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SocialistAppeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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A world of war and crisis



www.marxist.com

editor: Alan Woods
PO Box 2626,
London N1 7SQ
tel 0207 515 7675
appeal@socialist.net
www.socialist.net
www.marxist.com
www.newyouth.com

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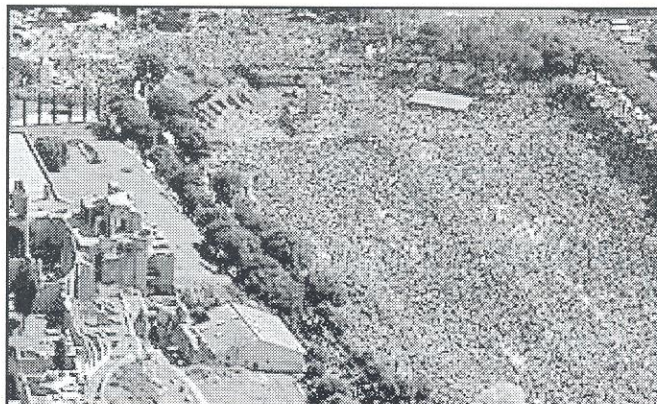
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Italy: 2 million people take to the streets!

Millions of workers flood Rome in the largest demonstration ever seen in Italy (page 18)

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The deadline for articles for issue 101 is April 20th

A Government Infatuated with the Rich

The latest opinion polls show New Labour's lead over the Tories slipping to just seven percent. This represents not a serious recovery in the fortunes of the Tories, but rather a mounting dissatisfaction with Blair and his addiction to privatisation. The YouGov poll conducted by the *Sunday Times* (March 24, 2002) found 54 percent "disappointed with Blair".

Blair has certainly disappointed on the railways. First they failed to renationalise the railways after Railtrack's collapse. Now, despite categorical assurances that no more government money would be used to bail them out, Byers and co have once again caved in to pressure from their friends in the city. They have backtracked over compensation to Railtrack's shareholders who will now get hundreds of millions of pounds of government money which could have been used to begin the rebuilding of our dilapidated public transport system. No doubt Byers wishes Jo Moore was still around to bury the story under some other bad news. The problem for Blair is that all the bad news is about him and his government.

The crisis in the Post Office, created by the introduction of market forces (i.e. profiteering), poses a serious threat to 40,000 postal workers jobs. The new boss of Consignia says the crisis is so great he will have to double his workload ... to two whole days a week! The company is to set aside some £400million to cover redundancy costs. What kind of a system is it that invests more in destroying jobs and services than keeping people in work? The method in their madness is clear. The private buyers they have lined up want a slimlined postal service, ready for total privatisation. More accurately they aren't interested in delivering a service at all, just making a quick buck.

Blair and his disciples have increasingly made clear who their real friends are. They toady to big business and follow the dictates of the City. Brown intends to increase taxes to 'rescue' the health service. Who does he intend to tax? The rich who have seen their wealth

expand under Labour? On the contrary he intends to cut corporation tax once again. It is us who will be asked to foot the bill.

In many ways they are "more Thatcherite than Thatcher" - not our words but those of the TGWU in condemning the decision to privatise maintenance work at the Royal Navy bases on the Clyde, threatening 1,000 jobs.

"This government is infatuated with rich men and bestows magical qualities on the private sector," stated Jack Dromey, a right wing national official of the TGWU. "The public interest comes second to a dogma that says private is best." The call to keep the shipyard jobs in the public sector has been rejected out of hand by the Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon.

Meanwhile, as we warned, the war in Afghanistan is far from over and now Blair proposes to follow Bush into another adventure in Iraq. His foreign policy is as unpopular as his attacks on workers at home. Not content with the company of a right wing US President, Blair now cosies up to repugnant right wing Italian leader Silvio Berlusconi, who praises Blair's Britain as the model of deregulated labour he would like to see in his own country. In Italy, Berlusconi will be quaking in his boots at the recent two million strong demonstration. That may not seem on the order of the day in Britain where events have been proceeding at a snails pace up to the present. But events like those in Rome do not just happen by chance. Their origin and development can be traced to a process of mounting discontent beneath the surface. The advantage Marxism has over other trends in the labour movement is the benefit of foresight over astonishment. If Blair continues on his current path he will face an 'Italian' result. Over which attack the explosion erupts is impossible to predict, but such confrontations are on the way.

Blair should be warned. Even the Parliamentary Labour Party is starting to mutter beneath its breath. The old mantra of 'not rocking the boat' has increasingly little effect. Ordinary work-

ers are more and more disenchanted with Blair and his government as the opinion polls testify. If Blair believes sending British troops to fight and die in Afghanistan and Iraq will distract workers attention from failing services and mounting job losses he is very much mistaken. A majority of those polled, 59 percent, are against joining the US in its threatened attack on Iraq.

The current splits in the PLP may only be hairline fractures, but increasingly they represent the discontent mounting from below. Seen in the context of a shift to the Left in the unions, rising industrial unrest, and Blair's growing unpopularity, they become not just isolated episodes, but symptoms of a process gathering momentum, if still yet in its early stages, beneath the surface of society.

As we have explained previously, the beginnings of a shift to the Left in the unions is an indication of this developing mood. There is a danger that some will race ahead of the majority, proposing breaking the union links etc. Understandably the threat to 40,000 jobs will raise such questions inside the CWU. This would be a mistake, however. Now is precisely the time for the unions to take up the fight not only against each of the attacks of Blair's government, but against Blairism inside the Labour Party.

The trade unions must abandon class collaboration and so-called social partnership and adopt a militant stand to defend workers jobs and conditions. At the same time they must take that fight into the Labour Party to defeat Blairism at its root, and take up the fight for socialist policies in the interests of the working class. ♦

No to imperialist war

No job losses, no privatisation, no more 'social partnership'. For militant trade union action

No to breaking the links. Unions take up the fight inside the Labour Party. For socialist policies.

NUJ: A Striking Mood

A new mood of confidence and unity was much in evidence at the NUJ's recent Annual Delegate Meeting in Eastbourne.

Delegates shared experience gained and celebrated victories won in recent recognition campaigns, together with lessons from industrial action, which had helped improve wages and conditions.

Of the Newsquest Bradford campaign, Bob Smith said: "There's the doubt. Will your members stay solid, or will they succumb to the intimidation and misinformation dealt out by managers. Then there's the moment of triumph as nearly 50 journalists walk back into work, heads held high. Forget the doubt, forget the threats. Start the action."

The union again committed itself to campaign against low pay and fight to break the fetters of the anti trade union laws from the working class movement.

The union again committed itself to campaign against low pay and fight to break the fetters of the anti trade union laws.

The union has a long tradition of campaigning and taking up international issues where there was wide agreement.

An important guest speaker was Independent Zimbabwean journalist, Basildon Peta, the Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, who reported on the run-up to the Presidential election. He said: "Mugabe never intended to relinquish power at the end of his fourth term, although he is now 78. He has no political philosophy except staying in power."

With inflation at 117%, Zimbabwe was the world's fastest shrinking economy and 87% of Zimbabweans were now below the poverty line.

He believed that the land problem, where 4500 whites own the majority of the land could be solved by redistribution without any violence.

"Mugabe has had 22 years to solve the problem - but only started making a noise about it when he was threatened with losing power. He has taken the economy back to the 12th century and created a nation of peasants and serfs. It doesn't make sense to take 10 farms which feed a million people and cut them up into tiny pieces which will scarcely feed those who live on them."

Agricultural production had dropped by 60%.

The media had suffered worst.

There were 42 cases of journalists being beaten up and no arrests had been made. Any criticism of Mugabe was a criminal offence and journalists were forced to apply for one-year renewable licences - not required anywhere else.

Peta said that institutions of dictatorship had been set up - so that even if a new president was elected, he could act the same way.

Gains & Campaigns

The new General Secretary, Jeremy Dear, is clearly held in high esteem as a tribute to his campaigning work and organising ability.

A healthy programme of fringe meetings included one on low pay, the war against terrorism and the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign.

The left produced a widely-read daily bulletin commenting on relevant resolutions, but disappointingly failed to organise a meeting to rally support or involve the large number of fresh young delegates.

There were about 200 attending the conference, including about 150 delegates.

About 22 journals were sold, along with a quantity of literature and about £120 raised overall including donations. ♦

by an NUJ delegate

by Dean Jenkins

Journalists at the Wakefield Express called off their strike just days before action was due to start after securing pay rises of up to 12%.

And further pay successes have been notched up at the Daily/Sunday Express and Daily Star and the Yorkshire Post group after votes for strike action provoked new offers from management.

At Wakefield, where the predominantly young members voted overwhelmingly for strike action, trainee journalists will receive an 11.98% pay rise this year followed by at least 6.75% next year. Senior journalists will receive

between 2.5% and 3.42%. The threat of strike action also secured rises in meal allowances and a one-off payment for photographers using their own cars.

At the Daily/Sunday Express and Daily Star journalists voted to accept a new offer of £1100 each just hours before their action was due to start. At a meeting of around 200 of the papers journalists NUJ members heard how the idea of a pay freeze had been mooted by the company and that over the past few weeks their campaign had secured an offer of £750, then £851, £901 and £1000 before the final

offer of £1100. The deal means rises of around 6.8% for trainees and above inflation rises for most staff.

At the Leeds-based Yorkshire Post/Evening Post journalists have called off their threatened action after the paper's new owners agreed to reopen talks on a pay grading scale for the title's journalists.

Other ballots are currently taking place at Greater Manchester Weekly Papers in Rochdale and at the Evening Gazette in Preston where the company has sought to impose a 1% pay rise. ♦

Teachers march for action

Ten thousand teachers from London and its suburbs demonstrated in the centre of the city last month against government plans to increase the London living allowances by a measly £105. That would bring the allowance for teachers to £3,105 a year, which compares with the £6000 recently given to MPs. The inadequacy of wages in the public sector means that especially young teachers, who made up a large proportion of the march cannot afford even to live in London, let alone buy a house.

The government was quick to condemn the strike, they had done so even before the ballot had been concluded. Estelle Morris, the Education Secretary, was quoted by the FT in the aftermath of the ballot: "I don't want to go back to the bad old days. There are signs that some teacher representatives want to try to solve the problems in ways which I thought we had turned our backs on. I have been through that with the NUT and it achieved nothing. It jeopardised the education of a whole generation of kids". A recent report in teaching journal, The Times Education Supplement, counters this

view. They quote NUT General Secretary, Doug McAvo, "Teachers are only too aware of the damage to children's education that shortages in the capital are causing". There is such a lack of interest in long hours, high stress, low paid teaching jobs schools have forced to make up the difference with supply teachers; this is very unsettling and disruptive for children's education. In some boroughs of London one in five teachers are short-term supply teachers.

The government is getting worried that the new awakenings of industrial militancy in many different professions will put a stop to their agenda of privatisation, and greater flexibility. The awakening of trade union protest among workers jeopardises the partnerships they have been developing with the employers. A spokesman for the Prime Minister was quoted in the Daily Telegraph: "We [the government] have shown through our actions that we are attuned to teachers concerns. Strikes achieve nothing for teachers and for their pupils". The Brave New World of education, which the government promised is not the experiences of teachers. One

teacher from St George's comprehensive in Maida Vale said: "We take no pleasure in having to do this, but we must call on the public and Mr Blair to take notice that for the first time in 30 years teachers are having to take this type of action". The teachers have come to a stage now where they have no choice but to take action to defend their wages and conditions.

This year's NUT conference will take place in Bournemouth, on Easter weekend, Estelle Morris will speak on Easter Saturday and is expected to get a hostile reception. One of the main bones of contention, other than the low rate of pay, and the London allowance, will be the Public Private Partnership (PPP), and the involvement of private companies in schools. ♦

- ☐ Teachers and parents must defend state education against the Government's attempts at backdoor privatisation.
- ☐ For a massive increase of investment in education.
- ☐ For a living wage for public servants.
- ☐ The state must provide affordable quality housing for all.

NEWSround

New figures show that the gap between the highest paid and the lowest continues to grow despite New Labour's claims to be addressing inequality.

The recently published New Earnings Survey shows that the hourly earnings of the highest paid 10% rose 7.6% while those of the lowest 10% increased by just 4.3%.

A separate report from the National Statistics Office shows around 30% of workers aged 18 and over earn less than the minimum wage.

Pefer Ellwood, chief executive of Lloyd's TSB, got an inflation-busting 16.9% pay rise last year taking him to £1,001,000 a year. However, even he was beaten by his deputy chief executive who got a whopping 38.9% pay hike. A further three directors got salaries over £500,000 pa.

No wonder they voted not to give shareholders a say over directors pay!

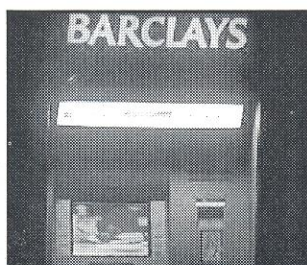


King for a Day Fool For a Lifetime!

Six Barclays investment bankers faced the sack last month for causing 'bad publicity' after spending £44,007 of their own money on one meal in a fashionable London restaurant. They spent so much on fine wine that the posh nosh was thrown in for free.

On the Same day the papers were full of reports that 1,800 Barclays office employees will face a diet of orange squash and beans on toast as they are gradually laid off over the next six months, in a move to cut costs and boost profits.

Does all this mean that one of Britain's biggest banks is struggling for cash? Not at all! Barclays have just announced record profits for 2001: £3.6bn, that is a 9% rise on the previous year. Chief Executive, Matt Barrett,



was quoted at the beginning of 2002: "We feel pretty good. We are in pretty good shape and we are cautiously optimistic about 2002."

Meanwhile our 6 epicures from the city are not feeling so good; they must be feeling more than a little sick. After spending £12,300 on one bottle of plonk to toast a business deal, they are now searching for new jobs. Never mind chaps thanks to the wonderful mechanisms of [super]market competition, you can now get a tin of beans for 9p. ♦

Rally for our rights

The leaders of 10 national unions will join forces with former MP Tony Benn and leading campaigners to demand the repeal of the anti-union laws and for a positive charter of workers rights at a rally in London on April 27.

The rally, to be held at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road will feature the General Secretaries of UCATT, POA, RMT, NUJ, GMB, CWU, FBU, NATFHE, BFAWU and ASLEF as well as STUC leader Bill Speirs.

The meeting, organised by the United Campaign to Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws starts at 1pm and is open to all. ♦

Fight for equal pay!

Peter Doyle on Equal Value in the NHS



I work as a full time officer for Unison in the north of England. I wasn't satisfied with the role of the union, or lack of role of the union, over pay and particularly that of low paid women. The majority of women we represent are ancillary workers inside the health service, and manual workers in local government. In 1995 I put forward a series of proposals for Equal Value claims; Equal Value claims that I thought we couldn't lose. They were based on groups of women in traditional so-called 'womens jobs'. We compared their jobs or the work that they did with men who worked in traditional 'mens' jobs. In the health service men are usually employed in the works department: plumbers, electricians, building workers etc.

I put forward a proposal in 1995, but was told that it couldn't go forward, because the Tory government was attempting to dismantle national pay bargaining. If we as a union lodged these claims, they in turn would scrap national pay bargaining. I didn't agree with that, but at the end of the day I didn't have the clout within the union to force the issue.

Then came the election in May 1997. Approximately a month before the election, the national officer for the health service at the time, a good trade union official by the name of Malcolm Wing, had been promised by Alan Milburn that PFI was off the agenda, and that we as a union had nothing to worry about. Two weeks after the election, PFI was back on the agenda of the Labour government and Alan Milburn in particular, along with John

Prescott, were claiming that PFI was actually their idea in the first place. Permission was given to go ahead with the first PFI hospital in the UK and that was in Carlisle, which is part of my patch. On the basis that we had been basically betrayed and lied to, I asked Malcolm Wing if he would now allow me to lodge my equal value claim. He was willing to allow it. And so we did, we lodged the Equal Value claims.

Work groups

Within the Equal Value claims there were 13 separate distinct work groups the vast majority of whom were women; ranging from nurses, cooks & catering assistants, to domestics, and seemstresses. We used men occupied in the works department as comparators. I spent a lot of time with people of the works department, some of whom are Unison members, but the majority are in the craft unions such as UCATT, and the AEEU. These men were very sympathetic to the union lodging an Equal Value claim and using them as comparators.

We identified 13 distinct work groups, and lodged 50 individual initial applications at an industrial tribunal. We now have 1000 applications lodged at the same tribunal. It has been going on now for four and a half years. Reports have been produced by a group of people called 'independent expert witnesses', these are academics, ex-ACAS types, who have come in and compared the work of the women members with the work of the men. We have seen interim reports produced by these people and they are very good. In fact on the strength of

the interim report we think we have won every claim. They are in the process of producing final reports, and they have notified us that final reports have already been submitted to the tribunal on 6 out of the 13 work groups. We think, in fact we know, that we are going to win them. The effect and the impact of this Equal Value claim will be tremendous.

A basic grade staff nurse is currently on £17,000 p.a., after she has been in work for 5 years, on an incremental scale. We have compared D grade nurses to the Craftsman Supervisors in the works department. The Craftsman Supervisor is an electrician with a 2-week training course on how to supervise men. The nurse has degree level training, she has additional training over a period of 5 years, she then is responsible for 3 or 4 wards and can supervise 30-40 staff of differing grades within the nursing profession; the Craftsman Supervisor supervises a maximum of nine men. The Craftsman Supervisor is on a 37 hour week, the nurse is on a 37.5 hour week. The nurse is paid £17,000 p.a., the craftsman supervisor earns £27,000 p.a.; a difference of £10,000 a year. The Craftsman Supervisor, if he works Saturdays and Sundays, gets paid time and a half, and double time; the nurse gets paid time and a third, and time and two thirds.

Our claim at the tribunal is that the work the nurses do, on the paediatric ward looking after children; on the cancer ward; on the intensive care ward, where they deal with people in Road-Traffic-Accidents, is at least of equal value to the

craftsman supervisor, who supervises electricians, and plumbers and joiners who fix, broken pipes, windows etc. We know that we're going to win that one.

Out of the total of 1000 we have in the region of 600 claims for nurses, each of those nurses will be looking at settlements of at least £10,000 p.a. backdated for 11 years (because it's got to be backdated, from the date of settlement to the date of application, which is 1997, and then for 6 years).

Skilled workers

We then looked at cooks. The cooks in the health service have to have City and Guilds qualifications, City and Guilds 702, and 703. And we compared the mainly women cooks to the male joiners, who also must have City and Guilds 702, and 703. We have argued that the work of the skilled chefs and cooks is as important as that of the hospital joiner, not necessarily more important, but at least of equal value. The cook earns £8,700 p.a. for a 39hr working week, the joiner gets £14,800 p.a. for a 37hr week. So when we win, the cooks are going to have a 2hr reduction in their working week, and they are going to have their pay claim backdated for 11 years. This applies to the domestics, the admin and clerical staff, the cooks, bottle washers etc.

ACAS has estimated that the impact of this claim on one trust alone will be £39million in backdated pay, and we now think that this is rather a conservative estimate, we think it will be more than that. If one nurse gets £100,000 in back-

dated pay and there are 600 of them, that alone is £60 million, and there are another 400 applications for various other grades of staff who will get equal sums of money. It will also cost the trust an additional £11 million p.a. on the pay bill.

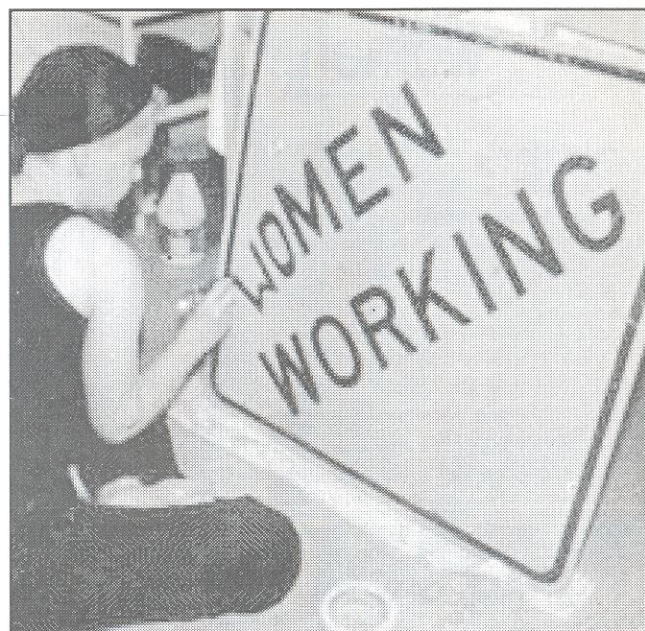
National repercussions

Once it goes to the tribunal and we win it, the decision of the tribunal will be that Whitley council rates of pay discriminate against women. In the health service. 99% of staff are on terms and conditions the same as those of Whitley council. So the claim blows the lid off this particular box that ancillary workers and nurses have been trapped in for many years. That is low pay and poor terms and conditions, and that's the green light for every Unison member in the country to lodge similar claims. That means that the money that is being put into the health service now will pale into insignificance compared with the money that they will need to put in to resolve these new issues of pay.

Given the claim has been going on for 4 and a half years, I have actually had more publicity from the

Royal College of Nursing union's magazine, than I have had from Unison's own magazine. Some people in Unison are opposed to the whole idea of lodging equal value claims. The SWP and some of the sects criticise lodging an Equal Value claim, they say it fosters illusions in the minds of workers in the power of the state. What they don't realise is that we've built the branch in Carlisle from 230 members four and a half years ago, to 1,800; that is the biggest growth in any trade union branch anywhere in the U.K.

We have gone from 230 to 1,800 and we're still growing, and it's all been on the strength of the equal value claim. We have put a lot of preparation into the claim, we have organised regular meetings with all the applicants, we have mass meetings of sometimes 500 members who come along to hear what the latest development is on the equal value claim; the applicants go out and recruit more applicants; and we have written to the applicants on a regular basis. We have raised the workers consciousness of trade unionism and we have raised the consciousness of thousands of women in this part of



Cumbria about their status and what they are entitled to. We have organised the whole campaign of equal value in the traditions of good trade-unionism, involving the members, involving them all the way along the line, calling meetings, giving them regular reports, and buoying up their enthusiasm. Marxists believe in fighting to improve workers' conditions, using any and every avenue available to us. Only a hopeless sectarian would argue that a pay rise is not worth having unless it is won by a strike. ♦

Labour Party Eastern Region Conference

Keep the left traditions!

The Biennial Conference was held in Great Yarmouth over the weekend of 16/17 March 2002. Nearly half of the 120 delegates were from the trade unions including Amicus, T&GWU, UNISON and GPMU.

Political ideas from branches and delegates were not discussed until the second day when there was a restriction that motions could only relate to regional issues! This was challenged and won politically but finally defeated on organisational grounds (as against standing orders which were magically produced although they were not available to delegates).

Motions were accepted on rail and road transport where there was a demand for more money to be spent, in East Anglia, on both forms of transport. New housing developments should not be built on "green spaces" with special reference to the government's plan to build 4 million new homes in the next 10 years, which means about 200,000 in the region.

A resolution moved by the Agricultural Section of the T&GWU calling for roving health and safety reps for the agricultural industry was accepted.

All this is to be controlled, in due course, by Regional Government in the East of England, which in this case means the present counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

The Socialist Campaign Group organised a well-attended meeting entitled "After the Third Way - Democratic Socialism". It was though the only opportunity during the whole of conference to raise and discuss the fundamental ideas of socialism.

The Labour Party Chairman, Charles Clarke, addressed the

conference on the need for political discussion within the movement. He accepted that members held the activities of the National and Local Policy Forums in contempt. He called for all ideas to be discussed where nothing was to be taboo. He said, "The greatest danger is for everyone to keep their mouths shut and hope people will vote for us again next time. They need to see us as a vital political force."

It was obvious that the leadership is worried by the fall in membership and has had to take measures to even maintain the present level. Questions from the floor showed the unease members felt about the Forums and the reduced role of National Conference.

The other speaker was the recently appointed General Secretary of the Labour Party, David Triesman. He gave a funny speech attacking the Tories. But he did not offer any policies to increase the standing of the Party.

For many years the Eastern Region used to hold an annual rally in Cambridge, but after the 1997 election this was stopped on the grounds of cost. It was an event that persuaded many a national speaker to come to an area where there were traditionally few Labour MPs. It was agreed at conference to start to arrange them again so that many of the 23,000 members in the region could get together.

Nearly £100 was raised for the Fighting Fund and 39 Socialist Appeals were sold. ♦

by a Conference delegate

The Abortion Referendum in Ireland

"It is a paradox that so much passion and energy should be invested on behalf of the unborn in a state that is confronted daily with its failure to provide for the weakest and most vulnerable of its living. The elderly and dying are jostled about on hospital trolleys. The disabled and their helpers struggle for basic rights. The accident and emergency system is daily and nightly in crisis at the hospitals."

Irish Times Editorial, 05/03/02

To have an abortion has been a criminal offence in Ireland since 1861. The recent referendum was not aimed at changing that.

By Phil Mitchinson

The referendum's aim was to reverse the limited reform of recent years which has allowed victims of rape, whose own lives are endangered by the threat of suicide arising from their experience of that horrific and violent crime, to legally get an abortion.

With a turnout of over 40%, this reactionary amendment has been rejected, though only by a narrow majority of just 10,000 votes. To have passed this referendum would have been a major step backwards, a cruel blow to one of the most vulnerable sections of society. Therefore the No vote was important. However, it solves nothing for thousands of women in Ireland. It simply maintains the status quo.

Approximately 7,000 Irish abortions take place every year in Britain. This referendum will not change that. If the government were serious about reducing the number of unwanted or "crisis pregnancies", they would make a start by investing seriously in a programme of education and provide access to information, contraception etc. They have consistently failed to do even this. There is no chance of them getting to grips with the real social problems at the heart of all the difficulties confronting ordinary working people in Ireland. Decent affordable housing, full employment on a living wage, better education and health services, these are the rights we must fight for. Inevitably such a fight will bring us into conflict with the capitalist system which has clearly demonstrated that even in boom times, it cannot afford these basics of civilisation for the majority.

The referendum result illustrates that a sea change is taking place in public opinion. Current abortion legislation in Ireland stems from an amendment to the constitution in 1983 which asserts: "The state acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal

right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right."

After certain struggles over the right to distribute information describing how to get an abortion abroad in the 1980s, Ireland signed up to the Maastricht Treaty on European Union after receiving an assurance that this would not affect the country's strict abortion laws.

Then in 1992 came the X case. Justice Costello granted an injunction in the High Court preventing a 14-year-old girl, pregnant as a result of rape, from travelling to the UK for an abortion. There followed an appeal in the Supreme Court. By a majority of three to two, the court found that, if there was a real and substantial risk to the life, as distinct from the health, of the mother, and that this risk could only be averted by the termination of her pregnancy, this would be lawful. It accepted that there was a real danger that she would commit suicide if she had to carry the child to full term, and that this therefore constituted a real risk to her life. The court lifted the injunction.

The constitution was amended again at the end of 1992, adding to the above quoted law:

"This subsection shall not limit freedom to travel between the State and another state.

"This subsection shall not limit freedom to obtain or make available, in the State, subject to such conditions as may be laid down by law, information relating to services lawfully available in another state."

In other words the law on abortion could not prevent someone from travelling abroad, or prevent them reading about abortion. It did not however, make it legal to travel abroad to have an abortion.

This was followed in 1997 by the C case. In

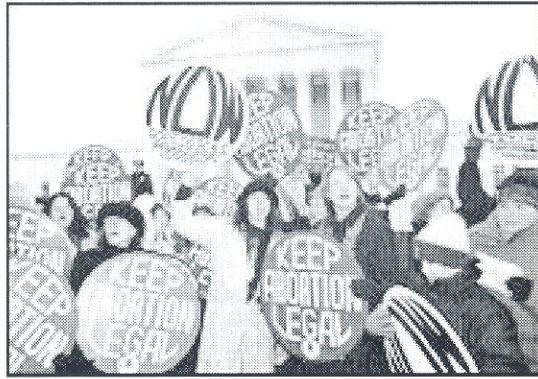
the C Case another raped and pregnant teenager - in the care of the Eastern Health Board - sought an abortion in the UK. This case differed from the X case in that the victim's parents opposed her decision to travel to the UK for an abortion. They had sought an injunction preventing the board from taking her to the UK. Basing themselves on the judgement in the X case the court ruled that she could travel. However, the judge also commented: "The amended Constitution does not now confer a right to abortion outside of Ireland. It merely prevents injunctions against travelling for that purpose."

Even after these changes, which are barely even a minimum of a civilised approach, women remain a long way from obtaining the right to have an abortion in Ireland. These raped teenagers, left suicidal by the trauma they experienced, were allowed to travel to the UK for an abortion.

The government claimed that if the so-called "loophole" whereby suicidal women were entitled to an abortion was not closed, then women would literally be queuing up to pretend that they were suicidal in order to obtain abortions for a myriad of "social reasons". This type of filthy scare mongering is nothing new.

At the time of the X case there was a disgusting smear campaign against the victim. A book published by Human Life International, *The X Case: How Abortion was Brought to Ireland*, claimed to reveal the "lies and manipulation" behind the case. Father Michael Cleary, on his Dublin local radio talk show in June 1993, claimed that the X case was "a model ... planned deliberately to test the amendment" and that there was a great deal of organisation behind it.

The meaning of this was clear: the victim (a fourteen year old girl who had been raped remember) was a liar acting out a role on behalf of sinister pro-abortion forces. What a nauseating mixture of



reaction and cynicism.

In the eyes of these upstanding gentlemen women are manipulative liars who will make false accusations of rape simply in order to get an abortion.

So rape is left out of the legal equation because in the words of our civilised friend the Attorney General, women would make up allegations. Similarly they wanted to remove the threat of suicide from the equation because girls and women would cynically and falsely claim to be suicidal.

As the *Irish Times* asked on March 5, "Has any Western democracy ever been asked to enshrine such a bleak, cruel view of half of its citizens into its fundamental law?" So much for so-called civilisation. What an illustration of the failure of the Irish bourgeoisie to take society forward in the eighty years since independence.

In fact the proposal to discard a woman's possible suicide as a basis for abortion is nothing short of barbaric. Both the young women in the X case and C cases were suicidal because of the circumstances surrounding their pregnancies. Their lives had literally been torn apart. And they are not the only ones to have suffered in this way.

The Irish government has exposed its reactionary hypocrisy. Their position is that such problems must be exported out of sight. A section of the Irish establishment have more or less accepted that abortion is "tolerable", provided the Irish women who have abortions get them abroad. So essentially the only time you

can have an abortion is when it is not an abortion but a life saving operation, or when it is abroad, where a blind eye can be turned.

The government claimed that they would protect the freedom to travel and to receive information if the amendment was passed. Even if we believed them this is hardly much to brag about and, in any case, these basic democratic rights were already won in the 1992 abortion referendum.

Moreover, it is important to make the distinction between the freedom to travel and the right to travel. Freedom to travel means little to a woman who cannot afford hundreds of Euros to go and get an abortion in Britain. This clearly discriminates against women on the basis of their class. Working class women are therefore oppressed on two levels, firstly as workers, like the rest of us, but also as women, and we have seen here the attitude the ruling class displays towards women.

Clearly, neither the government nor the so-called pro-life groups give a damn about women, some of whom could be the victims of terrible crimes. Ahern now declares that there will be no new legislation until after a new election. The government has cynically used this referendum to hold on to the support of their coalition partners and to play to the prejudices of what they see as their bedrock support in those forthcoming elections.

Abortion for tens of thousands of women in Ireland already has been or will be a reality. Legislation should not be introduced that denies that reality. On the contrary, women who find themselves in the position of requiring an abortion, for whatever reason, should get assistance not a tar brush and feathers.

There are very many reasons, medical, social and economic why women feel that they can't go through with a pregnancy and therefore abortion should be legalised. Contrary to the despicable



opinions expressed by the ruling class, women are not going to treat abortion in a light minded manner. There must be the right to have an abortion, that doesn't mean we want women to have abortions. The women facing such a choice undoubtedly 'want' an abortion least of all. There is no right to choose in a society that does not provide women or anyone else with the right to a job, the right to a home, the right to

education and a decent life. The reactionaries who present a woman's right to abortion as a choice similar to selecting different goods from a supermarket shelf are very keen on the right to life before birth, and on the right to life after death, what they care less about it seems is the right of the majority to live while they are alive.

No-one can pretend that abortion is a good thing. We want a society

free from the desperate social conditions, the poverty, the lack of housing, adequate childcare and so on which leads to unwanted pregnancy. More, we want a society where the relations between men and women are freed from the impositions of economics. A society where humanity can flourish, no longer restricted by the constraints imposed by prejudice and oppression. We want a society where the right of abortion would increasingly not need to be used. We are fighting for such a socialist society. Until it is established however, we must fight too for every basic right and reform which can improve the conditions of life for ordinary working people.

The southern bourgeoisie stands absolutely condemned for its complete

inability to develop Irish society. The result of this referendum demonstrates that a return to the restrictions of the past will not be tolerated by ordinary Irish men and women. In fact, there is a growing desire for social change in Ireland which cannot be satisfied by the capitalist system.

This system uses a million and one devices to hold back, deceive and divide the working class. It ruthlessly uses religion, race and gender for this purpose. Capitalism is a system mired in exploitation and oppression. The exploitation and oppression of women is inextricably linked to the class system. It can only be ended by a wholesale transformation of society and the building of a new socialist world. ♦

Rail workers in struggle

Though national headlines are not being made railway workers up and down the country are still taking or balloting for industrial action.

Scotrail drivers are demanding a 25% pay increase. They are one of the worst paid group of drivers in Britain. They are asking to receive wages in line with drivers south of the border. Management are only offering 3% and even that has productivity included. Yet the Strategic Rail Authority announced that Scotrail is to get an extra £70 million public subsidy to keep its franchise until at least 2004. This is despite Scotrail's profits rising 8.3% to £129.2 million last year. Scotrail drivers are determined to get better wages. An overtime ban has been in place since the beginning of the New Year cancelling trains every day. Four 24-hour strikes have been 100% successful following a 20 to 1 ballot for strike action. Another 11 have been planned, but the unions have suspended strikes because of talks taking place at ASLEF Head Office in London.

RMT strikes on Arriva Trains Northern are still continuing and hitting the company hard. The guards have been joined by other RMT

grades who voted 9 to 1 in favour of strike action, also demanding a better pay increase than the 3% offered. Members of the TSSA union have voted to strike by 7 to 1 on Arriva Northern. The TSSA whose members include booking office clerks and supervisors, have not called a strike in 27 years. They will be striking on the same days as the RMT. Strikes are planned for April and May. It has been estimated that each strike is costing management £1 million.

Drivers and guards on First North Western are voting for strikes over management's abuse of disciplinary procedures. RMT members who's job is to put up the posters on London Underground have voted for strikes over pay. So have workers on the Docklands Light Railway. Silverlink guards are at present being balloted for industrial action over pay.

London Underground drivers achieved a good victory this month, forcing management to cave in. Management reneged on an agreement at the end of last year, to make tube drivers pay the same as engineering drivers. An overwhelming vote for strike action persuaded management to concede the 5.7% pay increase. □



Bob Crow has won the election for RMT General Secretary. He polled 12,051, which was 65 percent of the vote. His nearest rival got 4,512. This result follows a string of other left wing union officials that have been elected into prominent positions. □

by Andy Viner

Interview with Derek Simpson

This month we interview Derek Simpson who is seeking nomination to stand in the election for the AEEU General Secretary position this June.

Leftwing AEEU activists believe that he has an excellent chance of beating the right wing in the election; continuing the trend of left victories in a number of General Secretary elections in important trade unions including CWU, RMT, NUJ and PCS.

Why are you standing in the General Secretary election?

The reason I'm standing in the General Secretary election is that I believe the union has lost its way; that the democracy of the union has been reduced. It is necessary to bring that democracy back, and I believe that the present leadership is not only incapable of restoring democracy, in fact is hell-bent on further centralising the command structure of the union. I am very much against this; I think the union belongs to the members.

What do the unions offer workers today?

I think unless we answer the question of how we stand up for workers, the unions have less to offer to workers today than ever before by the way they are currently going. Partnership and advocating partnership demeans the members, and cushions the movement. I therefore think unless we can return to the kind of policies that represent workers, we have very little to offer.

Does the AEEU do a good job for its members?

I don't think by and large that it does. It is not pursuing the policies the members would like to see it pursue; it does not appear to spring very readily to the defence of members when it's needed; and there is great concern about the advocating of partnership. It seems that the union has more in keeping with the bosses than it does with its members; in fact it's called the bosses union in many quarters. So I don't think that the union does do a job, which goes back to my earlier answer; that is one of the reasons why I am standing against the so-called machine, to try and change that.

What is your position on the government policy of Social Partnership? Is it viable? Do workers and bosses have the same economic interests?

I don't think it's viable; I don't think that pretending the interests of workers can be subjugated to partnership is indeed viable. We only have to examine where partnership has been implemented, and see where it is actually failed. There is no evidence that partnership is creating a safer environment for workers jobs, or a more prosperous environment for workers wages and conditions. All it seems to do is allow the bosses to exploit the goodwill of the employees, and if there's no goodwill it has generally been the role of the trade union leaders to move down this path of being cooperative with no reward, until the day the bosses decide that the bottom line takes them elsewhere. We see factories close just as readily whether in a partnership or not, so I don't think that the whole policy is sound whatsoever. I am not advocating, of course, a policy of permanent industrial unrest, but I think there is a clear position that the unions could stand up far better for their members than they seem able to, under this so-called 'Social Partnership' approach.

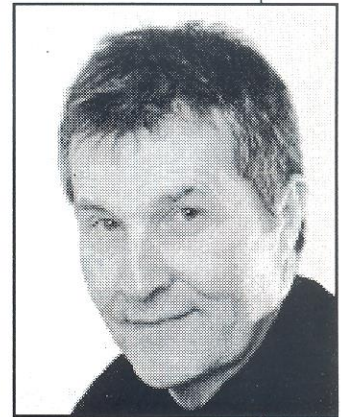
There is a debate going on over the Labour Party, and whether the trade unions should disaffiliate. What do you think? Should the Trade Unions leave the Labour Party. Or should they stay and fight for their interests inside Labour?

My answer to the question of disaffiliation is no, I don't think we should be pushing to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. I think that the Labour Party, or as it is now New Labour, has lost its way, just as I believe that the union has lost its

way; we aren't going to find our way back on track by deserting the struggle. I think the reality is, there are many people in the Labour Party; many Labour voters, who are aghast at the current state of affairs, and pulling out is not an answer, I believe that we should argue vociferously within the party. If our union, the AEEU, was doing so it would lead the others in arguing for a return to more socialist policies: ending things like the social partnership for example. Union members who are disenchanted with the treatment in our union, often leave and join other unions, or worse still leave and do not join any union, I say: don't throw yourself out, let's throw them out; them being the perpetrators of the policies that I believe are wrong. That goes also for people who are disillusioned with the policies of the Labour Party.

Have you anything else to say to your members who read *Socialist Appeal*?

I have to say we've got a golden opportunity with this election. It was finally forced when the leadership did not want it, they tried to avoid it. The members have an opportunity here, in the forthcoming election, to bring the union back into their own hands; to bring the union back onto a policy that represents their views. They can do a service not only to themselves, but to the whole trade union movement, and taken in line with the comments on social partnership, to the whole of the Labour movement. I encourage them to act and vote accordingly. ♦



INDUSTRIAL round-up

Staff at English Heritage, members of Prospect and PCS, have voted for strike action.

The move comes following an imposed pay deal and the failure of management to keep commitments made last year to deliver real improvements in pay.

ASLEF members at Nexus, the Tyne and Wear metro system, are being balloted on strike action after voting 56-12 to reject a revised pay offer from management whilst drivers working for freight operator EWS/EWSI voted 2:1 against the latest management pay offer and are to be balloted

on a series of 48-hour strikes.

RMT members at Arriva Trains North are planning a series of further stoppages as part of their pay dispute. The 700 members who took strike action have named five further dates in April and May for action. ♦

National Government, Invergordon and the ILP

The British working class has a history of swinging from industrial action to political action. This is as true today as it was in the 1930's. By Miles Todd

At the present moment the trade unions are beginning to flex their muscles, so also at a later stage workers, recognising the limits of industrial action, will once again seek a political solution to their perennial problems, in the process moving the Labour Party to the left.

On May 30th 1929 the second minority Labour government was formed with Macdonald at its head. They had won on the claim that they could solve the unemployment problem, but at a time when the world was on the eve of a profound economic and political crisis. Then, as now, Labour faced a stark choice: either break with capital, or become the instrument of the ruling class and capitalism.

Throughout its period in office, the Labour government backed the employers campaign to cut wages and reduce living standards. Government spokesmen demanded 'increased productivity', and 'sacrifices'. Following a Liberal amendment the May Committee was set up to look at unemployment and when it reported in July 1931 it proposed a 20% reduction in all scales of unemployment benefit, 43% increase in the weekly contributions of the worker to the scheme, a 26 week limit on benefit and a means test for all those who had exhausted benefit. Economies amounting to another £29.5 million were called for by cuts in the wages of civil servants, teachers and armed forces and reductions in education, health services, child welfare and pension spending.

By August the Bank of England was warning that the economy was on the edge of a precipice and advised on a balanced budget and cuts in public expenditure.

With the government in crisis and the rank and file of the labour movement in uproar, Macdonald, following secret meetings with the opposition, went to the King and readily agreed to form a National Government. Such was the ignominious end to the minority Labour government.

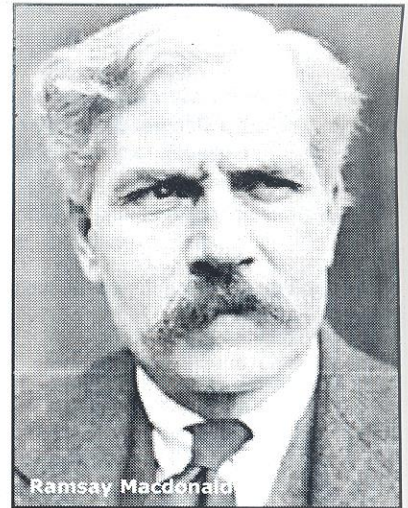
The subsequent election proved a crushing blow for Labour with the National Government gaining 554 seats to Labour's 52. The ruling class had sought a coalition government because they needed to divide the Labour movement. If a Tory government had been elected there would have been an immediate and mighty struggle by the workers in the trade unions and the unemployed.

Solvency

Macdonald formed a government, which from its first day in power set out to attack the living standards of the working class and make them pay for the crisis which capitalism had produced. It was claimed that economies of £120 million were required to restore solvency to the state finances. The wages of post office workers, civil servants, teachers, police, and the armed forces were cut, and unemployment benefits were cut as never before. To the mass of the workers in industry, because the government had chosen public servants and the unemployed for attack, it was not at first apparent that, by a policy of divide and rule this was the beginning of an offensive of the capitalist class against everyone's wages and conditions.

Of special interest to all Marxists, was the response of naval ratings at Invergordon. On September 12th 1931 the government announced a cut of one shilling a day for all naval ratings below the rank of Warrant Officer. For most this meant a cut of approximately 25%. Three days later the naval ratings of Invergordon gave their reply when it was reported that 12,000 men were refusing to obey the orders of the officers. Mass meetings were held and they were effectively on strike against pay cuts. Despite Admiralty orders for the fleet to sail the men stood firm, despite all the threats and intimidation, the men refused to carry out the orders.

One ship's captain was reported as saying: "This action of the men is a blow to British prestige, it has ruined 300 years of naval tradition." The unit-



ed ranks of the British Navy ratings at Invergordon was a serious blow to the government, which was forced to retreat and make a very big revision in the amount of the pay cut. This episode had a big effect on the working class in general and helped stimulate the struggle of civilian workers against the government's economic measures.

The biggest attacks though were reserved for the unemployed and massive demonstrations organised by the National Unemployed Workers Movement became commonplace in many of the industrial centres of Britain. Not untypical was a march at Glasgow Green, October 31, which became a bitter battle between 50,000 unemployed and the police. Although the Committee on National Expenditure had recommended a 20% cut in unemployment benefit rates, the government hesitated and limited the cut to 10% but the most hated part of the new legislation, the means test, remained in place. For the first time unemployment was treated as a charge upon the family rather than a charge upon the state, this struck a blow at the very means, and standards of existence of working class family life. It brought disaster upon hundreds of thousands of working class households.

By these means the government was saving approximately £30 million a year at the expense of the unemployed and their families. Given that by January 1933, 2,903,000 were registered unemployed, and that there were hundreds of thousands more not counted in the official figures, then it is not hard to understand the bitter resentment of the working class who had become victims of the capitalist crisis and a government of the ruling class.

Throughout these years terrific struggles of the workers and unem-

ployed took place usually against the forces of the state. In 1932 alone the records of the N.U.W.M. show that some 400 of its branch members suffered arrest and imprisonment for leading the struggles of the unemployed. Trade Union branches throughout the country passed militant resolutions calling for strike action to compel the government to withdraw the means test. But the T.U.C. leaders then as now were not disposed to taking militant action. If they then, the National Government would have been forced, if not to abolish the means test entirely, then certainly to have made drastic modifications to its implementation.

Amongst the most militant action of the unemployed and workers, occurred in Birkenhead where thousands took to the streets in September 1932. Bitter clashes with the police ensued over a number of days, such was the ferociousness of the struggle that the local Public Assistance Committee raised weekly relief scales from 12s to 15s 3d for men, and 10s to 13s 6d for women. The Town Council put in hand Public Work Schemes for the unemployed at Trade Union rates of pay to the total value of £180,000.

After the struggle subsided 45 workers were placed on trial and 2 of the N.U.W.M. leaders received jail sentences of two years.

Even more bitter were the struggles in Belfast. Here the unemployed from the Falls Road to the Shankhill Road were united, two workers died but considerable concessions followed. Then as now as the recent January 18th strike showed, common misery, common struggle led to united action proving in the process that only a class based movement could unite Catholic and Protestant workers.

In Britain during this period the two main organised left groups were the Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party. By 1931 the CP, under the influence of Stalin's Comintern, had abandoned Lenin's advice of 1920 of



Stanley Baldwin, Tory PM after Macdonald

patiently turning towards the Labour Party and the trade union rank and file, and was instead engaged in a violent series of zigzags seeing little difference between working class parties and those of reaction. This combined with extreme sectarianism in the field of trade union work, reduced the party to just 7,000 members, at a time when it should have been growing by leaps and bounds.

Future support

The reality was that despite the disastrous minority government of 1929-31 and the betrayal of Macdonald and the coming to power of a National Government in 1931, the bulk of the organised working class remained loyal to the Labour Party, giving it 6.6million votes in 1931. Potentially this was a force which would provide the Labour Party with massive future support.

The ILP, which had always played a leading role in the formation of the policies and principles of the Labour Party, drew the opposite conclusion. They believed that this was the end of the Labour Party, new political formations would develop in which they could play a key role. Disastrously at their July 1932 conference they voted by 241 votes to 142, not only to leave the Labour Party, but that all members should cease paying the political levy through the trade unions.

The split however over the question of standing orders for MPs within the Parliamentary

Labour Party was posed in purely organisational terms. In 1929-31 the real oppositions in parliament to Macdonald and co. had come from a hard core of ILP members within the PLP. With Macdonald's betrayal of 1931, the ILP could have exerted tremendous influence among the rank and file of the Labour Party exposing the role of reformism and gradualism within the movement.

Unfortunately far from increasing their support, their split was a disaster as their prestige and membership went into irreversible decline. In 1930 they had 100,000 supporters, when they split in July 1932 they were left with 16,903 and by the end of 1935 they were down to just 4,392. Working people far from deserting the Labour Party continued to support it, only the ILP had deserted the masses in the fight against Labour's right wing. What had been exposed in the eyes of the ILP militants, that the reformism and gradualism of the leadership could not lead to fundamental socialist change was not the experience of millions of workers who saw the Labour Party as still representing their interests. Furthermore the ILP in disaffiliating on an organisational question were seen as 'splitters' and 'deserters'. Fenner Brockway then the ILP leader later admitted: "This swing to ultra-leftism as a consequence of Labour Party parliamentary rules stands as a permanent warning against theoretical elaboration of revolutionary structure unrelated to the actual conditions of struggle."

Resurgence

Subsequently on the basis of events there was a resurgence of socialist ideas within the Labour Party. Far from the Labour Party going into some kind of internal decline it was the ILP which would suffer that fate. The radicalisation of the rank and file of the Labour Party showed what opportunities the ILP would have had, providing

it had adopted a Marxist programme raising the day-to-day issues and linking them to the need for a socialist transformation of society. However imperfect this move to the left was in Labour's ranks, i.e. transforming left wing ideas into action, it was there for all to see. The gains made by the Labour Party at this time were directly due to it having adopted a radical left wing programme.

Meanwhile the ILP flirted with the CP at a time when the Moscow purge trials of the Old Bolsheviks was leading to widespread revulsion throughout the movement against Stalinism. The CP was campaigning for a Popular Front style government and initiated the Unity Campaign alongside the ILP and the Socialist League. Despite the reservations of the ILP leadership, in practice they subordinated their criticisms to paper over an abstract unity. They approached the Labour Party with a programme far to the right of that which nominally on paper they had already accepted.

Fenner Brockway was further to reflect that when the ILP was out of the Labour Party it had no fundamental philosophy or policy and could not act with united purpose. Their opposition to the right wing Labour leaders in 1932 consisted merely of a "mixture of reformist sentiment, utopianism and awakening revolutionism". The opportunity to build a mass left wing, organisationally and politically armed with a socialist programme and clear perspectives was lost. The failure of the ILP was to doom it to obscurity, this at a time when there was much extra-parliamentary action by the working class. Today the left in the labour movement cannot afford to make the same mistakes if a genuine opposition to the right wing is to be built capable of leading the working class in Britain and internationally to a final break with capitalism. ♦

Socialist Appeal

On the eve of our tenth anniversary

Ten years ago, *Socialist Appeal* was launched as the journal of the Marxists in the British labour movement. Alan Woods charts its progress



This issue celebrates the hundredth edition of *Socialist Appeal*, and ten years of tireless work in defending the ideas and principles of Marxism on a world scale:

The ideas represented by *Socialist Appeal* and Marxist.com have gained a considerable audience over the last ten years. The launching of Marxist.com was an important initiative, which has made possible big advances in getting our ideas known and entering new areas. The sheer volume of our theoretical production has never been greater. This has enabled us to break into new areas: Indonesia, Turkey, Ireland, the Balkans, Russia, North America and others.

Few would dispute the fact that our website is the best in the world. It is increasingly a point of reference for socialist and communist activists everywhere. In 2001 alone we had over a million successful page requests. This is a guarantee of our future success. It should fill all our comrades with a sense of pride and confidence in the Marxist tendency in Britain and internationally.

Marxism is Not Dead!

Socialist Appeal was launched under the most difficult conditions. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many people thought that socialism was off the agenda. A decade ago the bourgeois were euphoric. They talked about the end of Communism, the end of Socialism, and even the end of history. All the leading ideologues of the bourgeoisie and the reformist labour and trade union leaders proclaimed the death of Marxism.

After the collapse of the USSR, the bourgeois felt that they were no longer threatened by "Communism". The capitalist system (the "free market economy") ruled supreme. The ruling class felt confident. They dreamed of an economic boom that would last forever. But time has moved on since then. Ten years have passed since the collapse of the USSR. In that period, the most profound changes have taken place, which are transform-

ing the situation on a world scale.

The euphoria of the defenders of the "market economy" was short-lived. Now all their dreams are in ashes. The entire situation has changed into its opposite: All the declarations of the strategists of capital are filled with deep pessimism and foreboding. In a very short time, the so-called free market economy has revealed all its shortcomings.

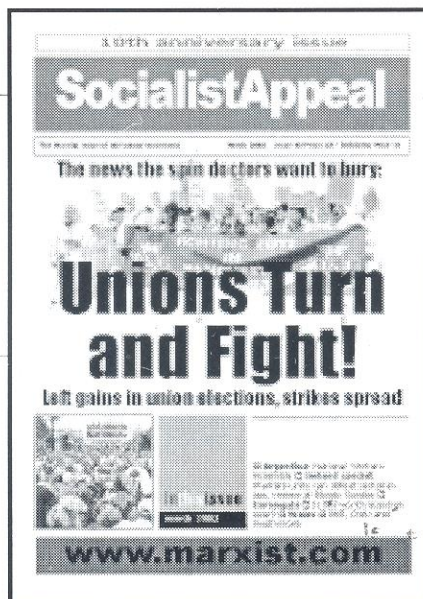
Crisis of Capitalism

The economists wrote about a "new economic paradigm". The middle class (including the Labour bureaucracy) followed the bourgeoisie and its "market" ideology. The working class saw no alternative and sought individual solutions to its problems. Despite the extreme pressure on the workers, the debt, the long hours of toil, the stress and exhaustion, it was possible for a temporary period to obtain a relative amelioration of living standards. The strength of reformism and particularly its right wing (Blair, etc.) and the isolation and weakness of the forces of Marxism were both predicated on this.

Now we see the other side of the process. The revolt of the productive forces against the straitjackets of private ownership and the national state is manifested in the present global crisis. Unable to deny the facts any longer, the bourgeois economists have admitted that the US economy is in recession. The world situation is characterised by increasing volatility at every level. The fears of the strategists of capital are expressed in one article after another. This represents a turning point in the whole situation.

There is massive overproduction ("over capacity") on a world scale. In Asia alone there is a huge productive capacity which cannot be used. Even when this is mopped up, it will not be possible to go back to the type of feverish growth of the previous period. A period of sluggish growth, accompanied by high unemployment in all countries, will follow.

The present global instability, with a combination



of war and slump, is unprecedented since 1945. For a long time the capitalist system experienced an unprecedented upswing, with full employment and rising living standards in the advanced capitalist countries, and relative stability in the relations between states. Now the world economy is entering into the first simultaneous slump since 1974. This is an unprecedented situation which is provoking deep concern among the strategists of capital.

Who Are We?

The Marxist tendency, represented in Britain by *Socialist Appeal*, is, in a formal sense, very young. But in fact, it is very old. We stand on the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky which, in fundamentals, have not changed since the publication of The Communist Manifesto over 150 years ago. We stand on the titanic achievements of the First, Second and Third Internationals.

We also stand on the basis of the ideas of that great revolutionary Marxist theoretician and martyr of the working class - Leon Trotsky - on the ideas of the International Left Opposition and the founding documents of the Fourth International.

In the person of Comrade Ted Grant, we stand for the continuation of the ideas of Trotsky. This year is also the seventy-fifth anniversary of the expulsion of Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition from the Russian Communist Party. Comrade Grant was a member of Trotsky's International Left Opposition from the very beginning. He represents an unbroken thread that connects us to the finest traditions of Bolshevism-Leninism and the October revolution.

The Unbroken Thread

We thus represent an unbroken tradition for over seventy years of struggle to defend the authentic ideas of Marxism. Of course, the Marxists are faced with tremendous problems and obstacles at every step. But we are used to this. We have shown that we are able to resist the pressures. This depends in the first place and above all on a correct political line, and a scientific understanding of society and the class struggle. But ideas in and of themselves are not enough. It is neces-

sary to build an organised tendency.

We have succeeded in retying the knot of history, rebuilding what had been destroyed and assembling the cadres under a new and clean banner. Together with co-thinkers in different countries, we have worked to rebuild the Marxist tendency on the basis of the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. After quite a difficult period, the forces of Marxism are going forward in Britain and internationally.

Our work is being helped by a change in the objective situation. Everywhere there is a thirst for ideas and theory among the youth and the advanced workers. In many countries and continents the audience for our ideas is growing, and we are winning new supporters all the time. This is no accident. It reflects in part the beginnings of a change in the objective situation, but also the fact that the correctness of our ideas has been demonstrated by the course of events.

Above all it is necessary to find a road to the mass of the working class, beginning with the active layer in the trade unions and the mass socialist and communist parties.

Turn to the Mass Organisations!

We have a dual task: a theoretical task, of patiently explaining our ideas, raising the level of the advanced guard; and building the Marxist tendency. We must not succumb to the pressures of the existing situation, but understand the perspectives and the processes at work under the surface.

For the past twenty years, the workers' organisations have lived through a period of defeats and setbacks. Looking back, many activists see nothing but defeats. Not having the advantage of a Marxist perspective, they do not understand how the class moves and have therefore drawn the most pessimistic conclusions. However, this psychology - which they

mistakenly regard as "realism" - reflects this past, not the present or the future.

The class struggle will continue, no matter what the Labour and trade union leaders say or do. Of course, the union apparatus is powerful and can hold back the movement for a time. But this will only give it an even more explosive character when it finally bursts through. If the unions act as an obstacle, there will be a wave of unofficial strikes, which will later end in official action. The main thing is to see that an explosive mood is building up under the surface of apparent calm.

In the next period the crisis of capitalism will find its expression in crises within the mass organisations of the working class. The hold of the right wing leadership will be broken. The unions and parties will be shaken from top to bottom, preparing the way for the formation of mass left reformist and centrist tendencies. The Marxists must be capable of winning over the leftward-moving workers and youth. This means that we must maintain our unswerving orientation to the mass organisations of the class.

Build the Forces of Marxism!

The political authority of our tendency on a world scale has never been higher. The quantity and quality of our written material has never been greater in the history of the last fifty years. That is the fundamental reason for our success. We are moving into a decisive period in history. On a world scale, events are moving fast. Everywhere the ruling class is faced with growing instability, wars and crises. The problems of humanity cannot be solved by capitalism, a diseased system that condemns millions of men, women and children to a life of poverty, wars, unemployment, sickness, ignorance and oppression.

The *Socialist Appeal* on its tenth anniversary is overwhelmingly optimistic and enthusiastic for the future. This is a decisive fact - and it has a political basis. The correctness of our ideas fills us with confidence. Confidence in the ideas of Marxism, in the world working class and in ourselves. The next decade will open up colossal great possibilities for Marxism. *Socialist Appeal* will play its part in politically arming the new generations for the struggle for a New World and the reconstruction of society on socialist lines. ♦



The History of British Trotskyism Trotsky and the Mass Organisations

The following is an extract from the new book by Ted Grant on the History of British Trotskyism, which will be released in May. Here Ted deals with the change in the work of the British Trotskyists from the Independent Labour Party to the Labour Party.

In analysing the movement in Britain, Trotsky showed not only a profound understanding, but also a sensitivity to the mass movement and how it would develop. Above all, he was keen to educate the young forces of Trotskyism against sectarianism and ultra-leftism. Trotsky came to the conclusion that the experience of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) must be drawn to a close. There was nothing more to be gained by work in the rump that remained within the ILP. There were clearly more favourable opportunities opening up within the Labour Party, especially the Labour League of Youth. "Since the ILP youth seem to be few and scattered, while the Labour Youth is the mass youth organisation, I would say: 'Do not only build fractions - seek to enter'," advised Trotsky. "The British section will recruit its first cadres from the thirty thousand young workers in the Labour League of Youth." (*Once Again the ILP*, November 1935). This was the first time in the history of our movement that entry was posed, not into a centrist organisation, but into a reformist organisation.

Trotsky wrote to our comrades in the ILP urging them to make the necessary turn towards the Labour Party. He told them they should prepare the ground by campaigning for the ILP to affiliate to the Labour Party. If the ILP refused to re-affiliate to the Labour Party, or even consider the question seriously, we should call on all revolutionaries to leave with us and join the struggle within the Labour Party. In the process, we would need to explain that the ILP was doomed as a revolutionary force, and we needed to draw all the necessary conclusions. The ILP could not now play the role that they had once hoped it would play, and it was necessary now to take all revolutionary forces into the Labour Party. Above all, in Trotsky's view, it was from the Labour Youth that the future major forces of British Trotskyism would emerge.

At each historical turn in events, there tends to be a split in the movement. What happened in 1933 would be repeated again in 1936. Trotsky raised this question of entry into the Labour Party, but the majority of the ILP comrades, including the leadership, were opposed and not prepared to follow his advice. They had, in effect, adapted themselves to life within the ILP. They were again determined to cling to the corpse, maintaining that black was white and the ILP offered the only way forward. For them work in the ILP was a "principled question", when in reality it was a question of tactics, as the Old Man pointed out:

"It is not enough for a revolutionist to have correct ideas", wrote Trotsky. "Let us not forget that correct ideas have already been set down in Capital and in The Communist Manifesto. But that has not prevented false ideas from being broadcast. It is the task of the revolutionary party to weld together the correct ideas with the mass labour movement. Only in this manner can an idea become a driving force..."

"To conclude: the Koran says that the mountain came to the prophet. Marxism counsels the prophet to go to the mountain." (Writings 1934-35, pp.33, 38).

Denzil Harber, as we have already pointed out, had entered the Labour Party in early 1935 to set up the Bolshevik-Leninist Group. I had joined the Labour Party myself, following the line of Trotsky at that time. CLR James, Arthur Cooper and other comrades who were the leadership of the ILP faction completely rejected entry into what they regarded as a reformist swamp. As I was in touch with both groupings, I had discussions with James, but he had developed other ideas. James and Cooper had illusions that they could influence Brockway and build a big movement inside the ILP. They failed to recognise that years of centrism had produced a certain ossification within the party. For the centrist ILP leaders, it had become an organic way of life. To a certain extent, this outlook had even affected the ILP rank and file. So the best way to influence the ranks of the ILP, as Trotsky explained, was to go into the Labour Party and build a revolutionary tendency there. They had to show by deeds what could be done and the way in which such a movement would develop. "I deem it absolutely necessary", wrote Trotsky in the summer of 1936, "for our comrades to break openly with the ILP and transfer to the Labour Party where, as is shown especially by the experience in the youth, much more can be accomplished." (Writings 1935-36, p.366). Again, "the most important thing is to get in", urged Trotsky impatiently. (Ibid, p.379)

Trotsky's arguments produced a massive crisis within the Marxist Group. There was a split and over a period a growing minority drifted into the Labour Party and began the task of building the "Bolshevik-Leninist Group". Unfortunately, once again valuable time had been lost. Trotsky was very critical of this time-wasting. "In Spain, where our section is carrying out a miserable political line, the youth, who were just becoming interested in the Fourth International, were handed over to



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the Stalinists", he said. "In England, where our people were too slow to get involved, the Stalinists have become the most important force among the Labour Party youth and we are in second place." (Writings 1935-36, p.322). The failure of Nin and the Spanish Trotskyists, in the name of "independence", to enter the Socialist Youth was to contribute directly to the defeat of the Spanish Revolution. "The lads who called themselves Bolshevik-Leninists", wrote Trotsky, "and who permitted this, or better yet, who caused this, have to be stigmatised forever as criminals against the revolution." (Ibid., p.368).

In Britain, the new group inside the Labour Party began the publication of a monthly journal called Youth Militant, aimed at members of the Labour League of Youth. Already operating in the Labour Party was the Marxist League of Wicks and Dewar. They had entered on an opportunist basis. Ironically, this seems to be a social law. Those individuals who take an ultra-left attitude tend to swing from one extreme to the other. Because they do not possess a balanced attitude and a Marxist understanding of the processes that take place within the mass organisations, they burn their fingers at every stage, jumping from ultra-leftism to opportunism and back again.

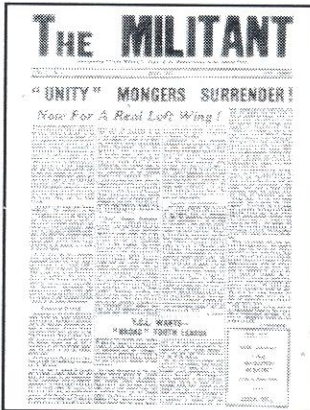
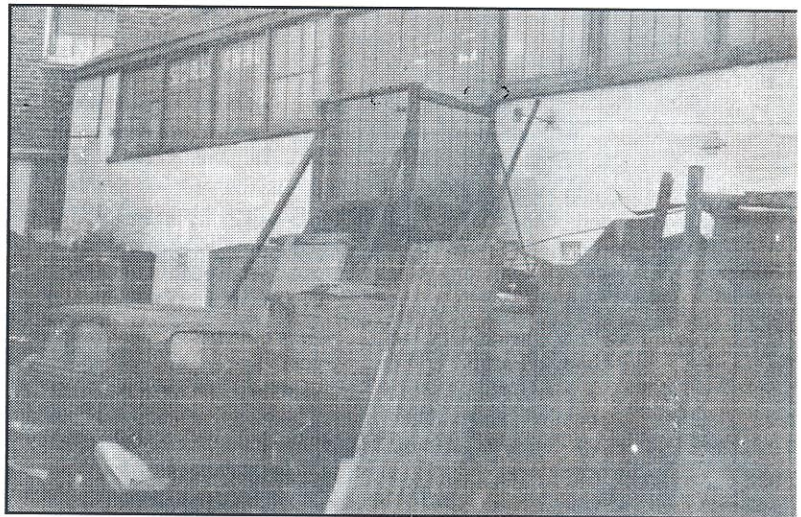
The question of how revolutionaries should work within

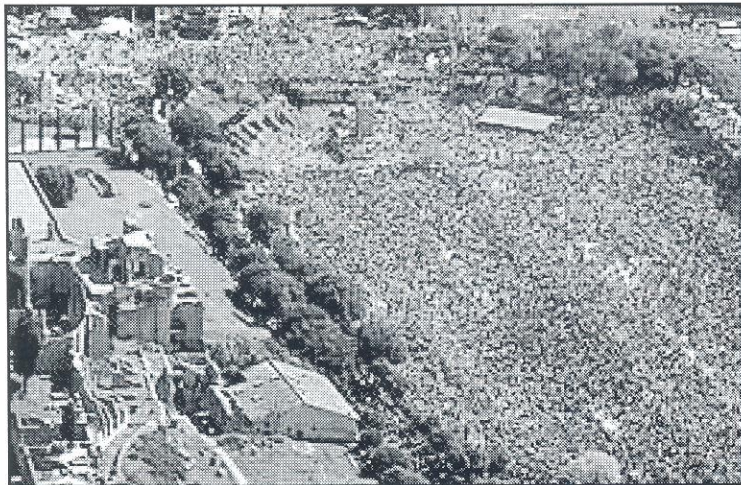
the mass organisations was dealt with many times by Trotsky, and not only in relation to Britain. Just as Dewar had entered the Labour Party on an opportunist basis, so had Naville in France entered the Socialist Party, having previously opposed the idea as "capitulation" when Trotsky had first suggested it. Both started out bitterly against entrism in "principle", then somersaulted to the other extreme. Trotsky commented bitterly:

"He [Naville] called the entry 'capitulation' because basically he was frightened by the prospect of a ferocious battle against a powerful apparatus", states Trotsky. "It is much easier to defend 'intransigent' principles in a sealed jar.... Since then Naville has entered the Socialist Party. But he abandoned the banner of the organisation, the programme. He does not wish to be more than the left wing of the SP. He has already presented motions in common with the left wing, confused opportunist motions, full of the verbiage of so-called centrism." (Once More on Our Turn, 15 December 1934). ♦

Pictures:

- (clockwise from top)
 1- WIL centre, Kings Cross
 2-Jock Haston
 3- RCP May Day demo
 4- Militant, July 1937





By Claudio Bellotti, Member of the National Executive Committee of Rifondazione Comunista and also of the Editorial Board of Falce Martello

The demonstration which flooded the whole centre of Rome on March 23 was at least 2 million strong. Six different sections (marching from different points and converging on the centre of Rome) made up the demonstration, covering a total of about 30 kilometres, with 60 trains, 9,000 coaches and two ships from Sardinia brought the marchers to Rome. The Circus Maximus was absolutely full, with a tail-back of one mile stretching beyond it. There was even a sizeable part of the demonstration which never actually got to the end.

This day will not be easily forgotten. The government is attacking the workers and the Cgil as terrorists, trying to portray the assassination of Marco Biagi by the Red Brigades as a consequence of the workers' struggles.

The scenario which is now opening up is still uncertain. The government is trying to divide the trade unions and to come to a separate agreement with the Cisl [historically the 'Christian' and more moderate trade union federation]. However, the success of the demonstration clearly puts strong pressure on these unions too. The three union federations (Cgil, Cisl and Uil) have now started talks with a view to calling the forthcoming general strike jointly (whereas before the Cgil was going alone); meanwhile, Cofferati (general secretary of the Cgil) has stated that until an agreement is reached with the others the Cgil is sticking to the date of April 5. If an agreement is reached then a joint call for a general strike would be issued for April 19.

The possibility of overthrowing the government is clearly present. Behind the facade of strength and intransigence, the ruling class is divided on this growing conflict, and so are the parties that make up the right wing coalition government.

The main problem is, as always, a problem of leadership. Cofferati has now conquered a leading role in the opposition. All the other forces who oppose Berlusconi are for the time being compelled to follow the Cgil and support it in words, including those bourgeois parties who are in reality very much closer to the Confindustria [Italian bosses' union] than to the Cgil. But as the conflict widens and becomes deeper, the sharp political and social polarization taking place will have its effects on all parties, and divisions and even splits will be on the agenda.

While this movement is developing, the Prc (Partito della rifondazione comunista) is preparing for its national congress on 4-7 April. It is a real paradox that the Party's national secretary, Bertinotti, is stubbornly refusing to call for the overthrow of the government. Just a few days before the demonstration, Bertinotti said that "it would be a gross mistake if we said that this struggle is

Italy: 2 million people take to the streets!

Millions of workers flood Rome in the largest demonstration ever seen in Italy

against the government; it's a trade union struggle, to which we must give support together with the other opposition parties". This position amounts to an obliteration of the role of the communists in the workers' movement just when they are needed to counter the social democratic bureaucracy at the head of the Cgil, whose aim is mainly to keep the movement on safe lines.

This tail-ending of the "movement" is nothing new for the Prc and for Bertinotti in particular. The same attitude was adopted last year regarding the anti-globalization movement, and even in 1994 when the first Berlusconi government was overthrown by a massive wave of strikes. At that time, Bertinotti said that communists had to restrain themselves and not criticize the trade union leaders insofar as they were calling the strikes. This attitude allowed the trade union leaders to derail the movement and to bring it to a halt, channelling the struggle towards the class collaboration embodied by the centre-left coalition.

The left wing of the Prc, which we are part of, is engaged in a sharp struggle to reaffirm the basic ideas and methods of Marxism, starting with the idea that the first task of a communist party is to struggle for influence and hegemony in every working class movement and struggle, and to defend the communist perspective as the only answer to the ever increasing contradictions of the capitalist system.

At the moment the mood prevailing in the working class is one of trust in the leaders, especially of the Cgil, who they see as fighters who are doing what has to be done. There is also a strong urge for left unity which puts an objective pressure on the Prc. What is needed now is a skillful combination of active participation in the struggle, political explanation and friendly criticism of all the shortcomings of the Cgil leaders. This is necessary if the party is to avoid isolation and mistakes of both a sectarian and opportunist nature.

The upsurge of class struggle will put every party and tendency to a severe test. The events are fully confirming our previous perspectives, and we are confident that the ideas and methods of Marxism will be able to get a wider basis in the new generation which is now coming onto the scene.

links

visit the website of the Italian marxist journal **Falce Martello** at www.marxismo.net

Mass Anti-Capitalist Mobilisation in Barcelona

Aniol Santo, from *El Militante*, reports on the mass demonstrations against the EU summit

Several demonstrations have been held in Barcelona against the EU summit in the city on March 15-16. These were massive demonstrations against bourgeois policies in the whole of Europe, and against capitalist globalisation.

On the morning of Thursday March 14, a demonstration of shop stewards and convenors from across Europe marched through the city. Despite the fact that the trade union leaders organised it on a weekday morning, when most workers could not attend, the turnout was massive. Between 150,000 and 200,000 people participated. When the head of the demonstration had reached the end of the route, there were thousands still waiting to start marching.

The city centre was blocked by a mass of people shouting and singing slogans against the attacks on living and working conditions, against right-wing policies of the bourgeois politicians, and for full employment.

The mood was very militant, the crowd of demonstrators was everywhere. The feeling of strength was spectacular. This demo shows that thousands of workers are ready to fight. In Spain and Europe the youth and the working class is fed up of making sacrifices and getting nothing in exchange.

But Thursday's demo was just a prelude to the mass mobilization of Saturday afternoon. Between four and five hundred thousand turned up for the biggest demonstration against capitalist globalisation that has taken place anywhere in the world. Youth, workers, students, pensioners, shopkeepers... Everyone was there, and all against the Europe of the capitalists.

In the last years we have seen a series of events that clearly show that there is a change in the class struggle - in Europe but also on a world scale. The two general strikes in Greece last year; the general strike in Galicia on June 15; the mass demonstrations in Genoa last summer; the struggle in Spain against the new university "Quality Law" (LOU); the increasing number of workers involved in strikes. And now the mass movement in Barcelona.

Capitalism can only offer workers and youth unemployment, casualisation and poverty. Our only alternative is to struggle

against the attacks from the ruling class. Wider layers of the masses are drawing this conclusion.

The ruling class knows this and they are preparing themselves for the future. In order to protect the EU summit, 10,000 policemen were sent to Barcelona. Part of the city was put under siege by police and the army, including tanks and F-16 fighters. In the Palacio Real, where the summit was held, the metro and bus services were suspended and the roads closed. They even closed the motorways around the area of the summit. The university, in front of the Conference Centre, was closed and the lectures cancelled. The city was full of police - plainclothes and in uniform. On Saturday the police searched every single youth leaving the Plaça Catalunya metro station, where the demo started. Rather than discouraging the people, these measures stimulated thousands of people to protest.

During the demo there were no police charges, thanks to hundreds of stewards and the numbers of demonstrators involved.

At the end of the demo the anti-riot police started to charge against demonstrators, with truncheons and rubber bullets. They intervened on several occasions as the protestors dispersed. That level of repression against a mass demonstration had not been seen for years. The aim was clear - to frighten the demonstrators and criminalize anyone with the will to fight. The only thing they have achieved is to show more clearly - if that is possible - the dictatorial and repressive features of the Spanish right-wing, and aggravate the workers and youth even more.

We as Marxists, must also prepare for a future where workers' struggles will be on the increase. It is not enough to fight against capitalism, we must have a revolutionary alternative. Only then, armed with the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, can we intervene in the events with a clear programme.

Only linking the needs of the masses with the struggle for Socialism we will be able to put an end to a system based on the profit of a few parasitic capitalists and build a classless society. ♦



 links

El Militante, is the paper of the current which defends Marxist ideas within the labour movement organisations in Spain. www.elmilitante.org

Mission Impossible

"Inaction is not an option," declares George W. Bush, seeking to extend the war on terrorism beyond Afghanistan to further military action against Iraq. By Rob Sewell

The Bush Administration has not ruled out the use of tactical nuclear weapons. The Blair government, acting as America's stooge, has also not discounted the insane use of nuclear weapons, under certain circumstances.

However, not all is finished in Afghanistan - far from it! The earlier claims by Tony Blair that the Taliban were defeated in Afghanistan and that the Coalition "victory" would soon restore stability has been completely exposed as a sham. The recent heavy fighting between US and Afghan forces against Taliban forces, which have clearly regrouped, means as we said repeatedly that the war in Afghanistan is far from over.

Bush and Blair boasted that everything was "done and dusted", and all that remained was a simple mopping up ("search and destroy") operation. But Afghanistan is not that simple. The Taliban were not defeated militarily, but evacuated their forces from the towns and cities to the mountains in order to wage a guerrilla war and wait for the Northern Alliance to fracture. A new phase in the Afghan war is now opening up.

Consequently, at the request of General Tommy Franks at US Command in Tampa, Florida, the Blair Government has deployed a further detachment of troops to Afghanistan. 1,700 Marines are being sent to assist US forces facing determined resistance from thousands of Taliban troops.

The imperialists, headed by American imperialism, have completely miscalculated. Bush's declared "war against terrorism" was a knee-jerk reaction to 11 September, without any clear strategy or perspective. Buoyed up by military successes where air-power was used, they thought air power could seal a quick victory against the Taliban.

However, events have exposed the realities and limits of US power. Operation Anaconda, in which US, Afghan and coalition troops took on hardcore al-Qaeda and Taliban remnants south of Gardez, near the Pakistan border, was to last 72 hours. The battle lasted three weeks. Seven US soldiers died.

"The US 10th Mountain Division found the battle at Gardez hard", stated the *Financial Times* (21 March). "More



troops trained in mountain fighting, as 45 Commando are, will be needed to take on al-Qaeda and Taliban forces put at anything between 2,000 and 10,000. The marines will be used to cut off escape routes in further planned operations." It continues, "Even if things go well, it will be at least the middle of the year before the rebels are largely cleared from the mountains." However, if things do not go as planned it will take a lot longer. "The Russians found 20 years ago that was no easy task", commented the *FT*.

Air power

There has been a growing realisation that earlier claims of victory in the war against terrorism were premature to say the least. It has also dawned on military strategists that victory cannot be achieved by air power alone and that combat troops will be needed for some time to come. However, the use of Afghan and coalition forces has proved increasingly complicated, as warlords, newly armed by the Americans, seek to reassert their influence.

In the US/Afghan operation in the Shah-i-kot valley, one flank was commanded by Kamal Khan. As soon as the battle was over he murdered another allied commander Haji Suba Khan, a long-standing enemy. With the end of the battle things are slowly returning to normal in Paktia and the neighbouring Khost province - at least for Afghan commanders: scheming, betrayal and blood feuds. Relying on local forces has allowed the US to escape heavy casualties, and to encourage the view that the war is being pursued by the Afghan government.

According to a US special forces officer known only as Lt Col Mark, the problem is that "previous to this larger effort these folks would fight each other." And this has resumed. They are reliant on the warlords and have unleashed another dimension in the Afghan war.

Zalamai Khaililzad, the US special envoy to Kabul, has described "warlordism" as the biggest challenge to US efforts to bring stability. "Our concern is that inadvertently, because of a miscalculation, or through lack of trust and a sense of insecurity, the warlords might do things which lead

back to war," he said. "In the meantime, the US imperialists are arming them to the teeth with weapons and cash to do its fighting for them.

Even more alarming for the US, is to be duped by these warlords by relying on them for intelligence about al-Qaeda. Abdul Wali, Kamal Khan's nephew, has been trying for months to get the US airforce to bomb the city of Gardez, which is controlled by the Ahmad Zeys, a rival tribe. "We have told the Americans that everyone in Gardez is al-Qaeda," he said, "I don't know why the US doesn't bomb them."

The rivalry between the Zadrans and the Ahmad Zeys may have spilled over into the battle of Shah-i-kot, according to General Mateen Hassan-kheil, a commander from Gardez. He says his forces were ambushed because the Zadrans did not make a promised attack on al-Qaeda defences. Abdul Wali has a different version: he confirms he did not attack, but says he was not supposed to. It was only when he saw Abdul Mateen's troops "running like schoolchildren" that the Americans begged his forces to attack. There were even unproven accusations that al-Qaeda was warned about the attack.

Enmity between the Ahmad Zeys and the Zadrans runs deep. Recently, the interim government appointed a Zadran, Padshah Khan, as governor of Paktia province, but the Ahmad Zeys took exception.

When Padshah Khan showed up in January to claim his office, they shelled his troops until they retreated. Kabul was forced to appoint another interim governor, who Abdul Wali dismisses as "an impostor". He warns that "we are attempting to mediate with the interim government, but if we don't get justice, we will capture Gardez ourselves." He goes on to say that the head of the Admad Zeys, Saifullah, "is al-Qaeda". He also maintains so is Zakim Khan, the US allied warlord.

In another turn of events, the US suspect that some of the guerrillas which fought in Operation Anaconda in the Shah-i-kot mountains may



have slipped across the porous frontier 45 miles to the south. The commander of the US forces, Major-General Franklin Hagenbeck has threatened to pursue them across the border. But he was warned by a Pakistani official who said the presumed leader of the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters in the area, Jala Uddin Haqqani, had close relations with local Pushtun tribes dating back to 1978. He warned: "you could face resistance. It would be seen as someone from outside coming in to their areas."

Coalition forces were recently attacked in Khost, eastern Afghanistan. "The escalating level of violence in the provinces has led many to fear for the future of Afghanistan's fragile peace process, begun in Bonn last year", comments the *Financial Times* (21 March).

Turmoil

The chickens have come home to roost. The turmoil in the region is not at an end. It is only just beginning. It was the West which trained, armed and sponsored Bin Laden, also the Mujahadeen, the Taliban, and even Saddam Hussein, for as long as it was deemed necessary. The West armed Saddam Hussein when they wanted him to attack Iran. Now he is deemed a "rogue state" by Bush and Blair, and a threat to Western civilisation. Everything and anything is used to justify the actions of the imperialist powers.

Last week, a confidential US government report revealed contingency plans for future offensive nuclear strikes against Russia, China, Libya, as well as the so-called "axis of evil" - Iraq, Iran, North Korea and the Sudan.

Iraq is being singled out for an attack by the United States and Britain. The idea that Iraq represents a danger to the West is utter nonsense. It has been militarily defeated

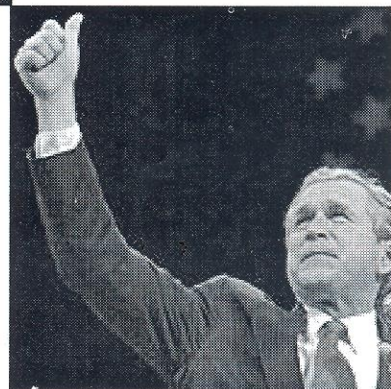
and worn down by economic sanctions. It cannot even prevent airborne incursions into its territory by the Allied forces. Iraq has been forced to accept

weapons inspectors in their country. These were made up of CIA spies, as was revealed by former weapons inspector Scott Ritter. This forced his resignation, alongside two other highly respected UN inspectors.

The task of removing Saddam Hussein is the task of the Iraqi people, not American or British imperialism. They will only be interested, as in Afghanistan, in imposing a stooge government.

Imperialism, landlordism and capitalism has caused untold misery in the ex-colonial world. The actions of imperialism are creating further instability and chaos, as witnessed in the turmoil in the Middle East. They will serve only to intensify the crisis. Whatever they do will be wrong, and will push the masses on the road of revolution.

Such turmoil will provoke revolutionary conflagration across every country in the region. Not a single regime will escape. The masses have no alternative but to seek a real way forward. They have been let down by Stalinism. They have been betrayed by Fundamentalism. On the basis of events, the advanced workers will seek a way out on the basis of a return to the banner of Lenin and Trotsky. Only the revolutionary overthrow of the reactionary regimes of these areas and the creation of a socialist federation can offer a way out of this nightmare. ♦



Jordi Martorell on

The failure of 20 years of capitalist independence



On Wednesday, March 13, election officials finally announced the results of the Zimbabwean elections. With about 3.1 million of the nation's 5.6 million registered voters casting ballots, officials said, Mugabe won more than 1.6 million votes to Tsvangirai's 1.2 million.

Western governments were quick to denounce the elections as undemocratic. In Washington, Bush said that the US "did not recognise the outcome of the election because we think it is flawed." The British government, as usual, followed quickly the line set on the other side of the Atlantic. But one has to take this "moral outrage" at the anti-democratic methods of the government in Zimbabwe with a pinch of salt. After all, what qualifies George W. Bush to speak of "flawed elections" when his own election was - let us put it this way - less than a "free and clear" process? The Western democracies have a long history of defending dictators all over the world, and the African continent is no exception. In their recent worldwide "crusade against terror" one the West's allies is the military dictatorship of Musharraf in Pakistan. Their position towards a regime is only determined by whether this regime accepts the diktats of imperialism and makes it safe for multinational corporations to exploit the country's natural and human resources.

The roots of the land problem

As long as Mugabe was carrying out the Structural Adjustment Plans imposed by the IMF and the World Bank, he was OK. As soon as he starts to threaten the interests of the handful of white farmers which dominate the country's rich agriculture and resist the implementation of IMF plans, then he becomes public enemy number one.

Mugabe came to power in 1980 at the end of a protracted liberation struggle. However, this did not take place in the form of a revolutionary take-

over, but rather a negotiated settlement between the guerrillas and the white elite which had been ruling the country. The Lancaster House agreements left the main issue of the revolutionary struggle in Zimbabwe, the question of the land, unresolved.

Thus, 70 percent of agricultural land remained firmly in the hands of some 4,000 large-scale capitalist farms, most of them owned by white farmers, whilst millions of poor peasants barely survived on the remaining land, mostly in dry, unproductive regions.

"Structural Adjustment"

The fundamental structure of the economy remained untouched, and the leadership of the liberation movement simply became incorporated into the state apparatus. After introducing some important reforms in the first few years, particularly in the fields of education and health care, the realities of capitalism sank in.

As early as 1985 the IMF was putting pressure on the government to carry out "austerity" programs. Mugabe went along with all the plans of the IMF despite the "socialist" rhetoric of the regime in the first few years.

In 1991, Mugabe's government introduced an Economic Structural Adjustment Plan (ESAP) which was on the same lines as the plans imposed by the IMF all over the world in the 1980s and 1990s. It basically "liberalised" the country's economy, cutting social spending, privatising publicly-owned companies and above all "opening up" the economy to foreign capital. The results were catastrophic. The lowering of tariff barriers had a devastating effect on the country's economy with dozens of factories having to close down, destroying more than 50,000 jobs. Manufacturing output fell from 32% of GDP in 1992 to a mere 14.5%; real wages went down, inflation went up and economic growth stagnated.

Workers in the cities were already becoming alienated from the Zanu-PF government. ESAP only deepened the discontent which finally exploded in 1996 with a very militant two week-long strike by government workers, which ended up winning important concessions from the government.

This strike opened the floodgates for a massive movement of all sections of society against the economic policies that the government was applying following the IMF "advice". In 1997 there were a record number of strikes involving more than 1 million workers. This included general strikes in February and December. In early 1998 again there was a movement of strikes and food riots.

Discontent with the Zanu-PF government also spread to the land-hungry peasants who were still waiting for land redistribution more than 15 years after the end of the liberation war. Landless peasants (many of them war veterans) started to demonstrate and occupied some farms.

The country's economy went into free fall and the Zimbabwean dollar devalued by more than 80%. The IMF and the World Bank, not satisfied with the "success" of ESAP in destroying the country's economy, went on to demand more cuts, more privatisation and an end to food subsidies. This was too much for Mugabe. Even from a capitalist point of view, he could no longer follow the IMF "advice" for fear of losing his position. The government increasingly refused to implement the plans of the IMF and at the end of 1999 both the IMF and the World Bank suspended their loans. Mugabe, in order to save his own skin, started to use the issue of the land demagogically, to win support and deactivate the movement of the war veterans, despite the fact that in nearly 20 years of government he had not done anything to solve the land problem.

Pressure from below forced the Zimbabwe Confederation of Trade Unions leaders, amongst them Tsvangirai, to call a National Workers' Convention in 1999 and to launch a party based on the trade unions, the Movement for Democratic Change, in September of that year. However, from the beginning there were contradictory forces at play within the MDC. The workers wanted an independent political voice in order to fight against neoliberal policies. But other forces involved in the formation of the MDC, from middle-class organisations, the Church, NGOs and so on, only wanted to fight for "democracy" in an abstract way.

Also, the white farmers seeing their interests being threatened by the increasingly radical speeches of the government regarding the land question (which would eventually lead to a movement of farm occupations), saw the MDC as the only political tool they could use to defeat Mugabe. They determined the MDC's economic policies. Eddie Cross, a leading member of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) became the MDC's economic advisor with a policy of speeding up privatisation (including health and water) and following faithfully all the IMF

proposals.

In the run-up to the June 2000 elections the movement of land occupations, promoted by the government, increased, with more than 1,000 of the country's 4,500 capitalist farms being occupied. It was at this point that Mugabe became an international pariah in the eyes of the imperialist powers, particularly Britain.

The domination of the MDC by capitalist elements, including the commercial farmers, which are the country's largest employers, completely cut it off from the movement of the landless peasants. The MDC programme on the land question was basically the programme of the commercial farmers. When the only socialist member of parliament who managed to get elected on the MDC ticket, Munyaradzi Gwisai, tried to put forward a radical programme of land reform, he was met with fierce opposition and threats of expulsion by the MDC leadership.

The presidential election

It is against this background that the presidential elections of March 2002 have taken place. On the one hand it is clear that wide layers of the workers and the masses in the urban areas oppose Mugabe because they are against the capitalist policies he has been implementing for 20 years. But at the same time they mostly support the MDC, a party which is dominated by capitalists (despite having a trade unionist at its head) and which would apply the same policies with renewed vigour if it were to come to power. In fact, the consistent refusal of the MDC leaders to mobilise the workers has already diminished their electoral support in working-class areas.

On the other hand, Mugabe has fought this election campaign on the issues of land, national sovereignty and anti-imperialism. On this basis, he has been able to mobilise support, particularly in the countryside and amongst the older generation which participated in the liberation struggle. Mugabe's rhetoric was combined with a widespread campaign of intimidation, violence and trickery against the opposition in order to make sure he won the election. A key issue was the massive reduction of polling booths in the urban areas (where most MDC support comes from) and an increase in the rural areas (where most support for Zanu-PF can be found).

Many feel quite rightly that the election has been stolen by Mugabe. Anger ran quite high in Harare and Bulawayo, the two main urban centres and MDC strongholds. However, the MDC "leaders" offered no leadership. Instead, Tsvangirai said that the onus was on "the people" to lead the way! "We seek no confrontation with the state because that is what they want. But the people themselves have to decide what action to take," he said.

The key question is that the capitalist leadership of the MDC is too afraid to decisively mobilise the power of the working class. If they were to come to power on the back of a mass movement of the workers their policies would lead them very rapidly to a clash with the workers. On the other hand their capitalist, pro-com-

This strike opened the floodgates for a massive movement of all sections of society against the economic policies that the government was applying following the IMF "advice".

mercial farmer programme cannot but alienate the masses of the rural poor who inevitably rally around the promise of land.

The way forward

Imperialism will now try to reassert its domination. The US and Britain seem to favour a tough line with sanctions and direct pressure. The South African government seems to have taken the line of dealing with Mugabe to try to convince him to set up some sort of government of national unity.

But the main factor in the future developments in Zimbabwe will be the economic crisis. Inflation is now running at 112%, 60 to 70% of the population live under the poverty line, 25% of the country's population is HIV positive, life expectancy has dropped to 37 years, interest rates run at 70% and millions of people face starvation for lack of even the basic maize-meal.

The way forward for working people and poor peasants in Zimbabwe is a clear anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist programme which can address the pressing problems of the workers in the cities and the land-hungry in the countryside. Only if the workers and peasants take over the resources of the country, both the land and the industry, can they start to fulfil their most pressing needs. This would be the beginning of a genuine liberation. In

1980, the liberation movement merely took over political power; a new revolution is needed which will take over economic power as well. A successful workers' and peasants' revolution in Zimbabwe could not succeed if it remained isolated within the land-locked borders of the country. But a break with capitalism in Zimbabwe would provide a massive inspiration for workers and peasants in the rest of Southern Africa facing similar problems of land reform, imperialist domination and capitalist economic crisis.

The main lesson to be drawn from the history of Zimbabwe in the last 20 years is precisely that genuine national liberation cannot be achieved simply by winning independence and democratic rights, but must be accompanied by the overthrow of the capitalist system on which imperialist domination is based. This is a lesson that applies not only to Zimbabwe, but to the whole of the African continent and the former colonial countries around the world.

Capitalism has sufficiently proven its inability to solve any of the problems facing the masses in Africa. It is time for a socialist alternative, based on the democratic planning of the continent's vast resources by the workers and peasants themselves. ♦



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Fighting Fund

100 issues and counting

So here we are - the one hundredth issue of *Socialist Appeal*. There were some who didn't think that we would get past issue one let alone get this far. However they have been proved to have been more than a bit premature in writing our obituary. The reasons we have got this far are two-fold. Firstly we can thank the confidence we can draw from the methods and perspectives of Marxism without which we would have been swept onto the rocks joining a sizable percentage of the Left press who have come and/or gone over the last period. Secondly we have to thank you - the readers and supporters of *Socialist Appeal* - for your ongoing financial support over the last 10 years. Without this we could not have survived, it is as simple as that. We have no big business backers and frankly are most unlikely to get any. In any case we prefer to rely on the support of ordinary workers, students and youth. This is the best form of backing because it comes with only one condition - to continue the struggle for socialist ideas and Marxism inside the Labour and trade union movement. At a time when opposition is starting to show itself within both the Labour Party and wider movement to Blair and his 'Tory Lite' methods, the need for a voice like *Socialist Appeal* has never been greater. We need to make that voice louder and louder.

So it is for that reason that we have launched a tenth anniversary drive to raise £5,000 by the end of spring. With the forthcoming publication of Ted Grant's 'History of British Trotskyism', which

will be marked by a number of book launch/tenth anniversary meetings around the country, there will be plenty of opportunity to look back at what has been achieved against all odds. However we also need to look forwards and build the resources of *Socialist Appeal*. So far we have collected £2,224 towards the £5,000 target with another £1090 pledged in IOUs by supporters around the country. So the target can be reached. We had an excellent sale of the journal at NUJ conference with several delegates and visitors contributing towards our financial appeal. At the Eastern region LP conference nearly £100 was collected and 39 journals sold. This needs to be replicated at the other forthcoming conferences over the next three months. Good sales have also been recorded on street sales, outside colleges and at the various anti-war meetings and demos. The opportunity is there to raise the sales of *Socialist Appeal* and get the cash in, both large and small - it all counts and is all needed. To mark our 100th issue we are asking for every reader and supporter to consider making a special donation and having considered it to actually send that money off to us. The address to send it to is *Socialist Appeal*, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ. We thank you in advance and forward to the next hundred issues! ♦

Steve Jones

The Class Struggle in Pakistan:

Workers occupation of Pakistan steel mills ends in victory

On Friday March 8, production in the Pakistan Steel Mills came to a standstill when a large number of workers took control of all the entrance points.

By Sadaf Zahra

The management, shocked and alarmed by this unexpected turn of events, immediately informed the civil administration and soon a police contingent arrived at the mills. But this show of force did not produce the desired effect. The workers maintained their control over the entry points and the police could not even enter the premises.

Though the workers termed the action purely a labour issue, the management insisted it was a politically-motivated act in which some political parties had joined hands to disturb the "industrial peace". In fact, they had a point. Pakistan is ruled by a military dictatorship, and such an open defiance of the forces of the state undoubtedly has political implications of the first order.

The strike took place on a background of severe repression by the management against the workers of Pakistan Steel. For more than two decades, the management of Pakistan Steel had been successful in dividing the unions and the workers on ethnic, nationalist and religious lines. The militant trade union leaders were systematically charge-sheeted and barred from entering the steel mills. But amongst the workers there was a colossal accumulation of anger. A mood of resistance had been developing for a long time. The volcano erupted on March 8 when the patience of the workers was finally exhausted.

There was an abrupt change in the mood of the workers and they moved into action without warning. They angrily demanded the immediate sacking of the company chairman Colonel Afzal - an army colonel involved in corruption, who together with his favoured cronies was ruining the company and putting the workers' jobs and safety at risk. They were also demanding that a high-level judicial probe be instituted into the worst industrial accident of the country that occurred at the mills in June 2001

leaving nine workers dead and two crippled for life.

On the evening March 8 the workers organised themselves into several battalions to take over the steel mills. The workers organised the takeover with military precision. They held clandestine meetings in which the workers were given different numbers to be used instead of their names to prevent recognition, and a plan of action was finalized. Different sections of the workers would picket and take control of the ten entrances to the steel mills. By 8 p.m., all the gates were picketed and the workers on the night shift proceeded to occupy various workshops inside the mills.

The workers, who started their work on the night shift of Thursday at 9 p.m., had to remain at their positions, as the morning shift workers were not allowed to enter by the protesters. The top management of the steel mills, including Afzal, was physically prevented from entering the premises. When the managing director and the general manager (both of them top-ranking military officers) finally entered the mill, the organiser of the strike let them in through the first gates but then asked their chauffeurs to park the cars on the side and invited them to walk to their offices. They were immediately locked up in their offices and then about 15,000 workers poured out of the main gates and onto the national highway, which they blocked for several hours.

The workers explained that the mills were not even carrying out the required plant maintenance owing to which accidents had occurred even after the June 2001 disaster. The money thus saved from the maintenance expenditure was being shown as profit.

They said they would only hold negotiations if and when the Sindh governor, Corps Commander, federal production minister, federal production secretary, intervened. The startled governor of Sindh was hurriedly

woken up to be told the news. The authorities were clearly rattled by this unexpected turn of events. The administration hastily conceded most of the demands and the workers agreed to open the national highway and end the siege of the steel mills at 2.30 in the morning.

This was a decisive victory. The regime proved to be too weak to stand up to such an electrifying upsurge of these steel workers. The main role in organizing the workers from below was played by Faqir Hamayati, Aqbal Mehr, Akber Marajo and Naveed Aftab, leaders of the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign in Karachi. Such was the impact of the workers' uprising that, in addition to the PPP union, the unions affiliated to all other parties had to associate themselves with this upsurge. This is one of the most important victories of the Pakistani proletariat in recent times - alongside the victory of the Baluchistan public sector workers in Quetta, which was led by Hameed Khan, the organizer of the PTUDC in Quetta. These events will have an impact on the workers far beyond the premises of the Pakistan Steel Mills. ♦

 links

Support the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, more details at www.ptudc.org

PTUDC

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Pakistan Trade Union
Defence Campaign

Trade union activists in Pakistan need your support. Send donations from trade union branches to:

PTUDC,
PO BOX 6977,
London, N1 3JN,
Britain
(cheques payable to PTUDC)

The Falklands War – 20 years later

On March 30, 1982, in response to Argentina's deepening economic crisis, and the repression of General Galtieri's military-police dictatorship, the workers took to the streets of Buenos Aires. By **Phil Mitchinson**.

The regime was staring overthrow in the face. Its response was to invade the Falkland Islands in order to distract the attention of the masses.

The war unleashed by the Argentinean dictatorship contained not a single atom of progressive content – and certainly nothing in the interest of the working class. It had nothing in common with a war of national liberation against British imperialism as some pseudo-Marxists claimed at the time. It was a counter-revolutionary adventure, reflecting the expansionist ambitions of the Argentinean capitalist class and its desperation to avoid overthrow.

Clausewitz long ago explained that “war is the continuation of policy by other means.” Marxists do not have one policy for peace and another completely different policy for war. At all times and in all circumstances we must maintain a revolutionary, internationalist and class position.

The position of the reformists of right and left on the war was hopeless. They either cheered on the Tories, or adopted a pacifist stance and appealed to the United Nations to intervene. This was the position of the Stalinists of the *Morning Star* and of the Labour Left.

On the other hand, the small grouplets claiming to be Marxists, or even Trotskyists, argued that, since Argentina was a colonial country, it should be supported in the war. Their ultra-left madness was perfectly summed up in the hare-brained slogan “Sink the fleet!”

The usual mistake these sects make is to adopt a crude caricature of Lenin's position of revolutionary defeatism. This boils down to the abandonment of a class position and support for the bourgeoisie of the enemy camp – that is, *inverted chauvinism*. In the case of the Falklands war, this expressed itself as – *support for the Argentinean junta!* Needless to say, with such an approach, they could never win over workers.

Our slogans must find an echo in the working class, or else they are completely worthless. The purpose of advancing slogans is above all to educate the working class, beginning with its vanguard. The slogans advanced by the reformists, the Stalinists, and the ultra-left sectarians at the time of the Falklands war could only serve to confuse and disorientate the workers and therefore assist the ruling class.

The first task of the Marxists was to expose the lying hypocrisy spewed out by the ruling class. Therefore, we pointed out that the Argentinean junta had been a good friend of British imperialism. Not only did the British imperialists sell arms to the junta and remain silent about its murderous activities, but they were also quite prepared to settle the disputed question of the Falkland islands – before the junta invaded. This has been admitted in the British press recently: “The fact that we'd been trying for decades to offload the islands, with the ardent Thatcherite Nicholas Ridley presenting a lease-back solution to the House of Commons only two years previously was forgotten.” (*The Guardian* 25/02/02)

Before 1982, they were quite prepared to give, or more accurately, sell the Falklands to Argentina. But they could not allow them to be taken from them by force. At the same time, Argentina's attack on the Falklands was not at all directed against imperialism, as some have falsely maintained. As a result of the signals given to him by Lord Carrington, Galtieri miscalculated. He did not think that the British would fight over the Islands. That they did had nothing to do with the defence of the rights of a handful of Islanders. Nor was it, as many have supposed, the oil and fishing riches of that area. Indeed, twenty years later the British have done nothing to develop the economic potential of the Islands. This fact demonstrates what we said at the time, that the real reason for the war was that British imperialism could not accept the seizure of the Islands by Argentina because it would have undermined its prestige on a world scale.

When the Argentine army captured the Islands, British imperialism was humiliated before the entire world. Overnight the attitude of London to the junta changed. They suddenly “discovered” that the regime in Buenos Aires was “fascist”. As *The Guardian* recently pointed out: “The fact that we'd traded with the junta, welcomed its leaders and sold arms to them but now realised that it was a filthy dictatorship after all, was swallowed without a burp.” (*The Guardian*, 25/02/02).

The invasion of the Islands was as unwelcome in Washington as in London, but not because it was a threat to imperialism. US imperialism found itself in a quandary, Galtieri, like many other dictators, was a good friend of theirs – as he had been of Britain before the invasion of the Falklands. At first they hesitated, as Thatcher herself explains:

“I sent a message to President Reagan urging the US to take effective economic measures but they were not prepared to do this. They had stopped arms sales. But they would not “tilt” too heavily against Argentina...They did not want

Galtieri to fall and so wanted a solution that would save his face." (Margaret Thatcher, *The Times*, 11/03/02.)

However, in the end they were forced to support British imperialism. The fate of the Islanders was no more a consideration for US imperialism than it was for the ruling classes of Britain and Argentina.

Lenin explained that Marxists should defend the right of self-determination of small peoples. The ultra-left groups completely overlooked the fate of the people of the Falkland Islands. Yet this was the main argument used by Thatcher to justify the war to the British people. Of course, it was false. Like the people of any small nation, the Islanders were destined to play the role of pawns in the conflicts between rival imperialist powers. Such people have never been a concern to the ruling classes. On each occasion what has been at stake is a combination of profit, power and prestige.

What about Argentina's historical legal claim on the islands? Firstly, the British working class has absolutely no interest in maintaining a single inch of foreign territory. At the same time, the claim of the Argentinean bourgeoisie to possession of the Malvinas on the grounds of self-determination has no basis. Lenin put forward the demand for the right of self-determination, not for rocks and land, but for people.

In 1982 there were about 1800 Falkland Islanders. Today there are maybe 2300. Regardless of their number, these people are entitled to their own language, control, and autonomy. They have a right to decide whether they wish to live in a particular state. What position should Marxists – above all Argentine Marxists – have adopted in relation to the rights of these people? They should have opposed the invasion and annexation of their home by the Argentinean capitalist dictatorship.

The question would have been posed differently if there had been a population on the Islands composed of Argentines, oppressed by the British and fighting to unite with Argentina. In that case, we would be duty bound to support them in their struggle against British imperialism. Even if there had been a small minority of Argentines, things would have been different. But there was not a single Argentine living there. Not one! For the population of the Islands – all of them English-speaking – the conquest of the Falklands by the Argentine army was not an act of liberation but an act of violence against them.

Democratic principle

The idea that Marxists should support the forcible annexation and conquest of a piece of land against the will of the people



who live there is a violation of the most elementary democratic principles. We therefore condemned the invasion of the Falklands as reactionary. But in so doing we did not offer one ounce of support to Thatcher and the British ruling class, who only yesterday wanted to get rid of the Islands.

In 1914 Lenin had indeed argued that the best outcome of that war would be the defeat of Russian Tsarism. The imperialist war he argued should be transformed into a civil war. He also said that, for revolutionaries, the defeat of one's own bourgeoisie was "the lesser evil". This was now seized upon by the ultra-lefts and applied to the Falklands in 1982. But in order to understand Lenin's method, it is necessary to take into account the whole of his writings – not just those of the period 1914-16.

At this time Lenin was not writing for the masses but for the cadres. He was laying down a *general principle* – not writing a cook-book with recipes for all occasions, as the ignorant sectarians imagine. As a general proposal, one can agree with what Lenin wrote. If we wish to reach the masses, however, it is never sufficient to go to them with general principles. These principles must be translated into slogans that concretely reflect the real situation and take into account the existing level of consciousness. Lenin understood this better than anyone. That is precisely the meaning of transitional demands, which, setting out from the real level of consciousness of the class, raises it to the level of the socialist transformation of society. A stupid slogan such as "sink the fleet" – apart from lacking any real content – does not educate the British workers. It "educates" them backwards.

Lenin never abandoned his opposition to imperialist war, but understood that the key question was to win over the workers, and to do so it was necessary to understand and distinguish between their "honest defensism" and the deceit of the bourgeois and reformist leaders.

The correct position on war was

explained by Trotsky in his writings on the eve of the second world war. At that time also there were "Marxists" who simply wanted to repeat Lenin's slogan of 1914. In his article *Bonapartism, Fascism and War* Trotsky explained that while the second world war was a continuation of the first, a continuation meant a development not just a repeat performance. Therefore, the Marxists' slogans could not simply be repeated, but would need to be deepened and developed in relation to the concrete developments:

"During the last war not only the proletariat as a whole but also its vanguard

We condemned the invasion of the Falklands as reactionary. But in so doing we did not offer one ounce of support to Thatcher and the British ruling class, who only yesterday wanted to get rid of the Islands.

and, in a certain sense, the vanguard of this vanguard, was caught unawares. The elaboration of the principles of revolutionary policy toward the war began at a time when the war was already in full blaze and the military machine exercised unlimited rule. One year after the outbreak of the war, the small revolutionary minority was still compelled to accommodate itself to a centrist majority at the Zimmerwald Conference. Prior to the February Revolution and even afterwards, the revolutionary elements felt themselves to be not contenders for power but the extreme left opposition. Even Lenin relegated the socialist revolution to a more or less distant future....":

"...The attention of the revolutionary wing was centred on the question of the defence of the capitalist fatherland. The revolutionists naturally replied to this question in the negative. This was entirely correct. This purely negative answer served as the basis for propaganda and for training the cadres, but it could not win the masses who did not want a foreign conqueror.

Falklands

In Russia prior to the war the Bolsheviks constituted four-fifths of the proletarian vanguard, that is, of the workers participating in political life (newspapers, elections, etc.).

"Following the February Revolution the unlimited rule passed into the hands of defencists, the Mensheviks and the SRs. True enough, the Bolsheviks in the space of eight months conquered the overwhelming majority of the workers. But the decisive role in this conquest was not played by the refusal to defend the bourgeois fatherland but by the slogan: 'All Power to the Soviets!' And only by this revolutionary slogan! The criticism of imperialism, its militarism, the renunciation of the defence of bourgeois democracy and so on never could have won the overwhelming majority of the people to the side of the Bolsheviks"

Trotsky on Brazil

Our position in Britain has always been based on Trotsky's military policy. The ultra lefts clearly understand as little of Trotsky as they do of Lenin. In an attempt to justify their incorrect stand, these people dragged out of context something that Trotsky had written in 1938. He had remarked that in the event of war between Britain and Brazil "I will be on the side of 'fascist' Brazil against 'democratic' Great Britain."

At the time, the Stalinists were advocating the counter-revolutionary policy of the popular front – a policy of alliances between the workers and the "liberal" bourgeoisie that had the most pernicious consequences in the colonial countries. The Stalinists subordinated the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat to the "defence of democracy". This was partly determined by Stalin's attempt to appease the imperialist democracies – Britain and France – against Germany.

This treacherous policy led, on the one hand, to the defeat of the Spanish revolution of 1931-37, on the other to the

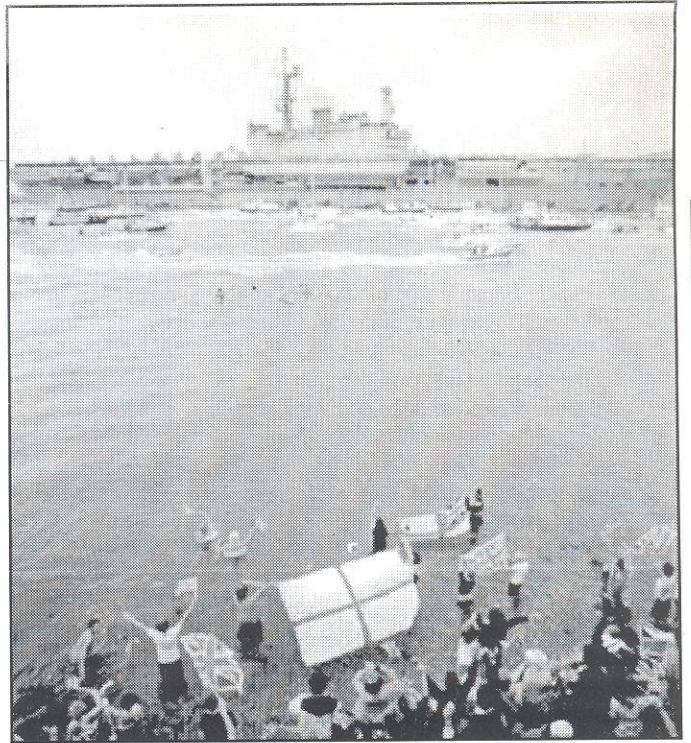
subordination of the proletariat of the colonial countries to their own bourgeoisie. Trotsky's emphasis on the terms 'democracy' and 'fascism' was intended to counter the Stalinist line that the struggle in defence of some abstract "democracy" against "fascism" was more important than the revolutionary struggle against imperialism.

In the context of a war between an imperialist country and an oppressed colony fighting for national independence it is self-evident that the Marxists of the imperialist state will support the colonial slaves against their masters. What Trotsky was referring to was a hypothetical war between Britain and Brazil, in which *imperialist Britain would attempt to enslave Brazil*. Let us look at what Trotsky said about this hypothetical war between Brazil and Britain:

"If England should be victorious she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro, and will place double chains on Brazil. If Brazil on the contrary, should be victorious, it would give a mighty impulse to national and democratic consciousness in the country and will lead to the overthrow of the Vargas dictatorship. The defeat of England will at the same time deliver a blow to British imperialism and will give an impulse to the revolutionary movement of the British proletariat."

It is clear that Trotsky had in mind an imperialist attack on Brazil with the aim of subjugating Brazil to Britain. The war in the Falklands had absolutely nothing to do with what Trotsky was writing about in 1938. Had there been an attempt on the part of Britain to invade and subjugate Argentina, the nature of the war would have been entirely different, and so undoubtedly would have been the outcome. The Argentinean masses would have fought like tigers to defend their country.

Trotsky did not say what his attitude would have been if the hypothetical war had been started as a result of Vargas' imperialist aims in the region



and above all a military adventure designed to 'cut across a revolutionary movement already breaking out on the streets of Rio. Nor is there any mention in Trotsky's article of directly or indirectly supporting the Vargas dictatorship.

Lying propaganda

The British Marxists did our duty in opposing the war. We characterised it as a reactionary war, waged for the interests of British imperialism. We combated the lying propaganda to the effect that this was a war to defend the rights of the Falkland Islanders. We opposed the poisonous anti-Argentinean chauvinism of the yellow press. We pointed out that Galtieri and the Argentine junta were the enemies of the working class. The Argentinean workers are not our enemy, we said. Galtieri was the common enemy of both Argentinean and British workers.

But how could the Tories be entrusted with the defence of the Islanders? We explained that the Tories and the British ruling class had previously had excellent relations with the junta. How could they wage a serious struggle against their friends in Buenos Aires?

The Tories are attacking workers at home, we said. The Tories have sent in the fleet for their own ends, therefore the first task was to get rid of the Tories. In other words we said to the British workers: our

main enemy is at home. Let us deal with this enemy first, then we will talk about Galtieri.

We posed this class line in terms the British workers could understand. We demanded a general election to get rid of the Tories. The Labour leaders should drop their quasi-coalition of silence over the action in the South Atlantic, and take up the struggle for socialism at home and abroad. Let Labour take power and implement a real socialist policy. Then we could wage a revolutionary war against Galtieri, combined with a class appeal to the workers of Argentina, to overthrow the dictatorship.

As a solution to the problem of the Falkland islands we raised the idea of a socialist federation of Argentina, Britain and the Falkland Islands. The latter could have full autonomy, language rights and so on, in the context of a socialist federation, based not on forcible annexation but on fraternal relations with the people of a free socialist Argentina.

We approached the question in a way that took into account the concrete conditions and in such a way that we would gain an echo in the working class. The Tories were exploiting the sympathies of the masses for the islanders, telling them it was a war "against fascism" and so on. The reformists did nothing to oppose them. Despite this, however, there was no great enthusiasm for the war among British workers. The prevailing

attitude was one of reluctant acquiescence.

What about the struggle inside Argentina? Is it defensible for Argentinean Marxists to support nationalism? We are well aware that there is progressive as well as reactionary nationalism. It is one thing to support the nationalism of a small oppressed colonial people, and another thing quite different to support the reactionary chauvinism of an imperialist state, which engages in wars of foreign conquest and annexations. However, in the first place, Argentina was not a colonial country and in the second place, this was not a war against an attempt by British imperialism to subjugate Argentina, as implied by the misuse of Trotsky's hypothetical example concerning Brazil.

Marxists have always given support to national struggles against imperialism. When Japan seized Manchuria from China, Trotsky supported China, even under the bourgeois bonaparte Chiang Kai-Shek. The struggle for national liberation, Trotsky believed would arouse the worker and peasant masses, who alone could defeat Japanese imperialism and go on to abolish capitalism and landlordism in China.

None of this implies the abandonment of class politics and, even less, uncritical support for bonapartist dictators. On the contrary, Marxists call for the independent organisation and mobilisation of the working class. That is, to argue that the workers and peasants could have no faith in the bourgeoisie to conduct the struggle to a conclusion. What else is the theory of Permanent Revolution?

The actions of the junta were determined by their own interests, and by the imperialist aims of the Argentinean oligarchy. This was not a serious struggle against British imperialism, because the rotten and reactionary junta was organically incapable of carrying out such a struggle, the first step of which would have been the expropriation of all the proper-

ty of the British and American imperialists.

Argentina is not a main imperialist power, on the scale of Britain and the USA. But neither is it a poor exploited colony, although one could argue that there are some semi-colonial features, particularly dependence on foreign capital. In reality, Argentina is quite a developed country. Not so long ago it was the tenth industrial nation in the world. It is still the second biggest economy in South America, after Brazil. The working class is the decisive majority of society.

Oligarchy

In more recent years the propagandists of the oligarchy have occasionally tried to present Argentina as a poor country, the victim of foreign aggressors, concealing the fact that Buenos Aires has some imperialist ambitions of its own. What is the real situation? The urban population of Argentina back in 1982 accounted for 82 percent of the total. True, there were high levels of unemployment and 57 percent of the workforce were engaged in the service sector, nevertheless 29 percent were employed in industry compared to 14 percent in agriculture. Industry accounted for a little under a half, 45 percent, of GNP, while agriculture made up just 13 percent.

These figures are sufficient to demolish the myth that Argentina was a backward, semi-feudal country. However, they do not give the whole picture. In the modern epoch the world market dominates, and the big powers dominate the world market. So inevitably Argentinean capitalism was subservient to the main capitalist powers. Agricultural produce made up almost three times as much of the country's exports as manufactured goods, reflecting the weak position of Argentinean capitalism in the world market.

In that sense, and in that sense alone, it is possible to say that Argentina has certain elements of a semi-colonial

country. Nevertheless, it remains at least a semi-industrialised country. It is in no position to play an imperialist role on a world scale – as the Malvinas adventure showed. But the Argentinean ruling class certainly had ambitions to play such a role on a regional level.

What is true is that in Argentina and in all Latin American countries the masses have a profound feeling of anti-imperialism. This is partly a heritage of the past, when they had to fight for independence against their old European masters, but mainly a recognition that these countries remain subordinated to imperialism through the mechanism of the world market.

The hatred of British and American imperialism among the masses is instinctively revolutionary. At bottom it is a class instinct. The Argentinean ruling class, by contrast, was never anti-imperialist, despite all their "patriotic" demagoguery and flag-waving.

It was understandable to a certain extent that the invasion of the Islands should spark off a wave of patriotic demonstrations by the masses. That was precisely the intention! Clearly, the Marxists in Argentina would have to take the mood of the masses into consideration, just as we did in Britain. One would have to pose the question skilfully. But the main thing was to oppose any tendency to collaboration with the junta, to expose its reactionary character and its total inability to wage a successful struggle against imperialism.

There should be no question of any truce or class peace during a war. The workers must not be sidetracked by Galtieri's adventure. Not only should they demand improvements in their wages and conditions of life, but they should also fight for democratic demands – freedom of assembly and speech, the right to strike, and also a democratic Constituent Assembly. At that time, this demand would have been appropriate.

The only way to settle the issue of the Falkland islands

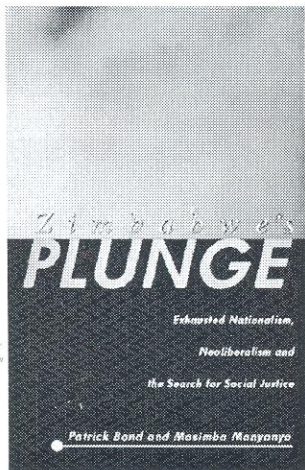


would be by revolutionary means. The first condition is that the Argentinean workers take power into their own hands. A workers' democracy in Argentina would appeal not only to the workers of all Latin America, but to the workers of the USA and Britain, to join them. But under the rapacious and counterrevolutionary rule of the oligarchy, no solution is possible.

Now the Argentinean masses are moving to a decisive showdown with the oligarchy. The sympathy of the British workers is with the working people of Argentina. They are an inspiration to the workers of the world. The key to the situation is this: that the British workers must fight against their bourgeoisie and the Argentinean workers must do likewise. Let the capitalists and warmongers strive to divide the workers of different countries. The advanced workers of Britain and Argentina will strive for unity and class solidarity!

Twenty years have elapsed since the Falklands war. The world we live in today is even more turbulent and unstable, a world of war, revolution and counter-revolution. We must learn the lessons of all these events. Above all the importance of Marxist theory and the method of Marxism, which always bases itself on a study of concrete conditions, and the vital interests of the working class. ♦

Zimbabwe's Plunge



Zimbabwe's Plunge -
Exhausted Nationalism,
Neoliberalism and the
Search for Social
Justice

By Patrick Bond and
Masimba Manyanya

Merlin Press
ISBN 0 85036 517 1
GB Pounds 14.95 pbk

This new book was finished just before the recent presidential elections in Zimbabwe, but nevertheless provides the reader with all the necessary background information to analyse the election results.

Bond and Manyanya make a damning and detailed condemnation of the IMF policies applied in Zimbabwe over the last twenty years which have "left the currency in tatters, unemployment and inflation at record highs and per capita GDP at levels lower than they had been three decades earlier" (p. 18).

The book goes on to explain how these policies alienated the urban and rural masses from the ruling ZANU(PF), and how this discontent exploded in mass action particularly in 1997-98. This is what they describe as "exhausted nationalism". On the other hand, that movement eventually resulted in the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change on the part of the unions (ZCTU). But, as the

authors explain in detail, the party was soon taken over by openly capitalist elements advocating precisely the same policies of the IMF which had already clearly failed in Zimbabwe. This is what they call "looming neoliberalism".

The authors correctly reject both "exhausted nationalism" and "looming neoliberalism", but what do they propose as a way forward? The repudiation of the foreign debt, the whittling down of "domestic debt through a rigorous, careful but very loose monetary policy", foreign exchange controls, and in order for these policies not to hit the poor the redirection of "financial capital towards productive investment", "protecting the pensions of ordinary workers" and "shielding the poor from inflation ... through well-conceived subsidies on basic needs" (pp. 170-71). Basically their whole argument is that previous periods of economic growth in Zimbabwe took place when the country adopted protectionist policies

and the economy was "deglobalised".

Would it not be more clear to pose the question of the struggle for socialism, that is the expropriation of industry, the banks and the land and to run them under democratic control of the workers and peasants for the benefit of the majority of the population.

The epoch of "regulated capitalism" has gone forever, together with the economic conditions which made it possible. The authors say in their introduction that they stand in a tradition which includes both Keynes and Marx. The central contradiction in this statement is that Keynes wanted regulate capitalism in order to save it, and Marx was fighting for the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by socialism. In their conclusions Bond and Manyanya opt for Keynes. We on our part are firmly committed to a Marxist solution. ♦

NEWSround
International



Media workers: Action widens

Media workers across Europe have been taking industrial action as employers try to shift the burden of the downturn in advertising on to workers. Greek workers have staged four one day national strikes demanding an end to mass redundancies, for improved pay, in defence of news standards and to draw attention to health and safety concerns and for improvements in working rights.

All news papers, radio and TV programmes have been axed as a result of the action and now new agreements have been signed by ERT, the public service radio and TV station and ALTER as the employers united front begins to crumble.

For further information see www.esiea.gr/gb

Meanwhile journalists in Belgium staged a 24 hour stoppage in support of a colleague facing prosecution for refusing to reveal a source. In France photographers attached to the agency Sygma, struck for 16 days in a bid to stop Bill Gates' Corbis organisation - which recently bought Sygma - stealing the workers copyright. ♦

by Dean Jenkins

noticeboard

April 2002

SOCIALIST APPEAL 10th Anniversary London Meeting

'History Of British Trotskyism'
book launch

Thursday 2nd May. 7.30pm start
Brockway Room, Conway Hall
Red Lion Square, London WC1

(Nearest Tube: Holborn)

Hear Ted Grant, Alan Woods and others.
Come along and celebrate
10 years of Socialist Appeal.

All welcome

Subscribe to Socialist Appeal

May day greetings

Socialist Appeal
P.O. Box 2626, London N1 7SQ
Tel: 0207 515 7675,
email: appeal@socialist.net

To all Labour and Trade Union
Organisations.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is the intention of the editors of Socialist Appeal to carry a May Day supplement in our May edition, containing greetings from Labour and trade union organisations in Britain and internationally.

2002 is a very important year for Socialist Appeal. It is our tenth birthday. We are celebrating ten years of defending the ideas of socialism within the labour movement, and reporting on the struggles of the workers in Britain and across the world.

Our struggle is the struggle of the international working class!

We therefore ask you to consider sending us greetings and messages of solidarity.

Our rates (indicated below) are very reasonable, and different sized designs are available.

In addition, and at no extra cost, your greeting will be placed on the Socialist Appeal website: www.socialist.net.

Please send your greetings on a separate sheet to the above address. All cheques should be made payable to Socialist Appeal.

Sizes available are:

12cm/20cm - cost £ 60

8cm/14cm - cost £ 30

4cm/10cm - cost £ 15

2cm/14cm - cost £ 10

Yours with fraternal greetings,

Alan Woods,
Editor Socialist Appeal

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Socialist Appeal

Marxist voice of the labour movement

Railtrack shareholders bailed-out While 40,000 postal workers face axe!

On the same day that the government did a U-turn and bank-rolled Railtrack shareholders with millions of pounds, Consignia announced the axing of 15,000 jobs, which unions believe could escalate to 40,000 job losses over the next three years.

Workers reacted furiously at the news that Parcelforce would be drastically cut back while other parts of the service would be "restructured." This is a crude attempt to save costs by killing the patient, and comes on top of the decision to "outsource" Royal Mail's fleet division. "Restructuring" will mean up to 3,000 urban post offices closing.

These measures come in the wake of opening up the postal service ("the business") to private delivery companies that can simply cherry-pick the profitable sectors. The regulator PostComm wants to totally "liberalise" the postal sector by 2006 and open up 30% of Consignia's revenue base within weeks. This shows how shortsighted the union leaders were in supporting greater "commercialization" of the post office.

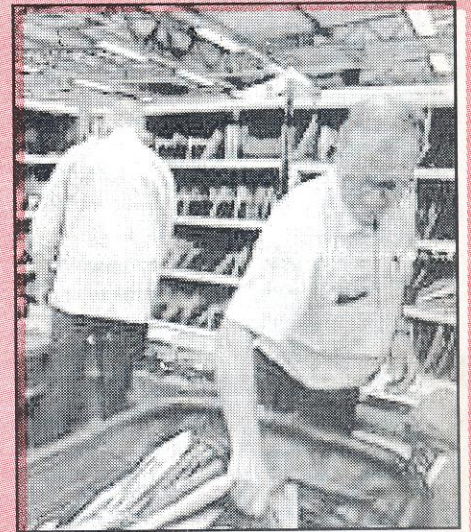
The union has consistently opposed pri-

vatization of the Post Office. However, different sectors have been "privatised" through joint ventures with the private sector. Scandalously, these measures have been carried through under a Labour Government.

It is time the unions called a halt. Last month's CWU demonstration in London was a start, although it was badly organised and did not reflect the real mood of anger in the workforce.

The union nationally should put its full weight behind the fightback. Redundancies - voluntary or compulsory - must be opposed. These recent measures are designed to prepare the way for complete privatisation of the industry and make the workforce pay for the crimes of management and the introduction of the market. The union must immediately prepare a national postal strike. The union already has a mandate for national action over pay.

Without question, there must be a rescue plan for the industry. But this must include the sacking of the present top management, who have brought Consignia to the brink of disas-



ter. The Post Office must be run as a public service and not a commercial business on the lines of Railtrack. All private contractors must be removed from the Post Office, and it must become a fully publicly owned, publicly controlled service. As opposed to the present bureaucratic commercial set up there must be democratic workers' control and management of the industry, representing postal workers, consumers and government.

Such a campaign would link in with the general opposition to privatisation and the "fat cats" who are attempting to cream off huge profits from the public sector. It is time we got off our knees!

By an East London Postal Worker

www.newyouth.com

Youth for International Socialism