

# Catalyst

## No Blood For Oil.

For once every one seems to agree. Public opinion across the World is firmly against the war. 400,000 have marched in London; and over 200,000 gathered in Washington DC and across the States against attacks on Iraq. Here opinion polls show a majority stance against our government having any involvement in this war.

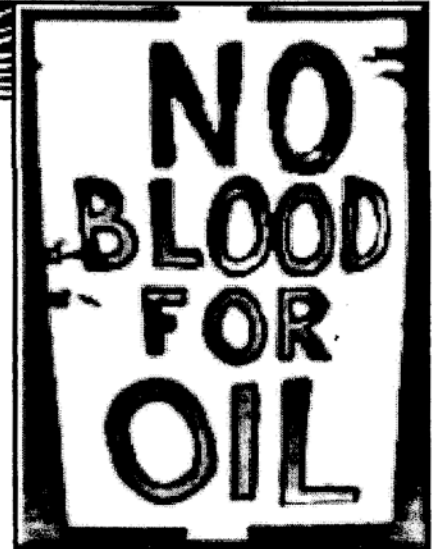
Yet its still going ahead. Nothing seems to affect the determination of Bush and Blair to make war. To find the best way to stop this war, we need to look at why its happening. After September 11th, Bush's government, the most unpopular in American history, supported by less than a quarter of the electorate seized the chance to impose its agenda in the name of 'fighting terrorism'. A tax cut that benefited the top 10% was forced through congress and legislation rolling back civil liberties introduced. There have been drastic increases in military budget. Anyone opposing these measures has been labelled 'pro-terrorist.'

The same thing happened in Europe. The EU is attempting to criminalize protest by defining 'terrorist' as anyone who opposes the political or economic structures of their society. Tony Blair has threatened to use 'anti-terrorist' legislation to break a strike by fire fighters-the same people who would be expected to risk their lives if terrorist ever did strike London.

So the 'war on terror' has been manipulated for the benefit of wealthy elites on both sides of the Atlantic. The US State Department has said that the goal of this war should be to impose US Style 'free enterprise' around the world., with low corporate taxes, no trade unions, and minimal spending on health and education-the same agenda being promoted by the IMF and World Bank.

Seen in this context the war on Iraq makes perfect sense. The US government is afraid its ally, the Saudi dictatorship may collapse, threatening 'stability' and the interests of US Oil companies ( Bush and Cheney both made their fortunes in the oil industry). By establishing a permanent military presence in Iraq with a puppet regime in place. America will control 10% of all known oil reserves, while also being in an excellent position to attack any Arab states that won't toe the line (not to mention the Palestinians). If it succeeds in Iraq, the US Military will set its sights even further. The next target may be Latin America. Already members of the Bush Administration have spoken of the 'second axis of evil': Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, and the Brazilian president Lulu, all sworn opponents of the neo-liberal agenda. US Military intervention is being used to defend corporate globalisation. If we want to oppose militarism and aggression, it's essential we oppose the Thatcherite social policies promoted by governments in Europe and Latin America. Since the protests against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle three years ago, a movement for global justice has developed and scared our rulers shitless. This movement is the main target of 'anti-terrorist' legislation, not Al Queda. And it's the only force capable of stopping Bush and the war mongers.

During the Nice Referendum, our government assured us that Irish Neutrality was safe in their hands. But now they've done everything possible to support Bush, allowing warplanes to land at Shannon and supporting the US at the UN Security Council. This is not an accident. Fianna Fail and the PDs look to America for ideological inspiration. US Conservatives have praised their neo-liberal economic policies as an example to the world. With friends like that, Irish neutrality is an embarrassment. Over the last few years, our neutrality has been gradually eroded, so we can be eased into NATO or an EU Militarised alliance. This is not just morally unjust: it harms every Irish person not lucky enough to form part of that charmed circle with foreign bank accounts who benefit from McCreevys tax cuts. Already the government has spent a quarter of a billion beefing up the armed forces for participation in the



(Continued from page 1)

RRF. There was no question of slashing military expenditure in the last budget; everyone affected by cutbacks in social spending is paying the price so that Ireland's elite can join the club of countries with a militarised foreign policy. It's no surprise then, that Cowen and Ahern haven't done anything to oppose war on Iraq. If we want to shift our government's policy, we have to make them pay a heavy political price for supporting Bush—and the best way to do that is to make the connection between cutbacks at home and violence abroad.



## Support Direct Action At Shannon.



On Saturday the 18th of January, over 1,500 people (RTE), some estimate over 2,000, descended on Shannon Airport to protest against the use of the airport by the US Military. This was the latest in a series of demonstrations at the airport, or warport as it's been dubbed by antiwar activists. US Military planes have been refuelling at Shannon Airport for some time in violation of both Irish law and also the constitution. However, a movement is rapidly growing to end the use of the airport by the US Military and against the war in Iraq. Large numbers of activists have engaged in non-violent direct action at the airport. Thousands have marched through Dublin in attempts to stop the war. The demonstration on February 15th promises to be the largest gathering against any war here

in decades.

Students in UCD have played an active role in the emerging anti-war movement. UCD Students helped 'reclaim' the airport during last Saturday's demonstration through non-violent direct action. Refuelling Peace have been monitoring landings by the US military, over a dozen warplanes are landing a day and refuelling alongside civilian planes in use by the military. The spray painting of a plane last year by an anti-war activist and the ensuing court case shifted some media attention onto landings at the airport. More recently a peace camp has been set up at the airport to highlight its use as a stopover for military aircrafts, incurring a major shift in the media and forcing the government to engage with the anti-war movement and answer some of the questions being raised, in very much the vein of 'no answers to relevant questions.' The broader anti-war movement has grown, manifesting itself in protests in Dublin and also at Shannon. When the first protests at Shannon occurred no more than 70 took part. However the most recent demos have seen numbers rise dramatically with 1,500 last weekend. At all of the protests there have been arrests of people engaging in direct action. Actions that have taken place include mass trespasses as people breached the perimeter fence. At the last demo protestors climbed on to the roofs of various buildings, unfurling banners. Later the fence was breached, but the cops intervened before it enough numbers could successfully get through.

Debate has emerged as two currents develop in the anti-war movement, those arguing for direct action against the use of Shannon as a war-port and those opposed to it. On the Irish Antiwar Movement organised buses back up to Dublin, debate emerged as a number of people took part in open-mic discussions on the future direction for the movement. As usual the debate crystallised around direct action, with members of the SWP making the argument for mass action of the working class to stop the war, creating an illusion that there exists some inherent contradiction between 'mass' and 'direct' forms of action.

In reality there is no such contradiction. Such accusations of elitism would not be flung in the face of any workers in the airport who decide to engage in direct action and refuse to facilitate the blatant illegal transport of weaponry. We should also note that even 'elitist' forms of action, such as the spray painting of a plane can contribute to the growth of a mass movement. Strolling around O'Connell Street on a Saturday afternoon, being led by the usual 'vanguard' of the left, going home after a few speeches by the usual politicians can be an act which encourages disempowerment and alienation from any sense of involvement in the movement. The type of actions that have been occurring in Shannon recently present both a strategy that can empower people, and most importantly force an end to the use of Shannon as a military stopover. One of the difficulties of carrying out such actions is their co-ordination, and there is a greater need for discussion among those who want to engage in direct action before the demos take place and during them. It's important that any action doesn't assume the quality of spectacle, with a crowd standing around watching the heroics of a few direct action fetishists. This can only facilitate persecution and victimisation of those involved, as well as discour-

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

age others. Direct action must be as inclusive as possible, and most importantly of the kind that involves as many people as possible such as mass trespasses, and breaching of the fence.

Its been interesting to watch how the media have afforded a sense of legitimacy to the anti-war sentiment strongly evident across the country through it's recently drastically improved coverage of the issue. The *News Of The World* recently castigated the Workers Solidarity Movements' proposals for direct action, the association the article tried to create between direct action and violence is one that is bound to emerge from other sections of the movement against the war. Any dismantling of a warplane with the potential to cause massive indiscriminate human destruction, can only be understood as an action of peace, not of violence.

There is an need to move beyond the idea that some grand alignment of the existing left will provide us with the movement we need, we must look beyond the existing activist community and begin to reach out to the wider disgust at the build up to war. What we need is a movement against the war based on grassroots organisation in communities, workplaces and campuses that involves as many people in the decision making process as possible, thus creating a genuine, broad mass movement. The build up to the February 15th International Day of Action provides and opportunity for the development of such a decentralised antiwar network.

Understand the Past, Create The Future, #1.

## The Dublin Squatters Association.

While the new spire towers above Dublin's skyline, like some great phallic outgrowth of post Celtic Tiger Ireland, in the doorways of the buildings it dwarfs lie the hundreds of people living homeless in Dublin. Despite Ireland's economic 'miracle' not much has changed since the Dublin Squatters Association scored a massive victory against Dublin Corporation by forcing it to house hundreds of people through direct action in the 1970's.

Waiting lists were long and as a response people began to squat vacant houses and ones in the process of renovation. Evictions were common and it was one such threatened eviction of the Williams family in Dolphins house which first sparked off the organisation of Dublin squatters into a cohesive group with the ability to resist evictions. An information stall and canvassing in the area resulted in a 400 strong waiting committee which greeted the cops and bailiffs as they arrived to evict the family. The successful action saw other squatters get in touch with those involved, seeing the formation of the Dublin Squatters Association with 100 members and regular 40 strong meetings.

The organisation began to legitimise the use of squatting as an immediate solution to the lack of housing and also as a tactic to force the corporation to provide more housing and clear the waiting list backlog. The association began to defend squatters from eviction through mass direct action, successfully. The threatened eviction of a young family in a squat behind James' St. saw about 100 residents face down 60 cops and bailiffs, the ensuing press coverage only served to strengthen and spread the campaign. Around this time panic stricken corporation officials even considered bringing in the army to carry out evictions. Losing publicly, in the face of rising militancy, the corporation was forced to concede defeat and offered an amnesty to all squatters, anybody squatting after the date of the amnesty would be put to the bottom of the housing list.

On the continent a new form of squatting has emerged, the creation of social centres, autonomous zones within the sphere of capital, be they squatted or rented. Such social centres play a pivotal role in the anti-capitalist movements of countries like Italy where they provide outlets for creative expression,, skate parks for kids and forums for political organisation. In some of the larger ones it would not be unusual to find raves or punk gigs taking place alongside a strike support meeting. In Britain there is the embryo of a social centre network forming. Some will argue that simply squatting a space is a political act in itself, and yes reclaiming space within the boundaries of the system can be, but for a such social centres to be revolutionary it must offer a potential for social change, not just through combating the dominant sources of information within a society, by playing an educational and informative role but also through revolutionary-inspired action such as getting involved in the struggles of a community. One such social centre space, in Glasgow grew out of the community, as the council attempted to shut it down residents occupied it for months forcing the authorities to hand it over. Now it provides creche facilities, adult education, summercamps for kids as well as engaging directly in political struggle, by providing an organisational space for successful campaigns against council warrants (where bailiffs seized the property of those who had reneged on service charges and rent for auction) as well as providing accommodation for the homeless and those coming from afar to attend anti-nuclear demos at Faslane sub-



(Continued on page 4)

## Events and Demos



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marine base.

Only such ventures exist in Ireland, the Warzone Centre in Belfast (<http://www.geocities.com/warzonecollective>) and the Cork Autonomous Zone, both first starting to provide rehearsal space for punk musicians.

One of the problems for those trying to organise campaigns outside of the 'twin towers' of the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party, will be aware that one of the difficulties faced is a lack of resources and facilities to kick-start. The creation of such an autonomous zone in Dublin would greatly facilitate the development of campaigns, providing educational resources for the activist community and general public and a centre for organisation. Unfortunately, at the moment it seems that economic circumstance mitigates against the creation of such a space. But if an opening those come then we should grasp it immediately.

### USI National Demonstration Against Fees. Feb 5th 2003.

At the last demo, Colm Jordan, president of USI recommended that we all go home and write letters of protest to our TDs. Such individualistic tokens of resistance collapse in the face of the collective problems faced by students today. On the day of the Demo, the UCD based Campaign for Free Education will be organising for grassroots direct action against the government. Don't just form part of the background of some photo with self styled USI radicals feigning passion in front, its time for real action, join the CFE block on the day. Meet at 1pm at Merrion Square, on February 5th.

### Anti-War Demo. Feb 15th 2003.

Possibly one of the largest anti-war demos yet to take place in the capital will be assembling at 1pm in Parnell Square on February 15th. The demonstration takes place as part of an international day of protest against the war. See the Irish Antiwar Movement Site ([www.irishantiwar.org](http://www.irishantiwar.org)) for info. Also check out the Irish Anarchism mailing list ([irishanarchism-subscribe @yahoo.com](mailto:irishanarchism-subscribe@yahoo.com)) for informative discussion on the best way to advance the antiwar movement in Ireland.

### Anarchist Federation Conference. Feb 1st, Belfast.

The Irish Section of the AF will be holding their first conference on this island in Gyros (Warzone Centre) in Belfast on February 1st. Talks will be held on topics such as autonomist Marxism and council communism, women in the anarchist movement, the war on terror, the Russian revolution and a host of other topics. See [www.afireland.cjb.net](http://www.afireland.cjb.net) for full info.

## Defend Our Heritage.



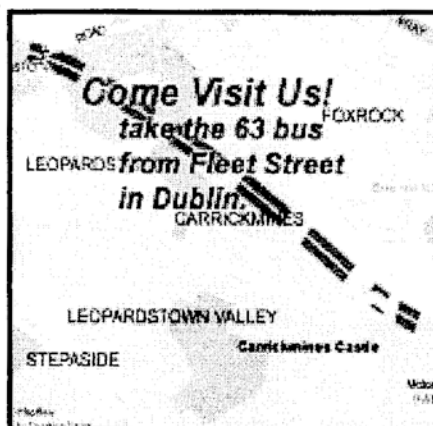
Since the end of the archeological contract ended at Carrickmines castle on Monday (27th of January) the real fight to save Carrickmines Castle begins. Attempts have been made to move part of the wall of the castle and the Carrickminders don't intend to allow this to happen. They have put out an appeal to people to get out to the castle and prepare to block any attempts to destroy part of our heritage.

On Indymedia one Carrickminder said 'Anyone who hasn't seen the site yet, this could be your last chance. It's a beautiful area and soon it will be an industrial estate, a shopping centre, a roundabout and a motorway.'

On the carrickmines.org site the activists describe how "We are not opposed to the construction of this motorway but we are opposed to the unnecessary destruction of our heritage and culture. We seek only a simple realignment of the road and a scaling down of a proposed access roundabout which will preserve much of the archaeological site."

Activists have been occupying the 800 year old Castle since august in protest, staying over night in an old farmhouse on the site, and in a number of geodomes they've erected nearby.

After entering into new negotiations with the activists the National Roads Authority has agreed to look at new proposals for a roundabout, which appears only as an attempt to facilitate the Jacksons Way lands, but are refusing to move the motorway.



## Get Active.



**Socialist Alternative members are active in the following campaigning groups.**

### Campaign For Free Education.

Building resistance to educational inequality. [www.freeeducation.cjb.net](http://www.freeeducation.cjb.net). Contact 085 719 8001

### UCD Anti-deportation Campaign.

Campaigning against state racism and deportations of asylum seekers. Contact Donal at 086 309 5663.

### Global Action.

UCD activist group raising consciousness and taking action on issues of environmental destruction, heritage, war and neo-liberalism. Contact 085 721 6815.

### CarrickMinders.

Defending our heritage in Carrickmines castle against the proposed motorway which seeks to level it. [www.carrickminescastle.org](http://www.carrickminescastle.org) and 087 962 7243

# socialist alternative

<http://www.socialistalternative.cjb.net>

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