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CLASS STRUGGLE AT THE BEGINNING
OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

(Sokoa III, June 2006)

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INTRODUCCTION: The intention of this paper is not merely to present a theoretical conceptualisation for debate in isolation from any practical basis, but rather, first of all, to attempt a synthesis of the main features of the class struggle being waged at the start of the twenty-first century, and then, following this “reality check”, to offer a theorisation thereof. Therefore it should be read through in the order in which it is presented and then compared with the appendices.

1. CLASS STRUGGLE IN EUROPE

1. At the end of 2005 came the conclusion of a 745-day-long strike in Euskal Herria by 116 workers at Caballito, a company affiliated to the German group Pferd Rüggeberg, with a total payroll of 1700 employees at its plants on four continents. Although business was profitable the multinational had decided to lower its salaries, reduce the number of jobs and introduce tougher working conditions. The strike combined “old” and “new” characteristics of class struggle: worker solidarity against the initial firing of two employees, democratic methods of worker organisation, a sellout by one of the unions breaking the united front, another union’s resistance fund to obtain corporative credits, external social support, threats to close down the factory, displays of arrogance on the part of management, repressive polie behaviour, the Basque bourgeoisie’s sympathy for the company side, and manipulation in the press and media. And to boot, national oppression which denies the working class access to the resources of local and international solidarity.
2. Many other conflicts were being played out across Euskal Herria, but we need to extend our perspective beyond these, for the class struggle is a constant factor, inherent to capitalism. The company threat to pull out of Caballito and move the factory to another country hearkens back to a recurrent practice ever since the seventeenth century, when the early bourgeoisie moved their companies around from region to region in search of maximum profit. That practice increased in frequency from the last quarter of the eighteenth century onwards, in the wake of the early resistance movement by workers in the steam engine industry.
3. The rebellion by a part of youth in the French state in December, 2005 threw a spotlight on the severe racist alienation they suffer because of their non-European origin. These young people carry inside them not only the imprint of national oppression suffered by their ancestors and their own cultural and religious oppression, but also their exclusion from jobs and society, an identity crisis, and political and trade-union isolation, not to mention their economic penury and the frustration of



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their life aspirations. The French state requested assistance of the Israeli police to repress their rebellion.

4. The large-scale rebellion by youth in March, 2006 against the state's outrageous proposal of neo-slavery in the work market, which had significant support from worker and grassroots sectors, indicates the degree of social tension that has been reached in the ups and downs of events since the winter of 1995: the 2003 mobilisation of public sector workers over the government's retirement plan, spiralling in February and March, 2005, with demonstrations and social and student protests in opposition to the government's attempt to abandon the 35-hour week, climaxing in May with the victory of the no vote in the referendum over the European constitutional project, giving rise to a tangible atmosphere of ferment and unrest, are some of the phases of this growing trend.
5. In October, 2005, grassroots and working-class sectors in Belgium carried out general strikes against neo-liberal policy; these were preceded by a wave of spontaneous strikes at many factories. The official trade unions did not support the spontaneous strikes but were forced to join the self-organisation movement that grew out of them and led to the October mobilisations. There was also a close connection between the so-called "social movement" and other forces in the struggle developing first steps of *rapprochement* in the 1993 fight against the government's Global Plan, reinforced in 1996 through the so-called "white movement".
6. The crisis of the German social democrats reflects not only the strength of the conservatives but, most importantly, the radicalisation since early 2003 of the worker movement which had helped them to defeat the conservative government in 1998. This radicalisation is also the root cause behind the growth of a political and electoral force situated to the left of the SPD that stole many of their votes. This force is highly critical of the official "Agenda 2010" which it sees as a grave threat to trade-union and social rights, including an attempt to put back the retirement age to 67.
7. Between the 1st of May, 2003, and early 2004, mobilisations grew culminating in the fight of metal workers against the revision of the 35-hour working week (won in 1984) back to 40 hours. The official trade unions, standing in the way of this movement, are starting to lose ground to newly created alternative trade unions, strongly politicised and more democratic, that emerged in 2004, especially after the October mass strike at Opel in Germany and Brazil. By then there had already been strikes in big multinationals such as Siemens and



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Daimler, as well as many smaller companies. Under this growing pressure from workers critical sectors within the SPD have begun to organise, like many other groups on the Left.

8. In Italy thousands of mechanical workers struck on the 12th of December, 2005. The CGIL said it supported their fight and there should be no concessions, but the FIOM, which is the mechanical workers' branch of the CGIL, favoured negotiation, and was backed up by the PRC. The worst part of this new rightward trend is that it is taking place in the midst of spiralling mobilisations against the Berlusconi government, as was shown by the four-hour general strike on the 15th of November, 2005.
9. The latter trend was clearly manifest since the wave of protests in 2001-2003 when Berlusconi's prestige began to falter. In 2004 it showed its strength in the consolidation of youth movements, notably in Bologna, and in the popular movements particularly in Piedmont, while another sign is the fact that 75% of Italian cities and regions have centre-left governments. This tendency should avoid manipulation for the general elections in April, 2006, since pressures from the reformists and the leadership of the PRC may bring about support for Prodi on the pretext of pushing Berlusconi out of power.
10. Greece, a country with 25% of its population living in extreme poverty and an official unemployment rate of 11%, went on general strike on the 14th of December, 2005 against the neo-liberal government. The strike was seconded by broad sectors of society, and was taken up on the 15th by civil servants, who are especially affected by government measures of privatisation, deregulation and redundancies. A thousand workers at Coca-Cola also began a protest campaign when they learnt of company plans to close down the Athens plant and move it to another country.
11. Greek port workers went on strike in mid-February, 2006, to protest against wage cuts. The right-wing government declared martial law to break up the strike, despite which a pitched battle was waged on the 22nd of February at Piraeus, Greece's main port, between workers and a heavily armed police force, which for all its resources was unable to quell the strikers. It is both regrettable and significant that the political and union reformists nevertheless decided to call off the strike.
12. The fights at Coca-Cola and among the port workers are just two examples of growing social unrest in Greece today. In the context of this upward trend, a meeting of left-wing parties and trade unions was held on the 26th of February to ensure coordination among the



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struggles of workers in construction, transport, shipping, textiles, banks, health care etc., all under threat from the bourgeoisie's offensive, and to lay foundations for a well-defined broad front of the Left.

13. In the Catalan Countries, a strike at SEAT in December, 2005 served as an object lesson on the role played by the Spanish majority trade unions, Comisiones Obreras and UGT, in the laying off of 660 employees. This umpteenth sellout by the unions in question has sexist overtones as well and has weakened the feminist struggle within the workers' movement, since of the 660 victims 132 were women, making up 20% of the total sacked, a high figure considering that only 12% of SEAT's entire staff are female. Thus the reformist unions are active collaborators in the company attack on its workers, adding to the burden workers suffer in having to deal with the patriarchal bourgeois system.
14. But the dismissal of workers is only part of the problem: the management also takes advantage of such situations to grind down militant trade unionism. On this occasion, Comisiones and UGT deliberately contributed to the laying off of 145 workers (23% of the total) belonging to CGT, the union that has fought hardest in defence of the workers' rights. It is obvious that there are no accidents here: there must have been previous meetings, union affiliation data must have been lined up, layoff victims must have been hand-picked by the management, and the UGT and Comisiones can only have played a part in this repressive policy.
15. As almost always when workers are made redundant, the management takes advantage of its victory to apply cutbacks in the most costly, inefficient or outdated areas of production. In this case a good proportion of the employees who lost their jobs were those ranked as highly skilled workers with higher-than-average salaries, and many were also aged over 55. So, trade-union collaborationism contributes to the deterioration of class cohesion and its restructuring in the least skilled and most defenceless sector.
16. Adding insult to injury, the reformist unions are so arrogant that they look down on the workers who don't surrender but fight on, calling them "hysterical", reinforcing the bourgeois viewpoint on what is "normal": someone "sane" and "normal", then, is someone who accepts the dominant system by becoming an obedient servant to those in power, while anyone else is branded as "hysterical". That is how blunt the General Secretary of Comisiones Obreras was, speaking in an interview on the 10th of January, 2006 in which he justified the SEAT layoffs.



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17. The growing discredit into which the major trade unions are falling is made still worse by their internal functioning, as in the case of the fight by workers exploited through the most extreme of neo-liberal methods by Comisiones Obreras in Madrid, at their company MAFOREN, in November 2005. Then there were the arrests of 25 members of Comisiones Obreras in March, 2006 in Cadiz, Seville, Granada, Murcia and Madrid for a fraud that may amount to over eight million euros of EU money that was supposed to have been put into training courses. Or again, UGT's accusation that Comisiones helped the PP in order to win favouritism at the UGT's expense in the handing over of trade union money. The pact between the management of Babcock and Comisiones Obreras in the Basque Country in autumn, 2004, amidst the silent complicity of ELA and UGT, was yet another example.
18. Contributing even further to the unions' discredit is their defence of the sociopolitical, cultural and power dimensions of state interests in the oppression of people in other countries, amidst a world trend towards emancipation of oppressed peoples, which is progressing at different rates in each particular case. As oppressed nations become more aware of their situation they generally start to organise trade unions of their own which may become key instruments for their emancipation. To this the occupying state responds with a succession of legal measures and prohibitions.
19. The state-oriented unions defend such oppressive laws due to both their adherence to the nationalist ideology of the occupying country and the economic benefits they produce, considering that the salaries supporting their bureaucracies are dependent on the money of the occupying oppressor bourgeoisie. In Euskal Herria it is undeniable that such a situation exists, the state-oriented unions acting as key elements in maintaining the imposed order by means of their explicit defence of the unity of the Spanish market, with its uniform system of employment, undifferentiated social security fund throughout the Spanish state, and fiscal unity for Spanish capitalism. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the French trade unions.
20. The state-oriented unions not only defend Spanish nationalism in oppressed countries but also come to the defence of Spanish imperialism whenever their bourgeoisie orders them to. Special mention must be made here of their intimate collaboration with the reactionary bureaucracy of the Venezuelan CTV, a mafia-type group backing all the fascist attacks against the Bolivarian Revolution.



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21. The fulminating strike of port workers against anticipated application of the Bolkestein plan; the blank refusal to date by the main unions involved in Arcelor, representing 94,000 jobs all across Europe, to accept the sale of the company to a corporate giant; the opposition of EFFAT, the European federation of food industry unions, to Coca-Cola's plans to close down plants and lay off workers in Belgium, Britain and the French state, as well as in Athens, mobilising its ranks in 120 unions and 35 countries; and a call for a British civil servants' strike for late March, affecting a million employees in nine trade unions, are just a few of the indications that a trend towards increasing militancy in the European Union indeed exists.
22. But this trend comes up against the reformist unions and the European Trade Union Confederation, representing 73 unions in 34 states and over sixty million members. At its London meeting in October, 2005, faced by Blair's proposal for a tougher policy, all that the ETUC did was call for compliance with the social programme presented at the 2000 Lisbon meeting, which will remain unfulfilled as long as social rights are still under attack. That is a rather passive strategy in view of the management's revival of the Bolkestein Directive, since November 2005, in the European Parliament's commission on the internal market, coinciding with the opening of discussions on the extension of the retirement age while cutting back drastically on aid to new countries in the 25-member European Union.
23. It is also a passive strategy considering that the results were already available from a study by Accenture and the Lisbon Council according to which future job niches will be centred around social and community work, health care, old age care, tourism, transportation and the like, within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that exploit these "labour quarries". Now it is well known that what with deregulation and job insecurity, these areas of work and the SMEs associated with them are notoriously prone to management impunity and servile union attitudes, all of which can only be expected to worsen with the implementation of Bolkestein.
24. The unions' and the ETUC's acceptance of this status quo is further reinforced by the European Parliament's surrender to the Bolkestein Directive. Indeed, following a few superficial touchups that barely entail improvements, the EP has opened the "back door" of the laws of each European state to allow implementation of the Directive in such a way that the reformist, state-oriented unions will gradually give way to this devastating offensive. All of which brings us to our next point which we need to analyse: the deepening crisis of the trade unions.



2. THE TRADE-UNION CRISIS

25. The instruments of pressure at the command of imperialism are not essentially different from those of which each state disposes. This is the fundamental thesis from which we must start out when studying the causes of the decline of the official trade-union structure, which is a recurrent phenomenon in the history of the class struggle. Yet despite the strong pressure thus exerted against the prevailing tendency towards escalation of the struggle, at least until now this intense effort has failed to quell the wave of worker resistance.
26. The fall in union membership is the result of several factors that need to be analysed in terms of both particular features and in the broader context. Before continuing we should consider some statistics provided by the ILO. The figure of over 328 million affiliated workers in 1985 fell to only 164 million in 1995. The negative trend has become more prevalent over the following decade, with falls of 77% in Israel, 71% in Estonia, 55.19% in New Zealand, 50% in the Czech Republic, 45% in Poland, 42.6% in Argentina, 40% in Slovakia, 38% in Hungary, 37.7% in the French state, 29.6% in Australia, 27.7% in the United Kingdom, 21.5% in the United States, 10% in Finland, 8% in Sweden, 7% in Italy.
27. The explanation for this decline offered by the ideologists of the bourgeoisie is that the death knell is being sounded for trade unionism in general because the “working citizen” is a free, independent person aware of his or her rights and needs who prefers to negotiate his or her own salary with the “company-owning citizen” without external pressure from the unions. We have to admit that such a thesis is true in part given that it reflects the alignment of the working classes and the domination of bourgeois ideology over them, all of which is intimately bound up with the myth of the “citizen”.
28. This is periodically further confirmed by union corruption scandals ranging from deals with company mafias and governments to secret pacts with management in many conflicts, whereby individual union delegates obtain perks and privileges in exchange for selling their mates down the river.
29. All this plays into the hands of bourgeois ideology with its doctrines of die-hard individualism and trade union corruption, “proving” that the best thing a worker can do is to negotiate on a one-to-one basis with the company and stand up to pressure from “corrupt union representatives” who are out to cheat the worker. Management only allows union rights when it lacks the strength to stamp them out and when there are unions whose role is to police the workers and



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undermine their struggle. But a fuller understanding of the present crisis of the traditional unions requires that we turn this one-sided argument around and contextualise it in a systematic view of capitalism and its constantly evolving contradictions.

30. First of all there is the intimidation brought about by the present globalising phase of the law of labour value, which increases job insecurity, a state of affairs that forms part of the essence of capitalism despite occasional transitory improvements forced on the bourgeoisie from time to time by workers' class struggle.
31. Secondly, there are theoretical lessons to be learnt from crises that have occurred in other waves or phases in socioeconomic development and class struggle in the history of capitalism that are fundamentally identical although different in form, and produced in a way dialectically united to the preceding point.
32. Thirdly, we need to consider the various scientific and technological, spatial, temporal, professional and disciplinary changes introduced by capital in order to undermine the centrality of class in the workers' movement before the period 1975-85, whose success or failure hinge on the strength or weakness of working class resistance.
33. A fourth consideration concerns the effectiveness of the machinery of state, semi-public and private sectors in their permanent maintenance of a climate of fear, anxiety and concern among the majority of the population and their families who depend exclusively on their wages, about the future and the diminishing pittance handed out by the bourgeoisie to pensioners, the poor, the unemployed and others. This feeling of insecurity is essentially inherent to capitalism, and the fear over the future that it arouses grows as the severity of the class struggle increases.
34. We must stress the crucial role played by the bourgeois state as a strategic focus not only for repressive systems in a global sense, including as we shall see unions that play along with the employer's interests, but also in promoting the ideological domination that stems from the very essence of capitalism by acting, through the state apparatus, within economic contradictions as forces that defend the wage dictatorship. These are at the same time sociopolitical forces, sex and gender forces, and forces of national oppression through the globalisation of the law of labour value.
35. One example of this is seen in the direct connections between the state, management, the reformist trade unions and company terrorism,



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also known as “industrial accidents”. According to ILO figures, six thousand workers die every day, or 2.2 million each year, while there are 270 million accidents resulting in time off work for injury, to which we must add another 160 million people who suffer from occupational diseases. These figures would be much higher if they took into account accidents in the black economy and in domestic and farm work.

36. A state that was determined to put an end to company terrorism would strengthen unions’ and workers’ rights, bring in more inspectors and increase their responsibilities, extend the list of officially recognised occupational diseases and causes of accidents, increase fines and prison terms for company owners, and outlaw sacking without compensation, subcontracts, job insecurity, excessively long working days, etc. etc.
37. In this daily leeching of the working class there is no such thing as passivity of the state, but rather an astute policy that consists of doing very little about company terrorism, allowing growing impunity, while in its propaganda blowing the little it does do out of proportion yet concealing its real responsibility. It is aided in this by reformist trade unionism, which puts all too little energy into this fight. The working class realise this and end up blaming all the unions.
38. In the last resort, the unions themselves are to blame for the fact that growing numbers of workers accuse them of being responsible for company terrorism, since the unions, blinded by their economicist outlook, refuse to educate the working class politically by focusing on a radical criticism of the state which represents management’s interests. Also to blame is the so-called “Left” which long ago relinquished such a radical critique.
39. Only from the viewpoint of this theoretical certainty stemming from the entire history of the class struggle can we understand what lies behind the European Popular Party’s proposal for an international condemnation of communism, which was admitted on the 14th of December, 2005 by the foreign affairs committee of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe. Whatever is meant by “communism” here, and independently of whether or not the proposal in question is admitted to the plenary session of the Council of Europe’s parliamentary assembly on January 23-27, 2006, it is undeniable for one thing that the very fact that such a proposal has been made at all reflects the European bourgeoisie’s concern over the possibility of a return of the “spectre of communism”, and for another, that this is sure to boost the pro-bourgeois trend in the “yellow” unions



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owing to their own bureaucrats' deadly fear of being accused of any such thing.

40. The union crises that come and go periodically in the course of the class struggle respond to factors that we cannot go into here. They are undeniably important in every respect, but above all in connection with the correlation of social forces when new subjects are purposely introduced into the class struggle not just locally but on an international scale, as is the case of the struggle for women's emancipation, the struggle for the rights of the original Indian nations and indigenous peoples generally, or the struggle to defend and improve the ecosystem and the environment. The appendices appended to this document contain numerous examples of the trade union crisis.

3. OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF CLASS STRUGGLE

41. The bulk of the profits of capitalism worldwide depend on the exploitation of women, which in turn rests on patriarchal exploitation which historically predates the development of the capitalist system. Ever since the establishment of the patriarchy, prior to the advent of national and class oppression, every successive mode of production has been founded in the first place on the exploitation, domination and oppression of women in a way in accordance with that mode's particular interests.
42. Here we cannot go into a detailed analysis of how capitalist and patriarchal exploitation are interwoven at every turn in all spheres of daily life, in every form of oppression in every country, given that this will be one of the objectives of a separate report on women's emancipation to be discussed in Sokoa III. Suffice it to say for now that, in synthesis, class struggle is at the same time the manifestation and motor, the cause and effect, of the oppression of women but also of women's liberation. In the dialectical relationship between patriarchy and capitalism and between pre-capitalist modes of production and global imperialism lies the explanation of how the struggle against those inhuman barbarities is in the last resort one and the same as the present-day fight over the most decisive issue, which is the standard profit rate of world capitalism.
43. Thus they are forms of class struggle between Labour and Capital, over and above the fact that they are fought out in specific parts of the planet where different hierarchies of modes of production exist under the hegemony of imperialism. This is seen in the increasing role of women in resisting the effects of the globalisation of the law of labour value which since the seventeenth century has forced more and more



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pre-capitalist peoples through the bourgeois grinder, giving rise to many forms of resistance which the western mind, in its ignorance and selfishness, brands as “indigenism”, “fundamentalism”, “populism” and so on, but which are in fact new components of the worldwide class struggle inasmuch as these struggles serve to weaken the process of accumulation currently being launched by imperialism.

44. Women are adopting a key role in defence of the identity of their cultures and peoples, threatened by imperialism all over the world. One of many examples was the Fourth Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women held in Peru in early 2004, attended by delegates from everywhere in the Americas. Likewise we are witnessing growing coordination in Africa and Asia; in the Arab-Muslim sphere too many women’s collectives are uniting efforts to defend their rights in their respective countries and at the same time defend their countries against imperialist aggression and Christian fundamentalism.
45. It would be a mistake to reduce our recognition of women’s intervention in most original peoples’ struggles to the mere acknowledgment of their “important role”, for it is far more than that. For instance, the permanent fight of the Mapuche people revolves around the Mapuche Motherland or *Mapu Ñuke* (“mother earth”), the people’s material and symbolic centrepiece and that of their historical memory. Woman’s role is central since it provides the material and symbolic connection to the land and the people’s collective ownership of it.
46. The Kolla and Ava-Guaraní people, who have been fighting since the beginning of 2004 to recover their land in present-day Argentina, proclaim loudly and clearly: without land, only hunger awaits us. The same message is heard from the Cauca Indigenous Regional Council, in present-day Colombia, who are waging a growing struggle for their rights despite the murders carried out by the army and paramilitaries; in a communiqué on November 10, 2005, they themselves refer to this as “a process of liberation of mother earth”.
47. Late 2004 saw the conclusion in Quito of the meetings of the Coordinating Council and Governing Council of the Co-ordinating Committee of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon River Valley (COICA), attended by organisations from Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Surinam, Colombia, Peru, Guyana, French Guiana and Bolivia, for the purpose of ensuring the survival of their original peoples, in the knowledge that these will cease to exist when the last river runs dry, the last fish has been fished and the last tree is cut down.



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48. Not long afterwards, in summer 2004, the Second Quito Summit of Indigenous People of Abya Yala was attended by five hundred delegates from 64 original peoples. The issues discussed included collective ownership of the territory and its resources, self-determination, rights and international organs, sustainable development and biodiversity, collective ownership of ancestral knowledge, the role of women, FSM, political and government intervention, communication and militarisation.
49. The common denominator shared by all the above is the struggle against the present form that imperialism is taking in order to increase the intensity of exploitation of the work of women and expropriate native people of their material and symbolic basis of existence and accumulated surplus. We can also observe an awareness of the need to defend the broad diversity and plurality of collective identities in the world, minority cultures, and everything that expresses through diversity the creative potential of human praxis, as opposed capitalism's goal: the commercialisation of everything.
50. At the Sixth Polycentric World Social Forum in Caracas in 2006, the discussion topics put forward by the International Woman's Court may be summed up as follows: the Condor Plan, the FTAA, free trade and militarisation agreements in Latin America, feminicide and patriarchal violence, violence against rural, black and indigenous women, forms of exploitation of women (patriarchy and capitalism), sexual exploitation, trafficking and women affected by HIV/AIDS, the fight against fundamentalism, resistance options for excluded women, the struggle against imperialism, war, poverty, racism, and in defence of minority groups, trade union activism, biodiversity and the defence of the environment.
51. These and other many conferences all over the world put on public display practical demands and theoretical approaches that challenge the very essence of imperialism. It should therefore come as no great surprise that according to a thesis (made known at the beginning of 2005) of the National Intelligence Council (NIC), the "brain" of US imperialism, the struggles of indigenous (i.e. original) peoples are ranked as one of the three gravest threats to the United States foreseen from now until 2020, the other two being Islam and the People's Republic of China.
52. From Australia to Alaska, from Patagonia to Siberia via the Kalahari Desert, everywhere the prevailing tendency since the mid-nineties has been one of increasing mobilisation of supposedly "backward" peoples. The hundred thousand surviving Bushmen, for instance, have begun a



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tenacious struggle to recover their ancestral collective property, expropriated by means of atrocious acts of aggression such as the blocking of wells that provide their only water supply, as well as massive deportations to guarded reserves. From there Bushmen have begun to escape by the hundreds, returning to their heritage lands which are now being vied for by the transnational De Brees company (leader of the world diamond market), which receives support from the governments of the region, especially Botswana.

53. This phenomenon of so-called primitive peoples bursting onto the world stage is stimulating a revival of the classic debates in the Left that date back to the late nineteenth century, resulting in a reassessment of the value of collective action, common causes, mutual assistance, self-management, non-monetary and non-commercial relations, and so on, and hence re-opening the debate over collective ownership of space and time, producer-control production, the recovery of its productive forces by society: in other words, on the urgent need to put an end to wage slavery.
54. These peoples' struggle is a basic part of the struggle worldwide, and has important implications for the struggles of classes and peoples situated in the heart of imperialism, as well as vice-versa. Never before in the history of class society has the need for true proletarian internationalism been so undeniable, given the complete integration into the world class struggle of these nations, collectives and individuals, which have previously been disregarded in the West by a Eurocentric Left. It is surely a symptom of this that at their December, 2005 meeting in Hong Kong, the imperialist triad (the USA, the EU and Japan) and the WTO manifested an obsession with the urgent need to impede, stop and stamp out the rise of such peoples' demands.
55. Indeed, the outcome of the WTO meeting in Hong Kong reflects the growth of social contradictions on three levels. First, internally among the impoverished nations grouped in the G-90 and the "developing" ones in the G-20, between popular or social forces opposed to giving in to the imperialist triad. Secondly, between the G-90 and the G-20 *en bloc* on the one hand and the imperialist triad on the other. And finally, among the members of the triad, as well as between the respective bourgeoisies and the revolutionary, progressive and democratic parties within each member of the triad.
56. Such a storm of specific contradictions constitutes just one part of the intensification of structural antagonisms of imperialism worldwide, in stark contrast to the extravagant claims made by the bourgeoisie at the beginning of the nineties to the effect that none of this would ever again



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happen since we had reached a “new world order”. Yet the social battle in Seattle, 1998 brought to a head the new historical failure of the bourgeoisie, as that was confirmed once more in Cancún, 2003. Now imperialism has changed tactics, and instead of deciding everything at once in grand international meetings, has begun to pressure, cajole and blackmail regional areas to get them to splinter away from the world unity of peoples. But this did not save the US from further fiascos with the FTAA and the Americas Summit, nor the EU with its plan for a South American economic community, MERCOSUR.

57. In Hong Kong the imperialist triad obtained a partial victory (compared to their defeat in Cancún) by forcing on the G-20 in particular, and to a lesser extent on the G-90, a triumph for the interests of the exporting bourgeoisies' interests over those of working people in these client nations. This provides an illustration of how the weak bourgeoisies of impoverished countries are happy to accept imperialist demands just as long as they are able to pull the wool over the eyes of their own masses using as a pretext the urgency to meet deadlines in “negotiations” with the WTO.
58. In spite of this, some such countries, like India and Brazil, have attempted to forge a united defence of ancestral knowledge and culture in the face of imperialist bio-piracy. The latter, also coming to be known as bio-slavery, has always been present throughout the history of capitalism, but is now coming to be seen as an urgent necessity in order to avoid stagnation by developing new areas of production and so boost the rate of accumulation of wealth at the lowest possible cost.
59. Bio-piracy is the robbery and plundering of resources that are vital for an oppressed people's survival, whether these be natural, cultural or linguistic, not to mention its genetic code and biological characteristics, not to mention any social surplus accumulated over past generations. This is the real context for the UN's warning at the end of 2005 to the effect that three thousand languages are on the verge of extinction. With them will be exterminated the ancestral knowledge stored in these languages and the three thousand peoples who speak these languages.
60. Everyone knows that the plundering of a country always makes necessary a strategy for the restructuring of the space of the plundered country to allow for faster and more intensive pillaging. Now restructuring space also entails restructuring time; this has been of the essence ever since the beginnings of capitalism but is more than ever so now, in the present phase of imperialism. Thus the question of space and time forms an essential part of class struggle in its most



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absolute sense of the confrontation between Labour and Capital. Since we cannot discuss the many facets of this issue in this report, we must refer the reader to the companion report which will deal with the environment and a critique of the capitalist policy of economic development at all costs.

4. SYNTHESIS

61. The class struggle is a day-to-day reality, the origin of which is simply the objective existence of exploitation, i.e. the fact that the overwhelming majority of mankind is exploited, oppressed and dominated in order to fill the pockets of a small minority that owns the forces of production. That majority is the proletarian class, or Labour, and the minority is the bourgeois class, or Capital.
62. The definition of social classes is dialectical: Labour and Capital together make up a unity of antagonical and unreconcilable opposites, neither of which would exist without the other. They fight and hate each other to death, yet they can only be separated if class society ceases to exist; when it does, so will they. This is a synthesis of a changing, moving, never-static reality. In each particular class struggle there is great social complexity which needs to be made an object of special study.
63. Such is the dialectic of the general and the particular, the abstract and the concrete. That dialectic contains a phase of analysis of contradictions revealing national, political and cultural realities all forming part of a whole, together with class components undergoing constant modification. But it also contains a phase of synthesis leading to awareness of the ultimate identity of all these struggles, showing their internal relations and teaching us the lessons to be learnt from them all.
64. In the present phase of world capitalism, we perceive a prevailing trend towards the weakening of the industrial component of the working class and the growth of components of workers in the financial and commercial sectors, and the rise of job insecurity (amounting to wage-slavery) and subcontracting. Along with this, civil servants and those working in social services, science and technology, and the production of cultural merchandise are being transformed into wage-earners in the private sector.
65. Most importantly, there is a definite increase in the total number of wage-earners who make up the world-wide working class as a whole, in contrast to a contraction of the bourgeois class, in spite of the



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historical step back to capitalism that has taken place in the ex-Soviet Union and also commencing (amidst contradictions) in the People's Republic of China. Their conversion into wage-earners is having devastating effects for women and the peasant masses who still live in pre-capitalist modes, and those who must maintain, through intolerable sacrifices, tiny allotments of land of low productivity.

66. Meanwhile, we are witnessing the growing inter-relationship between relative surplus value and absolute surplus value: between the exploitation of work through technology and the exploitation of work through long working hours. The bourgeoisie wants to increase intensive exploitation and simultaneously increase the number of paid working hours. Some reasons for this brutal return to such ferocious exploitation, reminiscent of the beginnings of capitalism, are the growing difficulty of accumulation and the diminishing productivity of work due to the high cost of NTCs and the resistance of workers and others.
67. At the same time, the worldwide reduction of skilled work relative to the growing proportion of unskilled labour is leading to the increase of the proportion of people who suffer job insecurity, sub-contracts, and over-exploitation by black-market capitalism: exploitation that is deregulated, crooked, criminal (capital equals crime) and devastating.
68. Moreover, these transformations, which are inseparable from the results of specific class struggles, are internally related to the rise of financial capital and its high-risk component, to financial-industrial capital for high-tech military development, science and technology, and health care. It is also related to the relative setback of industrial capital, which may undergo a degree of recovery due to growth, in Asia and South America, which stands in a relationship to the growth of commercial capital needed to create outlets for industrial production.
69. In spite of these changes, which are after all triggered by Capital to defeat Labour at every great social turning point, the wage economy is spreading relentlessly throughout the world, causing a continuous rise in the number of human beings who, in order to barely make ends meet, are forced to sell the only thing they possess, their labour, in exchange for a wage.
70. This spread of the wage economy is being accompanied by the reduction, concentration and centralisation of private property in the forever fewer hands of a diminishing number of people, in progressively more compact circles of the great imperialist bourgeoisie.



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71. The dialectical method requires that we study these changes in their concrete expressions in each major region of the planet: in the imperialist triad, in the so-called “developing” countries and in the impoverished countries.
72. Class struggle may take the form of a muffled, latent, surreptitious striving by the exploited masses to achieve small benefits, to get revenge against the boss, or to resist exploitation and rebel against its rhythm, demands and discipline by working more slowly, absenteeism, indifference, uncooperativeness, passive resistance or even sabotage that slows down the rhythm of work and eats away at company profits.
73. In such periods, reformist unionism, acting systematically to ensure that such resistance does not get out of hand or become too concerted, often adopts the role of enforcer of order in the factory. This has a very negative effect. Such unionism generally acts in complicity with the reformist political parties that profess parliamentary allegiance. The upshot is a reinforcement of the inter-class front within the factory.
74. But the time comes when the conflict, formerly muffled and latent, surfaces and starts making itself heard as an open, all-out struggle for nothing less than the conquest of collective ownership of forces of production, and is transformed into a revolution and revolutionary struggles of oppressed peoples for national liberation.
75. When that time comes, reformist unionism passes directly and openly over to the side of management and its government, overtly confronting the more militant factions of the working class using all the means at its disposal. These means are provided with growing frequency by the bourgeoisie itself: money, press coverage, meetings with political forces, and so on.
76. Between the two extremes of ongoing furtive struggle and great, turbulent revolutionary processes lies an infinite gamut of distinct levels of struggle that we cannot enumerate here. Particularly notable for their violent effects are counter-revolutions, forms of fascism and military coups, imperialist, inter-imperialist and world wars; inevitably these are also class wars.
77. So class struggle is internal to the economic system, forms part of its development and does not exist outside of it. Working-class and grassroots resistance undermines company profits and the whole accumulation process. On the other hand, the bourgeois quest for maximum profit requires of necessity the intensification of exploitation.



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78. The class struggle is also internal to the people, the community, and all of its social institutions which form part of the power of the ruling class. All social life is subject to the permanent clash between Labour and Capital, just as culture, language, traditions and so on stand in special relations to the class struggle of previous generations. This results in the expression of such internal contradictions in the people's various projects for future development.
79. We cannot understand the internal relation of the class struggle with economic development, the daily life of the people, its cultures, its patriarchal-bourgeois system and so on, independently from the decisive role of the capitalist state, which monopolises the use of violence not only according to a definition borrowed by sociology from Marxism, but through many other means of day-to-day, permanent and systematic intervention.
80. The class struggle is not just a mechanical, automatic linearity but an open processual tendency which encompasses chance and contingency arising from the great complexity of social forces in collision, in which there is room for defeat and victory, and even for the mutual destruction of the parties in confrontation leading to the stagnation of the entire society or historical backsliding.
81. There exist phases or waves of class struggle that stem from the dialectics of unreconcilable contradictions. But these waves are not rigidly cyclical, nor do they encompass the whole of the capitalist system, for there are areas that are less active or passive. The law of unequal or combined development explains these differences.
82. These phases are inseparable from the economic, political/institutional and cultural phases, etc., and although they all possess a certain degree of mutual autonomy in their rhythms of development that are difficult to perceive over short periods of time, their interaction within the overall contradiction is clearly seen over the long term.
83. The economic phases, of themselves part of the class struggle (and vice-versa), also possess their autonomy, and in particular a relationship vis-à-vis innovations in science and technology. But in the last resort it is the class struggle exerting pressure from within itself that effects the beginning of the particular phase, and also its end and the appearance of another phase, always accompanied by social crises.
84. In the present phase we can detect several "new" features to which special attention should be paid: the entry on the scene of women, of the peoples, of highly insecure sections of working youth; of a more



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active kind of internationalism; of forms of self-organisation of which the NGOs constitute one expression; of new Internet-based means of interactive self-expression; and the growing discredit into which institutional and parliamentary politics are falling, among others.

85. But these “new” aspects are also accompanied by negative and dangerous ones such as neofascist tendencies, tougher social control, increased police surveillance, the spread of preventive repression, restrictions on freedom and bourgeois democracy, or the electoral mobilisation of the moderate and extreme Right.
86. The union crisis is particularly serious when the class struggle goes through changes in the form of exploitation and accumulation of capital in its historical phases. This is when the workers’ movement, one way or another, sets about creating new alternative unions in response to both the attacks of management and the bureaucratisation of the mainstream unions.
87. These new unions develop theoretical critiques and confront new realities in exploitation and issues such as internal change within the working class, the spread of job insecurity, the loss of strength of the industrial sector, or the feminisation of the labour market. There is a return to certain half-forgotten forms of organisation such as semi-clandestine or non-legal action, street-level or neighbourhood relations, or links with popular movements. In particular, there is a search for new tactics to make contact with new sectors of young workers who lack union experience and reject the old reformist unionism.
88. This is coupled with the appearance or growth of new political organisations of the Left that either did not previously exist or were less visible, but which now take on a new role in the heat of events which they themselves promote. Thus there is a tendency to reinforce the newly developing political and union dialectic within the working class itself, which is also going through a process of internal change.
89. One characteristic common to these processes is a return to general assemblies, a horizontal style of organisation, and practices of worker and popular democracy in the workplace, the neighbourhood, schools and so on, all closely related to the forms of action of the new unions, groups and political organisations. Self-organisation is an important component of these processes that clashes with the control and bureaucracy that characterises the mainstream unions and political forces. No matter whether in the guise of assemblies, councils, soviets, communes or whatever, the essential point is the reversion to these kinds of organisational structure.



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90. Another common characteristic is the tendency of these embryonic foci of alternative power and popular power to hook up at the local level with other collectives and movements in the districts, schools, etc., making up a network which represents crisis-ridden society in general, raising such basic issues as those of self-organisation, self-determination and self-defence.
91. Yet another characteristic of fundamental importance is the tendency to put forward demands that are Capital finds unacceptable such as the drastic reduction of working hours, worker control of factories, popular control of institutions, direct democracy, the dissolution of repressive forces, the reappraisal of models of development, advances in the fulfilment of a range of specific rights, and the collective reclamation of factories, premises and infrastructure, seriously undermining the bourgeoisie's right to private property and inheritance.
92. We should avoid making the mistake of applying the same yardstick to all these forms of struggle. Here as always a dialectic exists between that which is common and essential and that which is formal and specific to each particular case, and a correct differentiation has to be made between what is common and what is specific to each.
93. In the revolutionary workers' movement, from time to time debates have occurred over whether spatial, urban, productive, repressive or other innovations of various kinds, which the system introduces in order to defeat the working classes and launch new periods of expansion, are surmountable by the oppressed masses or not. Yet time and time again the latter have shown in practice that they will end up overcoming these new obstacles.
94. This is precisely what is happening in the present stage of class struggle in which the masses are making more and more use of mobile phones, the Internet, rapid transport etc. to bridge the growing distances between the workplace and the home or between the latter and centres for shopping, programmed leisure activities, etc. Essentially the masses today are demonstrating the same inventiveness as in the past.
95. Those same people who ten or even five years ago were saying that neoliberalism had brought about the end of class struggle and were prophesying that the demise of a socialism that didn't really exist was the death warrant for revolutionary praxis are now looking on in horror as real social struggle unfolds.



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96. Great mass mobilisations are popping up unexpectedly, without anyone apparently knowing why they materialise where they do. Elsewhere, the mainstream political forces lose referenda that they thought they had wrapped up. Here and there, unions and political parties further to the left than the mainstream appear on the scene, while statistics suggest that institutional politics is losing credit day by day.
97. Different fora have also been making their appearance all over the world: not only social fora but also others devoted to more specific issues such as women's emancipation, water, freedom, torture, and so on. Whatever one may think, it has to be admitted that such an explosion of activism is proof both that many people are aware of the seriousness of these problems and that official institutions either cannot or will not provide adequate channels for their solution.
98. However, experience tells us that such processes as these are generally short-lived, merely representing intense flashes that quickly go out unless revolutionary forces have been developed in their midst in advance to help provide permanent structural cohesion. The bourgeoisie is fully aware of this weakness and quick to implement diverse measures aimed at accelerating the disintegration, division and political failure of such structures.
99. This points to the importance of the dialectic between objective contradictions and the subjective factor of political and union organisation, the dialectic, in other words, between spontaneity and organisation. We say dialectic, because there is no such thing as either pure spontaneity or pure organisation: rather, both poles interact in a complex social practice that only becomes noticeable when it bursts forcefully onto the public scene.
100. The tendencies observed depend, obviously, on the specific situations in which each particular class struggle is waged, and especially on their national or state character in the strong and decisive sense, whether this refers to a nationally oppressed working class or to one that, on the contrary, helps "its" bourgeoisie to oppress other peoples, thus gaining some limited material benefit for itself and a very substantial symbolic and nationalist benefit for the bourgeoisie.
101. In the standardised reality of neoliberal globalisation, working people's national identity is highly important because it underlies both the weaknesses and strengths of the sides in conflict. A people's social history, its own traditions (not just those of the bourgeoisie), its military memory and consciousness, its ethical and political predisposition to self-defence, its experience at self-organisation to resist repression and



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aggression, and so forth, all reflect past struggles and exert present and future influence.

102. It is no coincidence that the revolutions that have triumphed in their day, whatever their ultimate fate, are those which were national liberation struggles or which developed in defence of basic national rights. Nor is it a coincidence that a habitual cause of the overthrow of revolutions is the Left's negligence of national issues, leaving it to the ruling class to manipulate and distort these to its own advantage.
103. It is no coincidence, furthermore, that racism, xenophobia, chauvinism and nationalism (as opposed to socialist independence movements) are so often linked to reactionary, sexist, vicious, authoritarian, sado-masochistic and phobic-obsessive social forces, or that bourgeoisies have constantly egged on these often irrational yet at times highly lucid and one-track-minded components in the midst of its own working people in order to encourage internal confrontation as well as unrest involving immigrants.
104. Labour migration has always existed, but capitalism is carrying it to unheard-of extremes, and in the process creating new, unprecedented national issues even in so-called "affluent societies", and unleashing new situations of oppression exerting a growing impact on the traditional class struggle that existed throughout the Taylor-Ford, Keynesian and mass labour periods.
105. The increasingly frequent youth revolts and riots in the heart of capitalism point to the complicated interaction of older national feelings mixed together with new contributions, mixed together in the cauldron of hardships and insecurity suffered by proletarian youth. We can find parallels in mid-nineteenth-century England, late-nineteenth-century Germany, throughout the period in the USA, the period of industrialisation of the north of Italy, and in the French state itself between 1968 and 1973 and again from 1995 down to the present. Nevertheless, we have entered a new phase since the start of the twenty-first century.
106. These outbreaks, and the internal oppression that sustains them, are also forms of class struggle. Only through blind dogmatism is it possible to believe that those participating in them are just "nihilistic savages", "hooligans" or whatever. When we delve beneath the surface we find that the dialectic between spontaneity and organisation has already begun to operate here, leading to the development of not just vaguely defined demands but theoretical arguments too.



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107. It may prove possible to defeat the present wave of class struggle. But even should that happen, it leave behind a lesson to be learnt for the future, and the self-confidence of the working classes will have been heightened. No struggle can fail to produce positive consequences, no matter how small. Only those forces that never begin the fight can avoid ever coming to an end. In the meanwhile, such attitudes preach passivity and defeatism.

5. THREE PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION

108. At the onset of the twenty-first century, the class struggle faces an outraged world bourgeoisie full of indignation that after over twenty years of anti-worker offensives, and despite the enormous profits obtained in some areas of production, worker resistance is still keeping the average profit rate from reaching the high level required for an increased accumulation of capital. Ever since its conception, the labour struggle has formed part of the set of socioeconomic, environmental, political, cultural and other factors that slow down the cycle of capital, hinder the materialisation of profits and hamper the increased accumulation of capital. This is the reason why the world bourgeoisie as a united class is now launching tougher and tougher and ever more devastating programmes. The twigs and branches of authoritarian bourgeois democracy, where they are to be found, should not be allowed to obscure from our view the forest of out-and-out reaction, militarism and imperialism. Hence everything suggests that class struggle is on its way to becoming progressively rougher.

In consideration of this, we believe that the revolutionary Left must strengthen the spirit of struggle and confrontation in international mobilisations to oppose important summit meetings held by the representatives of Capital such as the WTO (World Trade Organisation), the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the G8 (Group of Eight) or Davos.

109. The class struggle at the beginning of the twenty-first century is faced with the need to reconstruct the unity of the labouring classes to surmount the myriad divisions introduced by Capital. The necessary advance from a “class unto itself”, divided, broken up and individualised, exploited in the invisible black economy, subject to conditions of job insecurity, towards a “class for itself”, requires political awareness. The class struggle in the twentieth century demonstrated that without a political consciousness there can be no “class for itself”. Therefore the main task of the revolutionary movement is to reveal the political and economic essence of Capital’s offensive and criticise this



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among the masses of working people, not from the outside, but within the very breath of life of day-to-day struggles.

Therefore, we consider that one of the chief objectives of the working class today must be to surmount the obstacle represented by the present reformist, pacting, assistentialist trend in the mainstream union movement. Only a militant, socio-political brand of unionism can give back to the working class its fundamental role in social transformation that the advances of Capital make necessary. We believe there is a need for the creation of an international union movement to confront the capitalist offensive.

110. The class struggle at the beginning of the twenty-first century is returning to classical, historical forms and demands of the workers' movement dating back to its origins, but adapted to present conditions. The defence of direct, social and indirect wages and of public benefits and so on are just part of this broad movement. When struggles move forward we have occupations of factories, offices, civic centres and the like, as a first step in a trend that may progress as far as the recovery of establishments and premises, while in the background lurks the demand for worker control, direct democracy, participation in political life espousing aims that overflow the dams erected by the ruling system. In the face of this, the bourgeoisie responds by militarising its police forces, toughening social control, brooding repression via the legal system, limiting rights of self-defence, and so on. Clashes between these two tendencies are witnessed in the rise in police violence, selective and preventive repression, and prisons. Only theoretical and practical awareness allows us to understand and explain this situation. Hence the need for a revolutionary theory is felt more strongly than ever before.

We therefore consider that the national and international Social Fora are areas for struggle in which the workers' movement ought to participate actively and play an important role, linking its union-oriented, social and political struggle to other expressions of class struggle in the twenty-first century, such as the fights for an alternative model of ecological development, gender equality, food sovereignty, against war and human rights violations, for linguistic and cultural diversity, for self-determination for peoples... In short, we consider that national and international Social Fora should be the meeting point and coordination centre for all political, trade-union and social movements that are fighting at a global level, each in their way, for democracy and socialism in the world, as the broadest and most pluralistic social space for the development of a



theoretical and practical awareness working towards the only other possible world: that of socialism.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: COLOMBIA

111. In Colombia the class struggle has reached one of its highest levels in the American continent. In the wake of difficulties in the eighties with the payment of its foreign debt, in the following decade Colombia received large amounts of foreign capital, thus giving the impression that between 1990 and 1994 the country had overcome its crisis and was entering a long-term period of sustained growth. Those years were marked by generalised pessimism within militant and revolutionary circles, which even led some guerrilla groups to opt for integration into the established order.
112. What was really happening was that the economy was becoming “financialised”. What little industry had existed was being eclipsed, falling into heavy debt and becoming increasingly dependent on narco-capitalism and drug imperialism. This resulted in still further impoverishment and corruption, which in turn provoked a rebirth of numerous manifestations of class struggle.
113. Given this, transnational and Colombian companies together began a ferocious attack on the workers’ movement through mass dismissals, deregulation, restrictions on union rights and, above all, repression and murder: between 1995 and 2005, four thousand union leaders were murdered, while countless others have been threatened, attacked or beaten up. A mere 5% of these cases were ever resolved – and not necessarily happily resolved either.
114. The first three-and-a-half months of 2005 alone saw sixteen assassinations, two failed assassination attempts, four kidnappings, twenty-three harassment cases, 123 death threats, six displacements and forty arrests of union leaders. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie is flatly refusing to sign collective agreements with workers. In 2003 only 284 were signed, 41.2% fewer than in 2001. A mere 1% of workers are now covered by collective agreements, and only 5% are unionised.
115. That is not to say that there is no class struggle, but rather that this is taking place outside of the official structures and taking forms that can only be confronted through the most savage kinds of violence.



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Although Colombia is often regarded as a “failed state” unable to achieve structural organisation, the truth is precisely the opposite; if it were not so, the country’s bourgeoisie would have fallen out of power long ago. In fact Colombia is an army state whose military budget, which has already risen from 1% to 2.9% of the country’s GDP, will probably surpass 4% by the end of 2005, and to this is added the military “aid” provided by imperialism.

116. Militarisation diverts money away from social services. Reliable studies show yearly military spending to be in the region of 4,800 million dollars. That is 116% of the total spent on health services, and also 25% higher than Colombia’s annual education budget. In such a situation the response of working people, including both proletarian and student sectors, is self-organisation. Official means of repression are inadequate to stop this from happening, so the bourgeoisie resorts to private armies and police.
117. While this is going on in the cities, big transnational companies and large Colombian landowners are expropriating low-income peasants all over the countryside of their land holdings, leading to the deportation of three-and-a-half million peasants. Just 1% of the population is in control of 55% of the best land, much of which is under-exploited. A mere 0.2% of all owners own 47% of the economically productive land; a further 0.2% own another 14.2%. At the opposite end of the scale, 57.3% of the country’s peasantry eek out a bare living from 1.7% of the country’s land area.
118. Thus all the conditions exist for the growth of both guerrilla and urban struggle: unfettered corruption, an official economy that has almost nothing to do with the real one, iincreasing dependence on narco-imperialism, and a national bourgeoisie indebted to imperialism for its very survival. The people respond, in increasingly large parts of society, with self-organisation at the grassroots level, self-defence, and a gradual rapprochement between various forms of struggle.

APPENDIX 2: ARGENTINA

119. In December, 2001, the Argentinean people rose up against their ruling class and the de facto occupying power: the United States. The official media claimed it was the “middle classes” who had taken to the streets to demand the return of their savings. In fact, it was, and still is, a far more profound and general process principally involving the working masses. We prefer to say “working masses” and not just “working class”, because while in 1976 Argentina had seven million industrial workers, by 2003 it only had one million. The deindustrialisation of



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Argentina was no fortuitous event, but a ploy of the national and US bourgeoisies to eradicate the growing class struggle in a country possessing great wealth.

120. Deindustrialisation was accompanied by the physical extermination of thirty thousand left-wing militants, of whom 55% were grassroots trade union leaders. Following the dictates of imperialism, the economy was outsourced and monetarised, with the virtual elimination of the country's domestic productive capacity, resulting in the most absolute economic dependence. In this new situation, for a very short time some social sectors lived in the lap of luxury, followed by an abrupt return to reality in which the "middle classes", once the artificial boom of their "new economy" was over, were reduced once more to poverty and ruin.
121. But the worst consequences were suffered by the working people, who make up the majority of the population: they sank still further into misery, even reaching starvation levels. By mid-2001 their situation was no longer sustainable, and at the end of the year the top blew off. Among a large part of the population, behaviour patterns spread that represent adaptations of practices common in the workers' movement worldwide to the specific Argentinean scenario.
122. Of these patterns we will mention four: neighbourhood associations for the protection of the most needy and defenceless; the reappearance of a solidarity-inspired barter economy; pickets going on the offensive through occupation of streets, squares, institutions etc.; and worker reorganisation, reclaiming factories and workshops, reminiscent of forms of struggle that had already reappeared in the late 1970s in response to the first deindustrialisation, and had returned in the second half of the nineties. This trend has grown since 2001 until, by November, 2005, around 180 companies had been reclaimed.
123. As was pointed out earlier, the movement to reclaim factories is not just an outlandish Argentinean trend but a normal pattern once a certain stage has been reached in the class struggle. Indeed, in November, 2005, Venezuelan and Argentinean delegates took a further step by organising the First Latin-American Conference of Reclaimed and Reactivated Companies, a new move forward along the road of worldwide coordination that began back in the nineteenth century, and had an echo in Euskal Herria in another international conference on occupation in May, 2005.

APPENDIX 3: VENEZUELA



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124. The Venezuelan programme is coherent with the advance of the Bolivarian revolution, already foreshadowed by the massive Caracas riot of 1989, when tens of thousands of impoverished and starving people took to the streets in protest over their situation, and several thousand were killed. Ever since, with qualitative leaps that made world news, the Venezuelan masses have surged forward towards a feasible programme for the expropriation of the latifundios [very large rural estates]. Significantly, the Land Law decreed by Hugo Chávez's government provided the pretext for a short-lived attempt at a counter-coup in April 2002 orchestrated under US guidance. This illegitimate coup attempt, which had direct support from Spain's conservative government but also from the now-ruling PSOE party's Prisa group, was quickly crushed by the intervention of the self-organised masses.
125. Of the many social victories of the Bolivarian revolution, we shall signal just two. One is the impressive process of creation, from the working-class grass roots up, of the National Workers' Union (UNT), unquestionably ratifying the defeat of the corrupt, old bureaucratic union, the CTV, a pillar of the bourgeoisie which supported the fascist coup in April, 2002. The CTV gave its unconditional support to the management in a strike in December, 2002 and January, 2003, and that fiasco effectively rang the death knell for the obsolete union, ushering in a new era with the UNT now taking shape as a real union, although it still faces certain difficulties due to the after-effects of many years of oppression.
126. The other victory we wish to mention is the decision to proceed with the reclaiming and reopening of many companies, in a revolutionary programme based on the initiative of the masses. According to a government study in July, 2005, there existed 700 non-productive companies and another 1149 functioning at half-capacity.

APPENDIX 4: BOLIVIA

127. Bolivia is a textbook case providing an integral, global and systemic view of class struggle involving the full range of social and historical factors, from still-active traces of pre-capitalist and pre-Columbian forms of production and distribution, complete with fully conscious pre-bourgeois ethnic and national identities, to savage pillaging by present-day imperialist corporations. Without attempting a complete overview of Bolivia's long social history, let us recall that in 1985 the national bourgeoisie speeded up surrender to US interests by carrying out extensive privatisations. Bolivia is rich in strategic resources, yet is forced to assign 30% of its gross national product to the repayment of its foreign debt.



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128. Let us centre our attention on events of the past five years. The “water war” broke out in Cochabamba in April, 2000, in defence of public ownership of water, privatised and sold off to a transnational company. Then in February and March, 2003, the “gas war” spread throughout the country in defence of public ownership again, and in May and June, 2005, it was the turn of the “fuel war”.
129. Simultaneously, other “wars” were being waged, including that of the coca producers and also the fight to defend the small amount of remaining communal land that was being vied for by the richest 7% of the population, who already owned 87% of Bolivia’s land resources including the choicest farming land and the mines.
130. Faced with such irreconcilable contradictions, the masses of Bolivia have developed numerous organisations, too many to review here, but of special note, apart from the crucial Central Obrera Boliviana, is the Asamblea Nacional Popular Originaria, which took part in the uprisings of October, 2003 and played a key role in the summer of 2005.
131. The best thing about this popular self-organisation is its rejection of naïve, blind faith in institutional promises, even those of Evo Morales, who was warned that mobilisations will begin again unless there is rapid progress in addressing the people’s needs. Those needs are dire indeed, considering that until recently a Bolivian had to pay US \$8.40 for the same amount of gas that a foreign transnational could obtain for just 12.6 cents.
132. We have already seen that elimination of the leaders of a militant union is a very common tactic, relying on support from the state under the control of the ruling class. The same thing is happening at present in Nicaragua, where Coca-Cola has set out to eliminate all workers’ union rights in its Nicaraguan plant. To achieve this, it has expelled the leaders of SUTEC, the company trade union, and is threatening and pressuring the rest of its members through a campaign that began in early 2004 and was toughened further at the end of 2005.
133. We have had to skip over a very large number of struggles throughout Latin America, ranging from Chile’s copper mine strike, which broke out at the beginning of 2006, to truly heroic resistance in the Mexican sweatshops, which was little known and stamped out almost immediately, and from the landless peasants of Brazil to the peasants of Guatemala organising to resist imperialism from the North.

APPENDIX 5: THE UNITED STATES



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134. Only in terms of class struggle can it be explained that since 1979 the average US family's income has risen by 18%, while in the same period the income of the richest 1% of the population rose by 200%, or that between 1970 and 1995, the portion of the population's total income earned by the poorest 20% of the population fell from 5.4% to 4.4%, while at the same time the portion corresponding to the richest 20% of the population went up from 40.9% to 46.5%. Since 1997 minimum wages have been falling while job insecurity is on the rise. The number of people going hungry in New York rose by 8% between the summer of 2004 and the summer of 2005. Another recent study shows that the incomes of the poorest 20% of families rose by 19% over the last twenty years – and those of the richest 20% by 59%.
135. We have chosen not to go back as far as the 1992 urban riots in various areas in protest over national/ethnic poverty and exploitation. Rather, it is sufficient to take note of the troubles that broke out in 1997, including the struggle of 200,000 workers of the multinational transport and communications company UPS, when a resolute and ultimately triumphant strike led by women shook the world. Then in 1998 the media, press and reformist organisations hushed up the feats of thousands of workers in industrial Seattle who carried out strikes and mobilisations in united action. It is highly significant that despite the fall in membership of the traditional unions and the loss of 600,000 jobs in 2000, in the same year the new unions gained 400,000 members, confirming the trend towards grassroots self-organisation as a way of sidestepping the mainstream union and political bureaucracies.
136. These budding workers' movements and new student and social movements, the impact of September 11th, 2001, were forced to go onto the defensive by an exacerbated climate of reaction and repression. The Right exaggerated the strength of Bush's electoral victory in November, 2004, which was not as overwhelming as they suggested, especially among the working classes and the new movements. The truth is that he only obtained the support of 29% of the electorate. If we add the nearly five million people who have no vote, that figure would be as low as 25%.
137. What happened is that the Right and the Far Right closed ranks around Bush, whereas the Centre Right and the Centre failed to mobilise as massively in support of Kerry for reasons that we cannot enter into here. We should bear in mind the harmful effects of racism within the white working class, as a result of which 55% of the white workers who voted supported Bush as against only 39% who backed Kerry. In the United States as elsewhere, racism is one expression of the existence



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of national oppression which, in the case of the US, benefits white workers and is directly supported by the Republican Right, and indirectly by right wing Democrats.

138. Only a few months after Bush's supposedly "crushing" victory, his popularity began to plummet. Opposition from workers and the general public was back, heaping criticism over the fiasco of the Iraqi invasion, the weakening of US imperialism abroad, and the constant deterioration in the socioeconomic situation at home.
139. By the summer of 2005 the news was out that social security and pensions were under threat as a result of high-risk financial speculations. The science and technology capability of American capitalism is on the decline, and the foreign deficit would be intolerable if it were not for the continual flow of foreign capital. In October, 2005 General Motors filed for bankruptcy. It took about five years for internal opposition to the invasion of Vietnam to spread through the country. This time round, two years were enough.
140. The new workers' movement in the United States is now making its comeback in a context of slow but relentless deindustrialisation coupled with growth in the service sector and the "casino economy". A proposal to occupy factories is currently under debate at Delphi, a multinational GM subsidiary, in the committees of the grassroots union set up by workers after leaving the official unions (about which more later). This forms part of a broad campaign that also proposes to forge an alliance with retirees and pensioners affected by the privatisation of the social security service for the Delphi-GM business group.
141. Another sign of this comeback is the New York transport strike, the biggest since the 1980 11-day strike. The motives for the protest are the usual ones: to defend purchasing power through a 6% pay rise, and conserve quality retirement with a 2% pension rise and maintenance of health care benefits, which are under threat in a company that made profits of a thousand million dollars this year alone.
142. In spite of tremendous adverse pressure, opposition to the strike by practically all the mainstream trade unions, and hesitancy and doubts in their own union, the transport workers managed to organise and carry out their strike. But by the 22nd of December, behind the workers' backs, their own union had started "negotiating" with the management and the mayor of New York on an agreement that, while not what the strikers were demanding, represented no great victory for the management either. This at least provides an indicator that some things are starting to happen in the workers' struggle.



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143. This strike symbolised the resistance of the working masses suffering from all kinds of aggression. For instance, at that very same time, benchmark companies such as Ford, General Motors, Delphi or Northwest Airlines were also threatening their workers' rights. The strike was watched closely by all the sociopolitical forces and trade unions because it broke out at a particularly important time of heightened social tensions. It was monitored closely by the all-powerful Standard & Poor's, which indexes the interests of the 500 largest US companies, many of which are of course also the biggest in the world. S&P was among supporters of laws barring the growing number of immigrant workers from obtaining union rights; of this we shall have more to say more later.
144. Despite such pressure, workers rejected an attempted forced settlement in February, 2006 on account of the management's and unions' manoeuvre to rig the terms of the proposed end-of-strike agreement so that workers' obligations would be increased to include, for the first time, payment of 1.5% of their health plans out of their wages, not to mention mammoth collective and individual fines for having gone on strike totalling three million dollars. This new workers' struggle is one more symptom of escalation of the class conflict.
145. This and other struggles are developing in the midst of a union crisis worsened by the most important split in the AFL-CIO since 1935. The split occurred in July, 2005 between the bureaucratic, hierarchical official section (which nonetheless denounced the Iraqi invasion in a decision unprecedented in the past fifty years) and the breakaway CTV. The latter is just as hierarchical and bureaucratic as its predecessor but differs in recognising the need to unionise Black and Latino workers, unorganised workers, those from new firms, etc., as a way of making up for the loss of membership and to bring in more dues.
146. Fifty years ago, one of every three workers in the private sector belonged to a union. Today only one out of twelve does, and that percentage is still falling. According to some studies affiliation in the private sector is as low as 8%, the lowest since 1901. Total union membership has fallen by 20% but overall affiliation stands at 12.5% owing to the maintenance of membership by public sector workers. One of the various reasons for this loss of membership is the repressive intimidation campaign launched by the Reagan administration, but above all that unleashed by Bush following 11-S, which was so bad that the WTO denounced persecution of union activity in the US in late 2003. That persecution became even more



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blatant in January, 2006 when a Chicago federal court ruled it legitimate for companies to take initiatives of their own to block union action.

APPENDIX 6: RUSSIA

147. The downfall of “socialism that doesn’t really exist” between 1989 and 1991 and the transformation of the caste of bureaucrats into a bourgeois class (a trend that had already been conceived of theoretically in the mid-1930s) is taking a devastating toll of the social gains that had managed to survive since October, 1917, particularly in the case of women. In spite of an information blackout through heavy censorship, word has got around that new grassroots unions began to emerge as early 1995. These are independent of either the old union apparatus or organisations set up by the new bosses to control “their” workers.
148. By 1997 there were already strikes in mining and steelworks, among others, and the scene was being set for other more enduring struggles such as as that being waged in Kaliningrad and other regions. These struggles succeeded in hindering the development of the new bourgeoisie, but they could not stop it. As the working masses suffer to renewed attacks, they have been reacting creatively, not limiting themselves to mere passive resistance. By mid-2003 the trend towards grassroots self-organisation in schools, hospitals, social centres and the like was taking shape in cities, neighbourhoods and regions, especially with respect to groups such as old-age pensioners, impoverished social strata, social workers, civil servants bereft of job security, and youth sectors, who demand at the very least the maintenance of their earlier gains.
149. By the end of 2004, this movement took a leap forward by creating the Union of Coordinating Soviets, covering twenty regions and embracing an growing range of social groups, new trade unions, regional associations and so, promoting the proliferation and spread of local struggles. This movement continued to develop throughout 2005. President Putin’s recent decision to supervise, control and repress NGOs is nothing but a legal subterfuge the purpose of which is to strike at the working people’s soviet-style self-organisation initiatives.
150. Statistics were released on Russia’s social makeup in October, 2005. Close to 60% of the adult population are living in poverty, above all in the countryside. The monthly income of the lowest classes does not exceed \$110. In summer, 2005, the average wage for the broad masses of the population was 8,655 roubles (\$303). Meanwhile, the



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new middle class, which constitutes 25% of the population, had an average income of just over 20,000 roubles. Finally, there is an upper class representing 0.4% of the population.

APPENDIX 7: THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

151. While the collapse of “socialism that doesn't really exist” is beginning to arouse working class reaction inside the former USSR itself, something similar is also happening in the “controlled” introduction of capitalism in the People's Republic of China – said “controlled” introduction tending to go more and more out of control as the new bourgeoisie gains increased autonomy within Chinese society and in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).
152. First let us note some of the similarities and differences between the fall of the Soviet Union and the introduction of “market socialism” in the People's Republic. In the USSR it was the proletarian class, although smaller in size than the peasant class, that constituted the qualitative force behind the October revolution and maintained it, as best it could, up until the mid-1920s. This class was able to hold out until the end of that decade, but in the early thirties broke down completely as the leading force. Exposed to many dangers, the rise, maintenance, weakening and downfall of Bolshevism proceeded simultaneously with that objective evolution.
153. In China, on the other hand, the brutal massacres of 1925-1927 exterminated the working class as a conscious revolutionary force. What survived was an unstructured group of wage-earners scarcely constituting a feeble “class unto itself”, and by no means representing a “class for itself”. This difference from the USSR was responsible for the inability of the Chinese peasantry to resist the almost immediate bureaucratisation of the Communist Party as well as the Soviet proletariat had. China's first social and economic steps in 1949 were by no means radical, but a combination of internal and external factors forced progressive nationalisation under tight control of the bureaucratised party, which foiled any attempt at self-organisation on the part of the masses.
154. By the middle of the next decade an unreconcilable clash had arisen between the faction in charge of the nationalised economy and that favouring the privatisation of large sectors of the economy. Something like this had started to happen in the USSR following the death of Stalin with the rise to power of Khrushchev, but it the Brezhnev faction aborted it. In China, Mao's followers launched the “cultural revolution” in 1966 to overthrow the “reformist” Liu. Mao's “cultural revolution” was



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successful, but the economic consequences were so disastrous that, paradoxically, the final outcome was to strengthen the hand of the pro-privatisation wing in the Communist Party, whose takeover began even before Mao's death in 1976.

155. No sooner was Mao out of the picture than the privatisation faction officially took power in the party and commenced the slow but unstoppable march towards "market socialism", also known as "socialism with Chinese characteristics". At the beginning of the eighties the CCP took a number of decisions that were later partly copied in the USSR by Gorbachev, but without a similar concession of a limited degree of press freedom. Of the many reasons why the CCP has survived and the Soviet Communist Party has not, three are particularly important. One is that China's economy was less deteriorated than Russia's. Another was the Chinese party's skill at gradually integrating foreign capital, which at first was almost all of Chinese origin. And finally, China's national solidity is far more coherent than the USSR's was in the late 1980s.
156. The present outcome of the conjunction of these factors, plus others such as more modest arms spending, is that without too much social tension "market socialism" seems to be turning into a sort of "CCP capitalism", in a remake of Confucianism where the Party plays a role comparable to that of the dynasties in China's tax (rather than feudal) economy. This role is only similar, however, not identical, and is merely transitional, for sooner or later the growing Chinese bourgeoisie is going to demand not just a presence in the CCP but direct political power as a class. After all, only one third of China's economy is now controlled by the state, and it is the most obsolete third at that.
157. Class struggle is unquestionably already underway in China, even though press censorship and the Chinese conceptual system have gone out of their way to deny it. It is a struggle of the peasants against land privatisation by bourgeois companies, of workers against China's new bourgeoisie, against state bureaucracy and the CCP.
158. Underlying the growth of a fairly substantial sector, growing richer by the day, is a close alliance between the new bourgeoisie, the party bureaucracy and the transnationals. According to official Chinese statistics, the richest 20% of the population controls and consumes 47.5% of the national income. The high concentration and centralisation of private property that characterises imperialism has not yet happened, but is coming. Meanwhile, there is no national or state-wide public social security system or public pensions and retirement plan, only regional ones dependent on local power.



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159. Until the infamous crushing of the Tiananmen protest in 1989, the CCP had avoided setting the police against the working masses, solving problems by other means, or at least so it claimed. But in December, 2005, it was officially recognised that police had killed four peasants in Dongzhou, while other sources spoke of ten deaths and between forty and fifty wounded. Not long before that, two women workers had been killed and twenty-four wounded during a steel strike in Chongqing.
160. China remains to this day a predominantly agricultural country whose peasant class is fast acquiring political awareness. The 1992 law dismantling the people's communes was a turning point in a land privatisation process that had already begun and was later further reinforced. This move led to the loss of 250 million jobs in rural China and the massive migration of peasants to the cities, but also triggered an advance in peasant struggles. Official statistics list 8,700 rural protests in 1993 alone, rising to 10,000 in 1994 (involving 730,000 protesters); 32,000 protests in 1999; 50,000 in 2002; 58,000 in 2003 (with three million protesters); and 74,000 protests with 3.8 million people protesting in 2004. Remember that these are the *official* figures.
161. Although the basic reason for these struggles is commune land privatisation, the peasants' vehement responses are reactions to the particular way in which expropriation is being carried out for the benefit of the new bourgeoisie and foreign transnationals, who are locally supported by new unscrupulous mafias acting as private police forces in addition to state coercion. Growing corruption in the CCP both expedites and gives sanctuary to such injustices, which are a manifestation of political decisions to promote the importation of foreign agrarian products sold in giant transnational chain stores with state subsidies of up to 80%. Little wonder that companies such as McDonalds have suffered assaults from furious peasants.
162. The emergence of a new de facto power defending its own growing private property with considerable impunity is being increasingly contested by the peasant masses. In December, 2004, tens of thousands in Guangdong province confronted police when they learnt that police agents had killed a fifteen-year-old peasant youth accused of stealing a bicycle. In June, 2005, about ten thousand people went on a rampage against a Chizhou supermarket after its car-driving owner ran over a peasant woman riding her bicycle. Then in October, thousands of Chongqing peasants burned dozens of official vehicles and occupied the municipal government building in protest over an incident involving a worker and a civil servant.



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163. Class struggle is on the rise in the industrial cities and special zones. The police officially recognise that between 1993 and 1999 the [annual] number of urban protests rose from 8,700 to 32,000. More recently they said that, between 1994 and 2004, the figures had risen from 10,000 to 74,000. Other police sources indicate that almost 900,000 people took part in 9000 protests in the *spring* of 2003 alone. If we take into account the size of China's population, these official statistics actually seem fairly low. However, all signs suggest that the figures given are conservative; in any case, they point to an upward trend which will end up overwhelming the system's capacity for social control, surveillance and repression.
164. The rise in repression is proportionate to the loss of control by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the 134-million-member-strong official union organisation, in the face of increasing social unrest, which is already giving rise to self-organisation in alternative trade unions. According to data provided by these organisations, in 1995 the Labour Arbitration Committee dealt with 23,000 protests, disputes and strikes, in 1999 with 120,000, and in 2002 with 200,000. Again these figures seem low in proportion to the population of 1,300 million, but are clearly on the rise.
165. This is easily understood given the atrocious exploitation taking place, for example, in some private companies in the special zones where the capitalist transnationals have been given a free hand. Coming in to work late costs a worker a two-euro fine, which is the better part of an employee's wage for an exhausting day's work that may last as long as fifteen hours, owing to the obligation to accept overtime, with hardly any days off.
166. In these "free" companies as well as others under state control, discipline is very strict, with the tightest of control systems. Workers have almost no (or no) union rights. Working conditions are unhygienic and generally unwholesome, and wages extremely low. Only such exploitation, together with internal links between the new bourgeoisie, the party and the capitalist market, can explain how it is that in 2004, for a pair of Chinese shoes costing 150 euros, the fourteen-year-old worker in Zhongshan who produced them only earned 45 cents.
167. Although there are leftist sectors within the CCP pressuring to stop the rise of the new bourgeoisie, many of these were purged in the Sixteenth Congress in autumn, 2002, at which time 40% of the Central Committee was replaced. The capitalist current was fortified by the admission of Chinese big businessmen into the CCP. The New Left current advocates increases in social investment and more support for



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the peasantry. It is also a known fact that many Popular Army officials oppose the present reforms.

168. The capitalist tendency is particularly strong and fast developing in the special zones, where 140 million migrant peasants are badly exploited. This vast migration has continued to increase practically everywhere, and many of the 250 million displaced peasants, landless since 1992, remain to be accounted for. This situation is leading to the formation of a new proletariat that is more and more closely united with the previously urbanised masses. This has been the decisive force behind grassroots self-organisation since the beginning of 2002.
169. Despite its divisions and lack of experience, this proletariat is already making strides in spontaneous class struggle that have begun to bear fruit in the form of better wages and social benefits in zones open to capitalism, such as Canton, where the average monthly wage is 70 euros, the working day lasts between ten and fourteen hours with no payment for often-demanded overtime, and working conditions, health care, food and lodging are dismal. The workers' struggle is being aided by the virtual absence of unemployment in these areas and a constant demand for labour on the part of companies.
170. This is due to a slackening off of the flow of peasants from the region, who have begun to benefit from reform measures recently introduced by the CCP to improve the situation in the countryside. Furthermore, the nearby rural population is increasingly aware of the tough working conditions and poor wages at the factories. Yet the demand for factory products continues to grow. This combination of circumstances is bound to lead to a reduction in the flow of rural emigration to the cities and a corresponding increase in the amount of pressure that urban workers are able to exert.
171. The CCP, aware of the seriousness of the problem, has this year made moves to attempt to slow down or control the present trend. But in many areas this can only be done either through force or by means of concessions. Such is the case, for instance, in the Shenzhen special economic zone. One of the questions that most worries the CCP and the new Chinese bourgeoisie is what will happen if the trend towards self-organisation in the industrial cities merges with that in rural areas and smaller towns that have closer links with the countryside.
172. The growing internal class struggle is becoming more and more closely related to the worldwide tendency analysed in this paper. The Left's use of the Internet is a worry for the CCP, which has made moves to restrict democratic access to the Web and towards increased control.



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One of its motives for doing so is to impede the exchange of organisational experience and theoretical-practical debates with other revolutionary forces. That is why the Chinese police acted so forcefully to break up mass protests against the WTO in Hong Kong, where 1,300 people arrests were made.

APPENDIX 8: THE EAST

173. The impact of growth in the People's Republic is one of the factors exacerbating social unrest in neighbouring areas such as Taiwan. A case in point is the the experience of Taiwanese workers at Chunghwa Telecom, which ranks fifteenth among the world's biggest telecommunication companies. Workers at Chunghwa were the protagonists of one of a number of important labour conflicts that have taken place in Asia since the mid-nineties (others included the South Korean transnationals Daewo and Hyundai). The 35,000 employees of Chunghwa Telecom had a very active union, the CTWU, but in late 1999 the company launched an administrative and repressive attack on the union, persecuting its most militant members, bribing others, and infiltrating its own agents into the union leadership.
174. By March, 2000, the union's previous leadership had been ousted and replaced by one that was favourable to the company's interests and quickly justified the attack. Despite this, when ten thousand workers carried out a one-day strike in August, 2000, the union positioned itself in their favour. The next day, the union announced that it had negotiated an agreement with the management and thenceforth started to distance itself from the struggle, finally selling out. A year later, as a reward for his services, the neoliberal Taiwanese government appointed the leader of the union who had sabotaged the Chunghwa strike to the post of political adviser.
175. In Australia, too, workers mobilising in opposition to the government's hard-line offensive took a leap forward in November, 2005, when following weeks of protests they carried out a giant rally in Melbourne. Despite its success, the Australian Trade Union Council announced that tens of thousands of workers had not joined in actively for fear of company retaliation supported by anti-union legislation passed by the Howard government. This is considered one of the causes for the drop in union membership.
176. Central to these events was the determined struggle of the construction workers and their union, CENFU, who were the sector of the working class worst affected by this offensive from the bourgeoisie. So far the CAS has resisted all the bourgeoisie's bribes and attempts to



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undermine the union, but the working class' most serious problem is the bourgeois-nationalist racist offensive unleashed by the state and other capitalist agencies.

177. As in the case of the Australian building workers' union, workers elsewhere find support for their struggles in militant unions that remain faithful to their principles, even in cases where such unions are illegal. Such is the situation in Turkey, which still has many regions and economic sectors where independent unions remain outlawed. One such is the new Corlu industrial zone, in Thrace, where the fight for the right to unionise has been going on since spring, 2005.
178. And in Konya, workers at the Seydisehir aluminium company, backed by relatives and other people in the area, have been involved in a practical uprising since July, 2005 to keep out new buyers of the factory who plan to move it to another location. Workers at Telekon have also been mobilising since the summer of 2005 to oppose privatisation and subcontracting. Most unions in Turkey have not yet fallen prey to corruption by the bourgeoisie, and it is certainly no accident that one of the EU's "recommendations" to Turkey is the establishment of "union democracy", in other words, bringing the workers' movement there into line with the established order.
179. The same is happening in the class struggle in Iran, for which we have limited data owing to censorship and the repression of any social struggles that fall outside the regime's ideological framework. The 17,000 workers of Teheran's public transport company, Vahed, are waging a heroic struggle in the most difficult of conditions with backing from students and others. Things started to get tougher in May, 2005, when the Islamic Work Council forbade the formation of a free union to defend workers' rights and wage claims, and since January, 2006 the repression has further increased and the situation has radicalised.

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28th of March, 2006