the oil-rich region of the Caspian Sea.

Since Russia invaded Chechnya in October 1999 some 40,000 people have died and 400,000 have been made homeless.

Chechnya is occupied by 80,000 Russian soldiers whose systematic torture, murder and looting have led even members of the Moscow-appointed puppet administration to resign in protest.

A new book by a Russian journalist tells the truth about the war.

by DAVE CROUCH

which is why I record all the detail I can."

Unusually for a journalist, Politkovskaya is so moved by what she sees that she constantly finds herself pulled into direct involvement in the situations she describes.

She gives money to desperate people, campaigns to save an old people's home and rages at the Russian generals.

Her relentless message to her "hard-hearted readers enjoying their breakfasts" is to reject the government's sanitised lies about the war.

There are signs that the message is getting through.

Support for the war among Russians has halved to 35 percent, while 75 percent say the government's policy has shown no results.

This book does not explain the war, however.

And because Politkovskaya isn't clear about why it is happening, she sometimes accuses the Chechen resistance of being as bad as the Russians.

Hysteria

But it is remarkable that this brave author has stood out against the war hysteria in her country.

Her reports are unambiguous. This is Russia's dirty war.

Vladimir Putin, Russian president and ex-

War crimes

Anna Politkovskaya is a correspondent for a Moscow newspaper. *Dirty War* is a collection of her reports in which she documents Russia's war crimes.

She exposes the arbitrary violence meted out to the Chechen population.

They are forced to live in primitive conditions without food, heat, light or medicines.

Behind each statistic lie thousands of unbearable personal tragedies.

Politkovskaya allows Chechen men, women and children to tell their stories for themselves. "My notes are written for the future," she says.

Testimony

"They are the testimony of the innocent victims of the new Chechen war,

Film

Shrek's appeal

SHREK IS DreamWorks latest release. It takes off Walt Disney's perfect fairy tale world of which we have seen so much with the likes of Robin Hood, Pinocchio and, of course, Beauty and the Beast.

Shrek is a tale of an ogre, Shrek (Mike Myers), his unwanted companion, Donkey (hilariously voiced by Eddie Murphy) and the princess, Princess Fiona (Cameron Diaz).

In the opening scene we see Shrek reading a fairy tale of the usual

by MIRIAM CAREY

princess who is locked away and can only be freed by her true love.

As Shrek reaches this crucial part in the fairy tale, he rips off the page and wipes his backside with it. Here, the tale begins.

Shrek is a social outcast (because he is an ogre!) but he prefers it that way. In fact, he hates company.

When he eventually rescues Fiona she is expecting a handsome prince, who is her true love, but is disappointed to find Shrek.

On the journey home we find out that Fiona, the beautiful



RUSSIAN HELICOPTERS in Chechnya during the massacre

KGB officer, was welcomed by Western leaders with open arms at the recent G8 summit.

Bono and Bob Geldolf could do with reading this book before they go to anymore international conferences for a hug.

■**Dirty War: A Russian Reporter in Chechnya** by Anna Politkovskaya, price £12

music

Bella Chao

"PEOPLE'S GLOBALISATION not corporate globalisation" is one of the slogans of the anti-capitalist movement.

And people's globalisation exists, it now has a soundtrack.

Manu Chao is a hugely successful musician everywhere in Europe. But in Ireland he remains largely unknown.

He makes music of resistance, singing in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese.

He sings about "los sin papeles" (illegal immigrants), about the poor of the world and their struggles against a system which puts profit before people.

This makes him sound a bit worthy, perhaps rather glum.

But his music is a joyful explosion of reggae, ska, salsa, rock, folk and many other influences.

These are mixed with subtlety and a lightness of touch that belies the seriousness of his

themes.

He spent several years travelling in Latin America and other parts of the world recording and collecting local songs of resistance for his first album, *Clandestino*.

This is music to dance away the blues.

Manu Chao's new album, *Proxima Estacion-Esperanza (Next Station-Hope)* is in the same spirit.

Anyone at the protest in Genoa probably ate and drank at Manu Chao's expense as a restaurant, *Clandestino*, was distributing free refreshments to the protesters during the entire weekend.

He has made many public statements in support of the movement and performed for free at benefits.

But of course the best reason for buying his records is the fun of listening to them.

■**Proxima Estacion-Esperanza** is released on the Virgin label, price £14.99.



where we stand
Workers create all the wealth in capitalist society. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be reformed out of existence. Parliament cannot be used to end the system.

The courts army and police are there to defend the interests of the capitalist class not to run society in a neutral fashion.

To destroy capitalism, workers need to smash the state and create a workers' state based on workers' councils.

FOR REAL SOCIALISM, EAST AND WEST

The SWP welcomed the break-up of the USSR and the end of the East European dictatorships. These states were not socialist but were run by a state-capitalist class.

We are against the domination of the globe by imperialist powers and we oppose their wars. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We stand for: free contraception and free, legalised abortion and the right to divorce; the complete separation of church and state, an end to church control over schools and hospitals; an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians; an end to racism and anti-traveller bigotry.

We argue for working class unity in the fight against oppression.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

Northern Ireland is a sectarian state, propped up by the British Army.

Catholic workers are systematically discriminated against by the state. The division between Catholic and Protestant workers weakens the whole working class.

Workers' unity can only be won and maintained in a fight to smash both the Northern and Southern states.

We stand for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Violence will only end when workers unite in the fight for a workers' republic.

FOR A FIGHTING TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Trade unions exist to defend workers' interests. But the union leaders' role is to negotiate with capitalism—not to end it. We support the leaders when they fight but oppose them when they betray workers. We stand for independent rank and file action.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party. This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. The SWP aims to build such a party here.

Genoa aftermath...Genoa aftermath... Genoa aftermath...Genoa

IRISH PROTESTOR JAILED IN GENOA:

'Continue the fight against oppression and exploitation'

JOE MOFFAT, an Irish protestor at the G8 summit in Genoa, was imprisoned by the Italian authorities from Sunday 22nd July until Wednesday 8th August. Here he tells *Socialist Worker* about his experiences.

"I was walking down the street when the Carabinieri started shouting at us aggressively. They started to hit my friend and then arrested me for having a Swiss army knife, which was used in camping.

"I was beaten around the head and kicked in the chest and legs. One of them attempted to stab me in the right arm. They demanded my eyes look groundwards and I felt a small prick upon



Joe Moffat

my right arm I lifted my head and saw that the arresting Carabinieri had a combat knife in his hand that must have just pricked

me. I was hit on the head with a coin"

"All the time they tried to deprive us of information. Even though I saw a

magistrate, the Italian state denied that I was being held in custody.

"I think that the campaign of solidarity in Ire-

land to demand my release was a real help. I was released without seeing a magistrate which is most unusual. I still do not know if there are charges against me.

"I now want everyone to look out for three German friends I made while I was in prison—Peter Cuntz, Hanny, Michael Kohl, who are still being held on trumped up charges. One of their brothers waited a week outside the jail in a car before getting in.

"Funnily enough, this experience has strengthened my political beliefs. Policemen should not be allowed to arrest people at will.

"We should continue the fight against oppression and exploitation. I think the anti-capitalist movement is getting bigger and bigger. We need to keep it broad based and we can succeed."

★ **OUTRAGE** has greeted sentences passed on anti-capitalist protesters who demonstrated in the Swedish city of Gothenburg in June.

Luigino "Gigi" Longo, a 43 year old trade unionist and socialist living in Norway, and Jonas Enander both received sentences of two and a half years.

Paul Robinson, a UNISON union member from Britain was also imprisoned, for a year.

Write to jailed protesters at the Gothenburg remand centre: Haktet, Polis Huset, Box 429, 40126 Göteborg, Sweden.

Globalise Resistance

In the aftermath of the Genoa protests, Globalise Resistance took to the streets and organised a series of report back meetings around the country.

There were repeated protests at the Italian embassy against the treatment of protesters in Genoa and for their release.

The Globalise Resistance contingent that had gone to Genoa immediately set up a vigil at the Italian embassy and forced an apology from the Italian ambassador.

At a protest for the release of Joe Moffat, one protestor was arrested and charged under the public order act for chanting "Bullshit come off it—release Joe Moffat!"

Some 600 people attended a carnival, with workshops and lively march the week after the Genoa protests in Dublin.

Reportback meetings around the country have included: Over a hundred people to hear a member of Cobas and the Genoa Social forum in Dublin, 80 people at a meeting in Cork, 90 people attended a meeting in the Smithfield area of Dublin, 30 a meeting Derry. There have been meetings in Sligo, Thurles, Limerick, Galway, Letterkenny, Drogheda, Dundalk and Ringsend in Dublin and lively meetings and a big Gap protest in Belfast.

Globalise Resistance is setting up groups around the country. If you want to get involved or put on a meeting or activity in your area ring 086-4098186 or e-mail globalise_resistance@yahoo.com.

Italy

Thousands take to the streets

THE ITALIAN government is still feeling the after-effects of the great demonstrations against the G8 summit in Genoa last month.

The vicious police repression of those who protested against the G8 summit in Genoa sent shockwaves through the whole of Italian society. And it has created a political crisis for the new hard right government of businessman Silvio Berlusconi.

The police killing of 23 year old Carlo Giuliani, and the general police violence against demonstrators, sparked huge demonstrations in towns and cities across Italy.

In Milan a spontaneous demonstration of 50,000 people erupted through the

streets. Some 60,000 then protested the following day as well.

There were at least another 46 protests outside police stations across Italy in support of the Genoa Social Forum which organised the protests in Genoa.

The demonstrations called for the resignation of Claudio Scajola, the Italian interior minister, and for an inquiry into the violence unleashed by the police.

Banners said "Government of murderers" and "Our blood, your profits". A number of protesters are still missing after the demonstrations, and a group of mothers in Milan carried a banner saying, "Where are our children?" Over 30,000 marched in Rome, stopping for a minute's silence in memory of Carlo Giuliani.

The slogan of the Genoa Social Forum was "You:



Thousands marched in Rome

G8. Us: six billion". In Rome a banner said "You: G8. Us: 5,999,999,999".

Another 15,000 marched in Bologna, 5,000 in Brescia and 5,000 in Palermo, and 500 people in Cagliari were led by popular singer Manu Chao. Thousands more protested in Venice, Trieste, Napoli, Ancona and scores of other cities. Around 15,000 marched in Genoa itself.

"Genoa has completely changed the face of Italian politics," says Nicki, a socialist in Bologna.

"There's a new young layer of people coming through into left wing politics. But events have also reinvigorated a lot of older people. There's no time for cynicism anymore. Any time anyone wants to fight, Genoa will be the inspiration. No one is going to forget what happened there.

"The demonstrations were really angry. There was a real feeling that violence will not silence us. There were people on the streets who hadn't been in Genoa. They were angry at the police violence and didn't want a return to the

'strategy of tension'. No one has been killed on a demonstration in Italy for 25 years. But despite the violence everyone was smiling on the protests. Genoa has made people more determined to build the movement.

At the Stefana steelworks in Brescia workers went on strike against "the ferocious violence of the police".

They demanded the release of one of their shop stewards who was arrested in Genoa.

★ **THE BERLUSCONI government is a coalition between his Forza Italia party, the anti-immigrant Northern League and the "post-fascist" National Alliance.**

The National Alliance (AN) changed its name from the MSI in the early 1990s. The MSI openly stood as the political followers of former Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

Fascist leader Gianfranco Fini is also deeply embroiled in the revelations.

Fini is Berlusconi's deputy. He leads the National Alliance, a fascist party which follows in the tradition of Mussolini and is part of Berlusconi's coalition government.

It is now clear that Fini was personally present in Genoa police headquarters on both the Friday and the Saturday of the protests.

Fini boasted that he personally finalised the security plans.

The inclusion of fascists in the government has boosted the most right wing elements in the Italian state.

An unnamed police officer revealed that many of the police involved in attacks on demonstrators had far-right sympathies: "The police lined them up against the wall. They urinated on one person. They beat people up if they didn't sing the 'Facetta Nera' [a fascist song]. They threatened to rape girls with batons."

Socialist Worker

inside

AFTER GENOA:

**INTERVIEW: Jailed Irish
protestor Joe Moffat
PLUS Italy in revolt**



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Italy: The strategy of tension

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Contact SWP: (01) 8722682 <http://www.clubi.ie/swp> e-mail: swp@clubi.ie

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STOP BUSH'S STAR WARS MADNESS



Workers in Korea protest against Star Wars

US PRESIDENT, George W Bush, is determined to re-launch the Cold War and increase the risk of nuclear war.

He wants to speed up the arms race by creating Star Wars, a new missile system. Bush is planning to spend almost \$50 billion on the National Missile Defence System (NMD). The United States already spends \$35 billion a year—or more than \$96 million a day—on its nuclear arsenal.

The cumulative cost of U.S. nuclear weapons is nearly \$5.5 trillion.

Yet the US has the highest number of people living below the poverty line in the developed world.

Star Wars is an attempt by the US to assert its mil-

itary dominance in order to enforce its interests across the globe.

The other main reason behind the plan is the desire of US corporations to boost earnings in the midst of recession.

The US defence industry is dominated by a few contractors. Boeing, Lockheed Martin and TRW all of whom have suffered heavy losses in recent years.

But now they are all involved in Star Wars.

Defence

A consortium of three arms manufacturers: Raytheon, Lockheed Martin and TRW is now developing the technology, under the name United Missile Defense Company.

Raytheon's Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicle (EKV) transports the missile into space.

It is supposed to hit and

destroy an incoming missile in mid-flight above the earth's atmosphere.

The National Missile Defence system will fire missiles at any object the U.S. military deems a threat.

The US Department of Defence says it needs the system because "rogue nations" are developing their own weapons systems.

These rogue nations include Iraq and North Korea. But Iraq is already bombed regularly by US and British forces and has been devastated by sanctions.

North Korea is on the brink of famine and is hardly capable of hurting the US.

US claims that the mad scheme is purely defensive have been blown out of the water.

The *Observer* newspaper reported that US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is presiding over a programme aiming to develop a "space bomber" which could strike anywhere in the world.

The "space bomber" plan means the US's real aim is to be able to strike across the globe while hiding behind its protective shield.

Rumsfeld says the aim is for a space-based vehicle "for conducting rapid global strikes".

The craft could drop bombs from 60 miles high.

It could reach anywhere in the world in less than 90 minutes from its position in orbit.