

SocialistAppeal

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IRAQ

Onslaught in Fallujah

Shooting at a fly that has landed on a horse's head

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

After Arafat's death

Will the Palestinian Authority take the carrot?

UKRAINE

Both sides are reactionary!

Fight for a workers' alternative!



imperialism means
Crisis and **war**



VENEZUELA

Prosecutor investigating anti-Chavez
coup killed in terrorist attack

Enthusiasm greets Chavez in Madrid

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The three ghosts of Christmas: Elections past, present and future

ELECTIONS CAN provide us with a snapshot of the political mood of society at a given moment. Yet if we restrict ourselves to who won and who lost they can teach us very little. For example, if one acknowledges simply the headline result of the recent US elections, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that George Bush won and his policies are popular. This is the line we read generally in the press. Yet the US elections tell us a great deal about the present and future state of the US. They reveal a society more divided than at any other time in recent history; they foreshadow not years of social peace, but a new period of turmoil and instability. The US elections continue the trend we described earlier in the year in relation to the European elections. Both illustrate a sharp polarisation of society.

The 'present' elections looming are those promised in Iraq for the end of January. Having 'completed' their barbaric assault on Fallujah leaving thousands of dead and wounded in their wake, the imperialists are not one step nearer peace and stability. Any elections held in the ruins of Iraq under foreign military occupation will be a farce.

An election will also be taking place here in the near future, and Labour remains odds on to win. Does this mean a general acceptance of Blair to be followed by years of stability? Far from it. In the first place although a Labour victory is the most likely outcome of that poll, it is

far from guaranteed. A great deal can happen in the next few months.

The impact of the ongoing slaughter in Iraq, and the lack of any electoral alternative, will see turnout continue to be historically low. Workers disillusioned by Blair and co. will not vote for any of the various sectarian fringe groups but will generally stay at home.

The Tories have recovered some ground but probably not enough to win. The Liberals' pipedreams of overtaking them have turned to dust. As for the 'success' of UKIP in the Euro elections, there will be no repeat in a general election. They, like the defenders of the hunt, the Countryside Alliance etc. are a nasty foretaste of future reactionary groupings inside and outside the Tory Party.

Labour third term

The most likely outcome is a Labour third term. International events will have a big impact on that election, but so will events at home. Under the cover of the 'fight against terrorism', Blair and co. intend to introduce identity cards, create a British 'FBI', introduce trials without juries - these are not the plans of a ruling class confident of years of social peace and stability to come.

Meanwhile, Blair and Brown continue to believe their own myth that they have abolished slumps in the economy. They are in for a rude awakening. The insoluble contradictions of capitalism have not gone away. At the root of the

failing economy is the same old crisis of overproduction and overcapacity to produce. With no market for their goods at home or abroad the capitalists do not invest in production, instead they squander their profits on acquisitions, mergers, and speculation. Investment has been cut by 40% in the last five years. While the decimation of manufacturing industry has continued apace, with 750,000 jobs destroyed since Blair came to office, Britain does lead the world in the league table of credit. At more than £1 billion, British indebtedness is the same size as its GDP. Increasing interest rates was meant to bring this under control, and cool down the overheated housing market. The problem with bubbles is that sticking pins in them is far more likely to make them burst than gently deflate. Already house prices have begun to fall, by 1.1 percent in October according to the Halifax. Five interest rate rises have raised mortgage payments as a percentage of income from 14 to 19 percent. According to Nationwide new mortgage approvals were 30 percent lower in September than a year ago.

First time buyers can no longer afford to climb on to the property ladder. Young workers and their families don't earn enough to buy, so those wanting to sell to them can't sell; they in turn can't move up the ladder and so on. So prices stop rising and begin to fall. House prices are so overinflated they could fall by as much as 20 or even 30

percent according to Steve Nickell of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee.

Interest rate rises have meant falling investment and production and an increase in credit to pay for credit. This is unsustainable. As Marx long ago pointed out credit takes the market beyond its limits, using up tomorrow's money today. Yet tomorrow always comes around.

Disposable income will fall next year for the first time since 1998. Already car sales are at their lowest level since 1992 according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. John Lewis and Marks and Spencer have recently announced a drop in sales. Only credit and the consumer spending it fuelled were keeping the economy afloat. Now there is little left to keep it from sinking. The economy is grinding to a halt.

A Labour victory in 2005 will not be a precursor to years of social peace. Economically, politically, socially the conditions are being prepared for almighty battles. This is the spectre that will be haunting Blair this holiday season.

Of Scrooge's Christmas Eve visitations, the ghost of things to come was by far the most disturbing. It forced old Ebenezer to change his ways. The vision of the future offered to us by capitalism is just such a nightmare of war, hunger and misery. For millions this is already the reality. Another future is possible, but only if we fight for it. Join us in the struggle for a socialist world. ●

Truckers driven to despair

by Rachael Webb, Branch Secretary T&G 1/888(RTC)

TRUCK DRIVERS' representatives from the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) and the Union of Road Transport Workers (URTU) met at the end of last month to discuss how the European Working Time Directive will affect them.

At the moment workers driving 44-tonne trucks are working dangerously long hours in order to earn enough to live on. As well as destroying family life this has serious health and safety implications and is unacceptable.

We arrive at a loading/unloading point, (a "tip"), to be told "get your head down driver, we'll give you a knock when we are ready for you". You can't really rest properly in situations like this, but the end result is that whether we go abroad, work in the UK or do local deliveries, we end up doing a typical 14-hour day from start to finish. Most drivers probably do not drive for more than ten hours but we are on call and not able to rest.

Every worker in the industry has been looking forward to the introduction of the European Working Time Directive (EWTD) as a turning point where drivers will have the same sort of rest as other workers. The bosses on the other hand have been crying foul at the coming "catastrophe".

The Department of Transport (DoT) has released the final draft of proposals that will be implemented from March 2005. As it turns out the bosses could have saved their tears. New Labour has caved in to pres-

sure from the Road Haulage Association and not listened to the "ridiculous" demands of trade unionists.

Almost every worker will be entitled under law at least to work a 48-hour week. However the DoT has dreamed up a special clause just for us in the EWTD. Called a Period of Availability (PoA) it is time where we are not actually driving but are available to do so. Under their proposals we could work for example eight hours with a five-hour PoA in the middle. Although the shift would be 13 hours long we would only be driving eight hours - therefore a 13 or 14 hour day would be perfectly legal. We can still be legally instructed to work a 60-hour week, providing our driving time does not exceed the present limit of 9 hours on 4 days a week and 10 hours on 2 days.

The government has scandalously buckled in the face of pressure from big business. Recent reports in the trucking press and the Guardian have show just how big the influence of the truck industry bosses is. "We are so dependent on 'just in time' deliveries that a strike by hauliers could halt factories, offices, schools, pubs, hospitals and waste collections and bring Britain to a standstill in days". The articles have in mind a 'strike' by employers and small owners, however it also illustrates the potential power of the workers in the industry. If this vast potential of workers was tapped the bosses would have no alternative but to accede to the workers demands.



Those present agreed to carry on promoting our existing policy in the form of our T&G "Drivers' Charter". This has been union policy for 4 years and includes the demand for a 48-hour working week with no loss of pay and £25,000 a year or £10 an hour.

It is very positive for shop stewards to be able to use this as the basis for negotiation, and in some firms where the union is well organised they have already achieved it. However, where the union is not strong the problem persists.

Only the union can point a way out. At the moment drivers want to work longer hours because they need the money - but if we could get the Drivers' Charter implemented hours would be reduced and wages would increase anyway. We need a national campaign to demand the introduction of these policies - what better way to strengthen union organisation in the industry than inspire workers to fight and get organised themselves! This means organising flexibly, getting our

members to meetings to share views and experiences, drawing up a plan of attack, and adapting structures of the union, including our full-time officers, to meet the needs of the members.

The issue of long hours is also a political issue. The Labour government that our union pays for is clearly backing the employers on this issue - what a scandal! We need to change the current leadership of the Labour Party for one that is willing to implement socialist policies in the interests of workers. The T&G, with thousands of members in every constituency, and should conduct a campaign to mobilise them.

The latest twist in the European Working Time Directive saga shows how fruitless it is to sit back and rely on changes in the law. To solve the problems of low pay and long hours in our industry the union has to come out fighting. We must sharpen up our act and begin to take the struggle to the bosses and the Government. ●

Reuters - Action over job cuts

by Kris Lawrie, NUJ Central London branch

GLOBAL NEWS agency Reuters last month announced a round of job cuts in its London operation. Managers told staff that these would take place in various departments including pictures, graphics, and sports' results. It is rumoured that another round of cuts will be announced in December.

This is another blow, coming not long after the announcement of plans to close editorial facilities in London. These will be transferred to Singapore and Toronto under an initiative called "Fast-Forward" glossing over job cuts by giving them a flashy sounding name. However look under the flashy surface and you can see the real content of Fast Forward. The company says it will save them - £440 million, £340 million from job cuts. It will be fast forward for the company's bank account and the end of the line for many of its staff.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has already held a consultative ballot to establish the mood of the workforce. 84% indicated that they would be willing to take strike action to defend their jobs. A formal ballot for strike action has now been started. An NUJ spokesman condemned the sacking of "journalists with a proven track record of skill and expert-

ise.... It is thanks to its journalists that Reuters enjoys the reputation it does in a highly competitive market." The union is seeking a solution to the problem that will build unity between workers in Britain and those in India.

Contact has already been made with the Indian journalists' union to develop a campaign for quality jobs with good terms and conditions across Reuters

Transference of jobs

The transfer of more skilled jobs overseas has become increasingly common in recent years. We have seen this in industry, banking, insurance and now journalism. This is a problem affecting workers across all the advanced high-wage economies. This has been going on for decades especially in less skilled sectors of the economy. It is now being taken into new areas where previously workers had relatively good wages, conditions and job stability.

David Schlesinger, Reuters Global Managing editor has explained the cuts by saying: "We're trying to fillet out work that doesn't have to be done on the spot and move it elsewhere. We want to free our more expensive journalists for face-to-face, on-the-spot tasks to get the best value." This argument is similar to the

one used by the government in the ongoing civil service dispute over the cutting of one hundred thousand jobs. There has been talk about cutting bureaucracy in the back-room, freeing up frontline services. That is nonsense 'because everyone knows that for each worker on the 'front line' there needs to be many others working behind the scenes. If these are scrapped or moved thousands of miles away how are things to be properly coordinated? How are people supposed to work as a team when they are on the other side of the world from each other? It is nothing more than a manoeuvre to squeeze more profit out of workers by paying them less.

The unions must take a stand against job cuts, along with any cuts in wages and conditions. Why in this day and age should anyone have to face the prospect of unemployment and poverty? At the same time the union movement must put pressure on the Labour Government to start acting in our interests. Any firm threatening to make job cuts in the narrow interests of profit - whether a carmaker, a fast-food chain, a bank or a media company - should be nationalised under the control of the workforce. ●

BBC Bosses try to axe 6,000 jobs

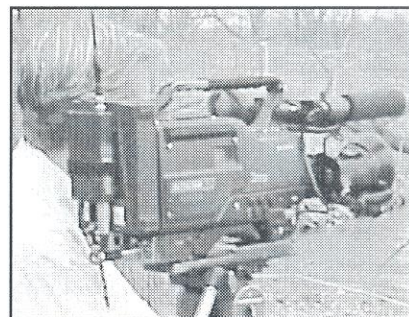
THOUSANDS OF BBC workers are set to ballot for industrial action in response to plans to axe thousands of jobs.

New BBC Director General Mark Thompson is set to announce more than £1bn of 'efficiency savings' in early December which will include a rumoured 6,000 job cuts.

The cuts which amount to more than 20% of the workforce will anger BBC workers who believe they are being made to pay a political price for the fallout from the Hutton Report.

BBC workers have already shown their willingness to stand up to defend public service broadcasting after staging a series of walkouts and demonstrations in the wake of the Hutton Report. New wildcat walkouts could greet the news of job cuts and both the NUJ and BECTU who together represent the vast majority of BBC workers will meet the day of the announcement and are expected to ballot for action. Programmes could be taken off the air over Christmas as a result.

NUJ General Secretary Jeremy Dear said: "We are not prepared to stand by and watch either the Government or senior management wreck the BBC". ●



PCS Action takes effect

North London Inland Revenue

WE WERE well prepared for the strike in the Area, we have very high union membership and managed to close our office down. The strike has had a positive effect on the union in my workplace, several longstanding non-members decided to join - including one who had always refused to join unless the union was prepared to go on strike!

We were picketing from 6.30 am but still people came in early to try to beat the picket! The support from the public was incredible - cars driving past were tooting in support; there is a big Post Office delivery centre beside us so there was a constant stream of mail vans in the morning with postal workers waving and shouting support. One man came along in a Barbour jacket and green

wellies walking two dogs. I thought here we go but when he heard what was going on he turned out to be really supportive.

I think there is a sense now among the members of 'what next?' This is undoubtedly being discussed at all levels. This last strike was a protest really to let the government know that we are not taking cuts lying down - it has also played an important role in building up the organisation on the ground. I think we should be looking for another strike in the spring to keep the momentum going and build it up.

There will also be individual actions in some of the departments. One thing that should take place in the Inland Revenue is an overtime ban in the run-

up to the 31st January - this is the date for tax returns to be in. The 31st is a Monday and we usually do overtime in the run-up to it - an overtime ban at this time would cause a lot of disruption. This really depends on a decision of the Inland Revenue Group Executive, which now has a Left Unity [broadleft] majority so it is quite possible.

The other piece of good news is the unions decision to approach the other public sector unions about some kind of united action in the spring/summer in the run up to the election. This would be good because it would do a lot to increase unity between different layers of the public sector and would put more pressure on the government.

Carlisle

THE CURRENT dispute was not solid in our branch because we had job losses in the pipeline long before Brown's statement.

I work for Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), in the Rural Payments Agency which administers subsidies to farmers. We have known for some time that the structure of the service was to be reformed due to the introduction of a new IT system and because of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) subsidy schemes which will result in a reduction to just one main scheme with the loss of 1600 jobs nationally.

This was before the big shock of the announcements about 100,000 job losses. The union went into negotiations and in the end came out in support of a deal under which all workers in my agency will have to re-apply for our jobs, under a competence based selection policy where we have to provide evidence of how we have met certain competences in the course of our work. Those whose applications score the lowest will be made redundant. This has now been cynically brought forward to coincide with this dispute and our current pay dispute and we are having to re-apply for our jobs now. It is understandable that this has caused a lot of resentment towards the union some members have even torn up their cards.

This has really cut across the mood in my area. Nonetheless we did picket the office and the majority of staff stayed out. At lunchtime we popped down to the town centre to leaflet and petition members of the public and some members from other unions such as Unison and the RMT popped along to help. The public support was good and we certainly

didn't get any negative comments.

There hasn't been much talk in the branch about how to go forward. My own thoughts are that the union needs to target strategic and sensitive areas to cause the greatest disruption with the minimum of effort.

David Niven - Branch Committee Member - Department of Food Agriculture and Rural Affairs



Southend

WE ORGANISED a local rally in Southend, which is a large regional centre for the civil service with a big Inland Revenue office and Customs and Excise HQ. 200 attended the rally that was addressed by Frank Campbell, Group Secretary for Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue. He gave reports from around the country saying that customs workers had disrupted work at big ports including Dover and Felixstowe.

Pickets took place on all civil service sites in the local area. The first picket started at just gone midnight at the Customs Computer centre. My own office had a joint picket of 18 from the

Inland Revenue, Courts and Jobcentre Plus. We managed to turn away the post, Securicor and even members of the public who were hoping to get advice from the Inland Revenue and Jobcentre but still showed their support for us. The mood was very good among those on strike with work being disrupted for all departments. We were told that the management called the police to one picket line because it broke the law with more than six people on it - the strikers responded in defiant mood by dividing themselves into smaller groups and covering more entrances.

The priority now is to find a way forward for the dispute. We are now dis-

cussing that at local level with all departments involved with the support of the Trades Council and other unions. The union's leader, Mark Serwotka, has talked about building an alliance with the other civil service unions and unions representing public sector workers, all who are facing attacks on jobs, pensions and sick absence levels. This is necessary to build solidarity and broaden out the struggle.

Rachel Heemskerck - DWP Essex Branch President - Department of Work and Pensions

Market Harborough

THE MOOD and the turnout was superb we had 97.9% of members out and 95% of staff out. Out of the three offices in the branch we shut two and picketed the third with 70 members. Only a small number of scabs went in which included managers some of whom are union members.

Through the action we have been able to do a lot to build the union. Before the strike we had 116 non-members some of whom were long-term and others who were new-starts. We have managed to recruit over half of them.

We did quite a bit of preparation for the strike. We were out leafleting all the members in the various offices around the town in the weeks leading up to the strike to make sure that they understood what the issues were and to try to get as good a turnout as possible. The young members were brilliant at this. They were out, full of energy, talking to members. It was like a breath of fresh air. And there are no edges on them - they've said this is what needs doing, and they've gone and done it.

We also had a lot of support from the public there were workers coming down to wish us support from unions like FBU, CWU, NUJ, UNISON etc.

I think as far as the way forward nationally is concerned things need a bit of tightening up - there are a number of points that need to be sorted in Inland Revenue and it is doubtless the same in other departments. For example we are in the run-up to the processing of the tax returns on January 31st but we are working overtime left, right and centre. We need to get a ban on overtime before we do anything else because this will screw up the tax returns and put more pressure on management.

What's clear now is that the gloves are well and truly off - the government is not going to back down - our members are not going to back down and it is a fight to the finish.

Martin Page - Branch Secretary - Leicester Revenue Network.



Support Jaguar workers

Coventry demo report

by our industrial correspondent

THOUSANDS OF workers gathered in Coventry at the end of November to protest against the closure of the Jaguar plant in Brown's Lane with a projected loss of 1150 jobs. Workers from Brown's Lane were joined by large contingents from Jaguar plants in Halewood, Merseyside and Castle Bromwich in the West Midlands. There were workers present from across the industry - Rover, Land Rover, Peugeot and Vauxhall banners were all present along with other banners from unions such as the PCS, CWU, UNISON, Amicus and T&G.

There was a good atmosphere on the demo, and a friendly response from the public as it proceeded through the city centre. The march ended in the centre and there were a number of speakers including TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber, Tony Woodley of the T&G and Derek Simpson of Amicus.

Tony Woodley said: "This is a dispute to stop British workers and Jaguar workers being the cannon fodder of multinational companies".

Mike O'Brien, Labour MP for North Warwickshire, described the closing of Brown's Lane as a hammer blow for manufacturing in the West Midlands. He also said that it would be felt by the whole community, because there are many more jobs that are reliant on the Jaguar plant.

A 16 year old school boy from a family who have worked for Jaguar for generations illustrated how important these jobs are saying: "Why should they close the place when it's one of Jaguar's most productive factories? My generation should have the opportunity to work in their local area."

Jaguar is planning to close Brown's Lane and its R&D plant in Whitley. They have said that production at the remaining two plants will be stepped up. The march was intended to build support and give a boost to the yes vote for strike action. The ballot runs till December 13th.

Ford bought Jaguar in 1989 with financial assistance from the British government. Since then over £9 million of government money has been ploughed into Jaguar. In 1998 Jaguar signed agreements with the unions promis-

ing that the future of West Midlands plants would be secure. As late as this September when they cut production by 15,000 cars they were still guaranteeing the plants future. However for companies like this nothing is as important as profit and that is what the recent closures are about. After 14 years of government subsidies they are preparing to cut and run at Browns Lane. Jaguar's main market is now the US where they have 60% of their sales. Many workers are now questioning what their long terms motives are with regard to UK sites. >

The unions must take a decisive stand. The car industry has been battered enough. We should not accept any further job losses, plant closures or attacks on wages and conditions.

The best form of defence is attack. The membership can only be mobilised on the basis of a serious fight and a positive programme for the industry. We should be fighting for improvements in wages and working conditions, and a shorter working week with no loss of wages (where overcapacity exists it should be easy to cut the working day).

At the same time the unions must put pressure on the Labour Government to nationalise under workers control the assets of any company that is attacking conditions or shutting plant. It is therefore important that we take this struggle into the Labour Party to chuck out the careerist clique that has hijacked it and fight for socialist policies in the interests of our members. ●



Nurses working "illegal" 80-hour week

by Kenny McGuigan

UNISON, the public service union, has condemned the latest reports showing that many nurses in Scotland are working increasingly exhausting shifts. The union blames low pay and expansion of the use of agencies to cover up the chronic shortage of nurses. The report, commissioned by the union reveals that some nurses regularly work 80 hours a week - almost double the legal limit.

These professionals, the backbone of the crumbling and under funded NHS, are partly being exploited - learning low wages aside - because of their earnest commitment and gallant gentleness. The result is personal stress and exhaustion while patients and staff are being put at risk by overworked and tired nursing staff.

Unison's Scottish organizer, Jim Devine said, "This is the day-to-day reality of nursing shortages in the Scottish health service. And excessive workload in a stressful environment, compounded by staff shortages is clearly putting staff and patients at risk."

The main problem arises because many nurses work for bank agencies. These agencies often pay a higher hourly rate than if the nurses were employed directly by the hospitals as a permanent member of staff. This arrangement allows Health Boards to avoid any statutory obligations to the employee, like having to pay union agreed different rates for weekend work, public holidays, holiday pay, sick pay, maternity leave and other benefits, such as having a contract of employment.

While the pen-pushers and accountants who currently run our hospitals and health services pursue a "let's just get through the financial year" policy, their strategy means that patients, and the service as a whole, suffer. The Unison report highlights that agency nurses are usually unfamiliar with both patients and surroundings and not knowledgeable of the continuation of quality of care plans in different hospitals.

Devine said, "Guidance needs to be issued to Scotland's health service about the "working time directive" and even more stringent rules need to be introduced to monitor the activities of nurses who work with agencies."

Socialist Appeal would go further beginning with an urgent review of nurses' salaries and paying these dedicated professionals what they are due. Most public opinion polls show conclusively how valued nursing staff are among the general public who in the main agree that they are underpaid and undervalued. The curtailing of ever increasing layers of management would divert huge amounts of public cash into the real heroes of the NHS. Even more sensible would be to nationalize the drug companies. This strategy on its own would solve the financial crisis in the NHS overnight. ●

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Scottish Socialist Party - On the Road to Destruction

by Rob Sewell in Glasgow

THE SCOTTISH Socialist Party, once heralded by many on the left as the most successful socialist experiment in recent times, is in the process of tearing itself apart after sacking its founder and leader Tommy Sheridan as the party's convener.

Sheridan was dumped as leader by a 19 - 0 vote at the party's executive committee, apparently over his handling of allegations about his personal life that were to be published in the *News of the World*. Sheridan strongly denied any wrong doing, and went to the press saying he was resigning for personal reasons - to spend more time with his family.

In fact Sheridan, far from voluntarily handing in his resignation, was forced out.

"Nobody knows what exactly Sheridan has done that so outraged the moral commissars of the SSP - but it clearly has nothing to do with politics. The result has been that most predictable of outcomes - a party collapsing in bitterness and rancour", stated the *Sunday Herald*.

The party executive refused to back Sheridan and sacked him instead. In fact when Sheridan stated he was going to sue the newspapers over the allegations, Caroline Leckie, SSP MSP, said: "There is no official backing behind any legal challenge."

Alan McCombes, the SSP's policy coordinator and one-time close friend of Sheridan's, said: "The executive committee does not want to go down a road where we are helping Tommy Sheridan build a tower of lies."

The row has thrown the party into turmoil and split the SSP group in parliament, with different contenders throwing their hat into the ring for the leadership. Character assassination and back-stabbing is now the order of the day as different groups and interests jockey for the leadership.

At a disastrous SSP press conference, the attempt to present a united front ended in complete farce as the SSP MSPs jumped through hoops to

avoid supporting Sheridan. When he entered the room, fellow MSP, Colin Fox, announced: "The late Tommy Sheridan"!

To prove that everything was "normal", the SSP executive issued a statement saying "The executive completely dismisses the rumours that have circulated in the press that Tommy's resignation was provoked by a leadership challenge, a factional power struggle or any other form of political internal infighting."

Established some five years ago out of the remnants of the Militant Tendency and other groups, the SSP had managed to win six seats in the Scottish Parliament and hoped to replace the Labour Party as the main workers' party in Scotland. This was facilitated by PR voting. The SSP attracted a layer of people disillusioned with Blairism and even managed to secure the affiliation of the rail union RMT in Scotland. Many on the non-Labour left, including all the sectarian groups, saw the SSP as the real way forward for the "realignment" of the left. Now they are holding their heads in their hands in despair.

However, the party became increasingly opportunist in its policies and moved in a distinctly nationalist direction. Its leaders began to call for Scottish independence, aping the SNP, as "a step forward". In a completely reformist fashion, favourable comparisons were being drawn with Norway and Sweden as a model for small nations.

The leadership of the SSP were desperate to find a short cut to success, even to the extent of jumping into bed with the Scottish nationalists and watering down their ideas to achieve respectability.

Tommy Sheridan was central to the initial success of the party. He was prominent in the struggle against the Poll Tax and went to prison for his convictions. He won a council seat from his prison cell and was keen to project his image in the press. With the

impasse of Militant Labour, Sheridan and the rest of the group broke with the Militant in England and Wales and launched their own broad-based party, the SSP. Ironically it was the leaders of Militant in London who originally promoted the nationalist line.

The SSP has been trying to pull together a coalition of different factions drawn from environmentalists, feminists and anti-war activists. The only way to hold this coalition together was by promising ongoing successes. However after the euro elections, things have not been too bright. The party is £200,000 in debt. Apparently Sheridan was forced to take out a personal loan of £39,000 to prop up the finances.

Crisis

Things have begun to fall apart, which is reflected by the crisis at the top of the party. The rivalry between the MSPs has certainly added to this intrigue and crisis. Some regard Sheridan's leadership as a block to their own personal ambitions. No longer prepared to co-exist in Sheridan's shadow, the petty jealousies and resentments have coalesced in this decision to oust him. They all want to be big fish in a small pond.

The real danger now for the SSP, having ditched Sheridan, the most well-known political figure in Scotland, is that they will sink into rancour and obscurity. This was only a matter of time. The SSP's courting of the Scottish nationalists and their shift to reformist politics, would always sooner or later have end in tears. According to John Curtice of Strathclyde University, the SSP needs only to lose 1% of its vote at the next election to lose all its MSPs, except ironically Tommy Sheridan.

Whatever Sheridan's plans and eventual political evolution, the party he helped to found is heading for the rocks. As with Humpty Dumpty, whoever wins the leadership, will not succeed in putting things together again. ●

A little bit extra for Christmas!

by Kenny McGuigan

A MATE of mine, let's call him Bobby, has been unemployed for the last 3 or 4 months. Bobby has worked at most jobs in the building industry in his 30 year working life. About a fortnight ago he was contacted by a pal who asked him if he was interested in a "bit of casual", working class terminology for cash-in-hand temporary employment. The job entailed roughcasting the outside of a block of offices and Bobby's services would be required for 2 to 3 weeks. The rate was £50 a day, 5 days a week were guaranteed and there could be the chance of a Saturday. It might even lead to more work.

With Christmas coming up Bobby didn't need to think for too long. The cash would mean a bit more for his struggling family. When Bobby told me of his change in fortunes I was delighted for him.

Then I read an article in the Herald newspaper about Scottish Enterprise, a government appointed QUANGO which rakes in £450 million a year from the public purse. Following scrutiny of chief executive, Robert Crawford, by sections of the financial press, who pilloried him for his inadequate management, Crawford was in February this year. In the previous financial year he had "earned" £185,960 plus an undisclosed pension package and "other benefits in

kind".

Crawford's successor, Jack Perry, wasted no time taking up his new post and planted the obligatory family picture and his collection of fountain pens on his new desk the very next day. Like my mate Bobby, Perry would probably be excited and looking forward to his pay day. The latest accounts published by the Scottish Enterprise group reveal that from 2nd February to 31st March when the financial year ended and the accounts were published, Perry trousered £28,051. He had worked a total of 43 days for this amount - meaning his take was £2,208 a day!

Seven other directors of Scottish Enterprise are all on salaries of more than £100,000 a year, plus bonuses, pension packages and "other benefits in kind".

Anyway, with prices rocketing these days and Christmas coming up it does give them all a bit more for their families! ●



"Serious consequences" if fire cuts go ahead

by Gordon Martin

HAVING CONCLUDED one of their now discredited "consultation processes" - a sneaky tactical manoeuvre which New Labour acquired from the last Tory government, - the Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament announced that they "would have no objections to cutting the number of control centres (for the fire service in Scotland) from 8 to a possible 2." The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) had consistently argued that the proposition, if it was successful, would inevitably "reduce response times, result in job losses and almost certainly cause deaths."

In spite of this, the Justice Committee were all set to rubber-stamp the latest attack on public service employees and services on Thursday, 18th November. However, in one of those rare moments of deviation from the contrived chicanery that masquerades as modern politics, it was left to a Liberal MSP on the New Labour - dominated committee to candidly raise the blunt point that such a move would be deeply unpopular with the general public. A fact which the "consultation process" seems to have failed to uncover!

This "the emperor's got no clothes on" moment appears to have caught the committee out and the members now say they need more time to "consult". They would do well to put the FBU right at the top of the consultation list. Meanwhile the FBU leaders should seek to link their campaign to all the other unions currently or in the near future facing their own industrial struggles. The trade unions need to put unrelenting pressure on MSPs' to back off from their strategy of attacking workers and decimating public services. ●

The number of winter deaths in Scotland last year was almost 10 times the figure for deaths on the roads. Help the Aged have produced figures showing that 2,900 elderly and vulnerable people died during the winter of 2003. Richard Meade, Policy Officer for Help the Aged, said the statistics contribute to "the nation's shame".

In the meantime, brace yourself for a contemptuous regurgitation of the strategy of people like Noman Tebbit and Edwina Currie, who when confronted with a similar problem when it was their turn to manage capitalism, told the impoverished elderly to wear woolly hats and an extra cardigan and to eat porridge, as this was a good way of keeping warm! ●

Happy Christmas!

by Michael Roberts

AS WE approach Christmas yet again, the decorations, jingles, lights and bunting appear ever earlier on the streets of America, Europe and much of Asia. The retailers tell the media that it is going to be a bumper season for sales and optimism always reigns in the financial world, particularly the stock market.

Indeed, since the lows of the summer, the world's stock markets have entered yet another rally in prices. They remain well below the peaks reached at the end of great dot.com bubble. Then the Dow, the price index of the top 30 companies in the US, reached 11,500. In the subsequent slump through to mid-2002, the index fell back to 7,500. A series of rallies and slips (snakes and ladders-style) since then have taken the index back to 10,500. That's a sizeable gain for those speculators who bought at the bottom in 2002. But, just as in the casino or the lottery, very few did. Most punters, and that includes the pension and retirement accounts of the millions of workers in the US and the UK, are still nursing losses and can expect a meagre return on their hard-earned money.

But now all is sunshine. President Bush has been re-elected with the promise to maintain the tax cuts for the rich and for the big corporations. He is even hinting at extending those cuts and introducing legislation to hand over the social security budget to private companies to run. That would be a bonanza for the financial sector (and of course disaster for the recipients of pensions and benefits in the future).

The US economy seems to have recovered from its 'soft patch' when it slowed down in the summer. Economic growth is tripping along at 3-4% a year.

Jobs are coming back. Households seem to be spending still and house prices are holding up – at least so far.

But here is the rub. The whole boom seen since the very mild recession of 2001 has been based on cheap money pumped in by the Federal Reserve Bank and for that matter the Bank of England and the European Central Bank. Households in America and the UK have borrowed that money, spent some of it and speculated the rest on buying homes. The property market dominates the discussion of the middle classes at their dinner tables and even concerns the many layers of the working class as they see house prices rocket beyond their means.

Household Debt

As a result household debt has reached astronomical proportions, well over 100% of annual household income after tax in the US, the UK and many other countries. So far, the cost of financing this debt has been manageable for most. With interest rates very low, mortgage payments have been no higher than 20-25% of most people's available income. But now interest rates are on the rise. The Bank of England drove up interest rates sharply during 2004 and now the Federal Reserve has started to hike from its all-time low levels.

And there are just some signs that the great housing boom of the 1990s and early 2000s is coming to an end – perhaps with a bang rather than a whimper. All the talk is of a fall in house prices in most of Britain in the last few months. In Australia, there has already been a 15% fall. The US is still reasonably buoyant but in the hot spots of California, Las Vegas and

Florida, prices are cooling off. Most significant, mortgage borrowing has fallen away.

And that's the first danger for the growth of the US economy. Americans have spent heavily in the shops by borrowing. For most Americans, take-home pay has not expanded in the last few years and for many it has fallen. The main reason is the huge rise in benefit contributions to pay for medical care, education, and transport costs.

If house prices now start to fall, then expect Americans, Brits and even Europeans to cut back on their spending in a big way. That spells slowdown and even recession. Already, there is muted mumblings that Christmas is going to be tough for the retailers in the high streets.

And there is nothing from the big corporations to keep the US economy rolling. The big companies in Europe, Japan and the US have dramatically improved their profit levels since they bottomed back in 2001. In the US, profit margins are nearly back to the levels of the height of the hi-tech boom in 1997. But they have done this not by investment in new technology or through innovative marketing etc. It is almost all the result of cutting jobs hugely. President Bush is the first US president since Herbert Hoover in the 1930s to serve a term of office where there were less people working at the end of his four years than there were when it began in January 2001.

American workers have paid for the boom in profits by lower benefits, wage cuts and job losses.

Despite huge tax incentives, job cuts and easy credit, US corporations have not used their massive profits to invest productively. Most of the profit has gone in extravagant salary packages for the top bosses, rising dividend payments to the shareholders

and even buy backs of shares in the market. Net investment after money spent on replacing old plant and equipment is at an all-time low! Only investment in arms, missiles and 'security' is rising.

The great productivity boom of the 1990s in the US was the result of huge investment in new technology. Indeed, there was massive over-investment, a chronic fault in a capitalist system where there is no planning, that finally led to the bust in 2000. After that productivity growth was sustained only by cutting the jobs of the workforce. But now productivity growth is slowing fast. Whereas last year, productivity per worker per hour was rising at over 5%, now it is creeping along at under 2% and will slow even further.

That suggests the US cannot maintain its 3-4% growth rate much longer.

And there is another dark cloud ahead – the dollar. US prosperity has been based on borrowing: borrowing to buy houses and also borrowing from abroad to pay for cheap imports from China and Asia. Most of the consumer gadgets, clothes and appliances bought this Christmas and most of the cars sold on the extremely easy credit terms are imported from overseas. America increasingly makes less, borrows more and buys from abroad. It has been able to get way with this because the dollar has been supreme, the currency for world trade and savings. Asian exporters have recycled their dollars back into investments in US stocks and shares or bonds or even to buy US companies.

That process has been going on for over a decade. Now the US owes over 25% of annual income in debt



abroad. But the inevitable demise is fast approaching. The dollar has started to slide. The slide began back in 2002 and then things seemed to stabilise this year. But now the run on the dollar has resumed. Foreign investors are asking themselves why buy all these US shares and bonds if their value slips because the dollar does. It is self-enforcing. Once confidence in the dollar goes, all will fall down.

US and China

If the US slows, there will be little help from Europe or Japan to take up the slack. Germany is hardly growing at all. The economy is still shedding jobs, shop sales are terrible and there is growing gloom at the failure of the government to turn the economy around. And now the euro currency is strengthening so much that it threatens to hit severely the export sales of European companies. Japan appeared to have been making an economic recovery in the last year. But since its great financial and housing bubble burst back in 1989, there have been several false dawns for the economy. It stayed stagnant throughout the 1990s and the current recovery is now showing signs of exhaustion. Industrial production is down, prices in the shops are still falling and house prices remain dormant. Exports to China are boom-

ing, as the only saving grace.

And here is the next danger for the world capitalist economy. Outside of the US, China has been the main support for world growth and demand for commodities and equipment is this decade. The economy has been racing along at over 10% a year. With no holds barred by the bureaucracy, capitalist businesses have been allowed to expand, without environmental control, paying very low wages and providing terrible working conditions – just as in the days of the industrial revolution of early 19th century Britain.

This capitalist expansion within the confines of an authoritarian Stalinist regime and underinvested ageing state sector has created huge distortions in the economy. Manufacturing trade booms and China sells huge amounts abroad. Corruption, inequality and, above all, unplanned over investment have rocketed to new heights.

Now the great boom seems to be heading for a bust. Take car sales. Last year, car sales were rising 100%. Now they are falling by 3%. Now there are 600,000 unsold cars and manufacturers with new plants and workers are getting worried. The same thing is happening in the new gadget industries. There are 315m mobile phone users in China! That provides sales

of about 90m units year, up 50% from 2003. This is already reaching saturation point. Unsold mobile phones have already reached 60m, or nearly two thirds of yearly sales. Then there is housing.

Property speculation has been unprecedented. Property investment is now 50% of annual output!

This great investment boom is heading for a classic capitalist bust.

Sure, because China still has 60% of its investment in state hands, the impact can still be controlled. But it will still mean a sizeable slowdown in the economy in 2005.

And China is no longer unimportant in the world economy. If you exclude the effect of currency exchange, then China's economy is now 60% of the size of the US, or the second largest in the world. Between 1990 and now, it contributed 28% of world growth compared to just 19% from the US! And that figure was probably closer to 50% since 2000.

Slump

To sum up, the US is probably heading for a slowdown. The UK will follow the US, as always. Europe is already expanding weakly. Japan's recovery could stall again, particularly if China slows. And that great manufacturing powerhouse of the globe could well be heading for a capitalist bust.

All this suggests that global capitalist slump is not far away. And with productivity growth slowing and oil prices still high, inflation may return at the same time to deliver the worst of all possible capitalist worlds – stagflation (stagnation and inflation). Happy Christmas! ●

Socialism Made Easy, by James Connolly

a review by Ray Smith

WHAT STRIKES you most about this book is how fresh the ideas in it are despite the fact that it was written 95 years ago. In this collection of articles the author was attempting to present the ideas and programme of scientific socialism to our class in an educational manner. He was massively successful. The plain language used by James Connolly in these articles is no accident. At that time the rates of illiteracy within our class were very high.

All those articles were written during Connolly's stay in the US and in Ireland. Although the book specifically addresses the Irish working class we can see how the arguments and ideas he puts forward are universal. While the great majority of Connolly's works addressed his fellow Irish citizens he always had a very strong sense of internationalism.

The book is divided into two parts. In Section 1 the Irish revolutionary uses all the prejudices and attacks against socialism deployed by the ruling class in order to explain the ABCs of Marxism. In a very satirical manner the author destroys all the narrow-minded prejudices of a religious and nationalist nature. At the same time Connolly boldly exposes the nature of capitalism and puts forward the need to fight against it.

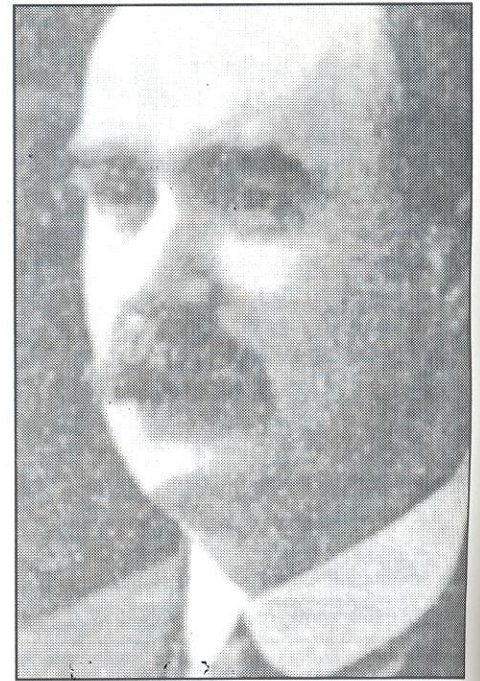
In Section 2 he explains how to

wage the struggle against capitalism starting in the workplace. The author stresses the need for trade union and political organisation of the working class as one of the first and most important measures in this struggle. He also saw how the weaknesses of the political organisation of the working class flowed from the weakness of the trade unions. He said:

"The men who are taught that it is all right to continue working for a capitalist against whom their shop-mates of a different craft are on strike are not likely to see any harm in continuing to vote for a capitalist nominee at the polls even when he is opposed by the candidate of a Labour organisation. Political scabbery is born of industrial scabbery; it is its legitimate offspring"

These words are still relevant today. They can be applied to one of the strongest labour movements in the world—the US labor movement. In the US due to the lack of independent political representation of the working class the bureaucracy of the trade unions have tied the movement to the bourgeois Democrats.

The book continues with analysis of labour based on historical materialism. From there he draws the conclusion that the overthrow of capitalism is the task of the working class due to its



role in society and in the economy.

There is little doubt that the Irish revolutionary fulfilled his purpose of explaining socialist ideas to workers and youth with his *Socialism Made Easy*. It is a good read and certain to attract the reader to the study of further and more elaborate works on Marxism. Probably, together with the world famous *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels, it is the best work to introduce socialism to beginners.

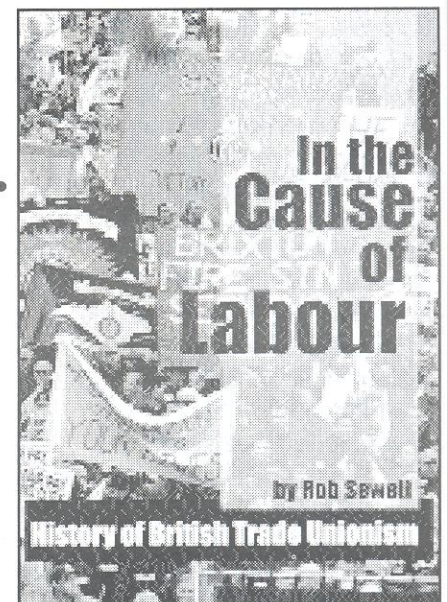
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Health and human rights under attack in Iraq

by Jack Duggan, Northumbria University

The hand that signed the paper felled a city:

Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,

Doubled the globe and halved a country:

These five kings did a king to death".

(Dylan Thomas, 1936)

JUST DAYS before the beginning of the second onslaught on Fallujah university students in Newcastle had the chance to hear a different version of the entangled story of Iraq, its people, their "liberation", the west, its army, and their occupation.

The Iraqi health sector faces colossal difficulties. First it was stripped of its structure, then re-formed with the "help" of the occupation forces. Now corruption is fermenting in the bureaucracy, funds are insufficient to meet the needs of the people and privatisation has raised the costs of medical equipment and the maintenance of hospitals.

Since the war was officially declared over, senior medical professors and academics have been either forced to retire, fled the country or been executed. The sense of security, an essential foundation on which society must depend, has been war-sened by the occupation of Iraq. This sense of security, which must derive from a protection of human rights has

been neglected and often purposely violated by the "liberators" of Iraq.

This summer in Fallujah, the Americans prevented food and medication from entering the city, obstructed access to the main hospital in the city by bombing a key bridge to the hospital and destroyed mosques. 95 % of Iraqis killed in Fallujah have been civilians, of that half are children and 30% women.

Civil rights such as the right to form trade unions are heavily monitored by the occupying forces and this basic civil right for workers to organise is only allowed with their consent.

It is a certainty that this war, waged in the name of freedom and democracy, does not uphold the values and beliefs it claims. It is also a certainty that the American and British armies and their counterparts have other motives for their action against Iraq and its people. It is also clear that they have no plans for withdrawal in the foreseeable future, since they have already begun building permanent military bases in the country.

They are trying to impose a unity between the people of the country and their occupiers. They are finding this is something they cannot manufacture or bomb into creation.

Education cut while military overspends

by Ray Smith

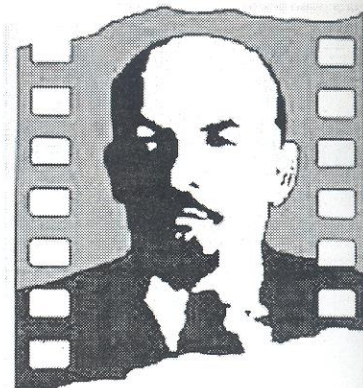
THE NATIONAL Audit Office (parliament's financial watchdog) has unveiled £6bn overspending on the UK's big weapons projects in the last two years. However, this overspending does not mean that the Ministry of Defence has acquired a lot of different weapon models and types. The report of the NAO also points out "There is little evidence that project performance has improved". The report exposes huge and expensive projects and the delays of these projects. Sometimes the delay is more than 3 years, like with the Brimstone anti-armour missile or the three nuclear-powered Astute-class attack submarines, designed for intelligence gathering. This waste of public resources shows the contempt of the Blair government for the electorate. On the one hand the Blairites are squandering the national budget on useless weaponry. On the other we have witnessed a lot of cuts in social services and continuing privatisation. Just

look at the cabinet's hypocrisy. They refused to nationalise the railways against the will of Labour Party members, TUC members and the majority of the working class on the basis that there is no money whilst pumping billions in to wasteful weapons projects. The government has also been making cuts in education. The government unveiled their plans to raise top up fees with the excuse of creating more competitive universities and warning people about the alleged bankruptcy that university education was going to face in the near future. This anti-working class policy has deterred loads of working class kids from going to university. This report by the NAO only adds another nail in the coffin of New Labour. Now it is up to us to get organised in our colleges, universities, workplaces, student unions and trade unions to fight for real socialist policies that will put an end to this waste of resources.



Imperialism and the Highest Stage of Capitalism

by Rob Sewell



IN 1916 in the midst of the First World War Lenin produced a Marxist masterpiece, entitled "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism". Basing himself on the method of Marxism, he analysed the most up-to-date material showing the destruction of "free competition" and the emergence of monopoly capitalism, and with it imperialism. Today, with all the talk of globalisation, as well as the aggressive stance of American imperialism on the world stage, this study of imperialism has enormous relevance to those who want to understand present-day developments.

In the preface written in April 1917, Lenin hoped that the "pamphlet will help the reader to understand the fundamental economic question, that of the economic essence of imperialism, for unless this is studied, it will be impossible to understand and appraise modern war and modern politics."

Imperialism and colonialism existed long before capitalism. The imperialism of the Roman Empire, founded on slavery, is one of the earliest examples. However, today's imperialism, in the highest stage of capitalism, is of a qualitatively different character.

The new phase of capitalism is characterised by "the enormous growth of industry and the remarkably rapid concentration of production in ever-larger enterprises", explained Lenin. Again, "a very important feature of capitalism in its highest stage of development is so-called combination of production, that is to say, the grouping in a single enterprise of different branches of industry..." Today, concentration of production and owners has grown to extraordinary proportions. Giant transnational corporations and trusts, such as Ford, Chrysler, and Microsoft stride the globe in search of markets and cheap labour. Rather than follow

the mass production industries of the past ("Fordism"), new techniques and methods have been introduced in the drive to maximise profits. Outsourcing allows companies to concentrate their business activities, while others provide components or services to the "parent" company. However, a tight commercial stranglehold is maintained on the separate "satellite" companies. Lean production has been introduced to stretch the system to the limits, to place pressures on all sectors of production, in the drive to squeeze out every last ounce of surplus value from the labour of the working class. This is management by "stress", involving team working and other variants of modern "Taylorism".

"Half a century ago, when Marx was writing *Capital*, free competition appeared to the overwhelming majority of economists to be a "natural law", wrote Lenin. "Official science tried, by a conspiracy of silence, to kill the works of Marx, who by a theoretical and historical analysis of capitalism had proved that free competition gives rise to the concentration of production, which, in turn, at a certain stage of development, leads to monopoly. Today, monopoly has become a fact."

Epoch of cut throat competition

For Lenin, the boom at the end of the nineteenth century and the crisis of 1900-03 resulted in a qualitative transformation of the capitalist economy. "Cartels become the foundations of the whole of economic life. Capitalism has been transformed into imperialism."

This epoch is characterised by cutthroat competition, where predatory monopolies seek to eliminate their rivals, attempting to undermine them and eventually drive them to the wall. This struggle takes on many forms: blocking

supplies of raw materials, closing trade outlets, "gentlemen's agreements" between buyers, price cutting, and squeezing credit. "We see here the monopolists throttling those who do not submit to them, to their yoke, to their dictation", wrote Lenin.

The boom and slump cycle of capitalism, as well as the periodic financial scandals and property crises also take their toll. "Crises of every kind - economic crises most frequently, but not only these - in their turn increase very considerably the tendency towards concentration and towards monopoly."

Together with the concentration of industry goes the increasing importance of finance capital. The banks and finance houses, which originally greased the wheels of production, began to fuse with industry, creating a financial oligarchy in the process. It is the epoch of state monopoly finance capital, where the state becomes increasingly entwined with the banks and trusts. The state is nothing more than the executive committee of the ruling class. In the imperialist stage, the struggle begins for the division of the world amongst the imperialist powers and political alliances are created. "Private and state monopolies are interwoven in the epoch of finance capital... both are but separate links in the imperialist struggle between the big monopolists for the division of the world."

Another feature of imperialism has been the export of capital, and not simply commodities, which grew steadily in importance. "The need to export capital arises from the fact that in a few countries capitalism has become 'overripe' and

(owing to the backward state of agriculture and poverty of the masses) capital cannot find a field for 'profitable' investment", explained Lenin. This lay behind the drive for new markets and fresh fields of investment in the colonies, causing the expansion of the world economy. Modern factories and rail and transport systems were established in more backward areas, such as Russia, where capitalism was grafted on to semi-feudal relations.

Later on, especially after 1945, this changed, with the export of capital being concentrated in the advanced capitalist countries. Capital did not flow to the less developed countries, but foreign investment increased between the developed capitalist powers instead. That was one of the main reasons for the post war upswing. The World Bank Report of 1985 explained "about three quarters of foreign direct investment has gone to industrialised countries on average since 1965." This process intensified over the previous 20 years. In fact, large sums of capital were squeezed out of the 'third world' by the IMF and World Bank and transferred to the major capitalist powers. In the debt crisis of the 1980s, the debtor economies were unable to generate enough exports to repay their loans, resulting in a series of defaults. This crisis soon put these 'third world' economies further into the clutches of IMF-dictated "structural adjustment programmes" (austerity programmes), resulting in stagnation, hyper-inflation and destitution.

"Finance capital does not want liberty, it wants domination", stated Hilferding correctly. American imperialism, the most powerful imperialism on the planet, has been seeking this role for the last

100 years. It wanted the 20th century to become the "American Century" as the 19th was the "British Century". The imperialist foreign policy of the United States, as in all capitalist countries, is dictated by the needs of the oligarchy (the military-industrial complex) that rules America. For seventy years the US ruling class was desperate first to destroy and later to contain the Soviet Union after 1945. The nationalised planned economy, despite its totalitarian character, was regarded as a deadly threat to capitalism. The Cold War was a period of intense military and diplomatic rivalry between the two incompatible social systems underpinned by the threat of mutual nuclear annihilation.

New World Order

The "New World Order" proclaimed by George Bush senior after 1990 and the collapse of Stalinism, was nothing more than a plan for world domination by the United States. The idea of the "peace dividend" after the collapse of the Berlin Wall has evaporated in the greatest scramble for armaments in history. The US intervened everywhere to build up its spheres of influence in areas formally controlled by the USSR. Thus its intervention in the Balkans, Caucuses and the Middle East, colliding in the process with the strategic interests of Russia, Germany, France and others. The plan for a "New American Century" is nothing short of a strategy for world domination by the new American "Empire". This is all done in the name of "democracy" and the "war on terror".

In a revealing article in the *Financial Times* entitled "The Profit motive goes to war", the authors graphically explain the imperialist policy of the United States. "The

past decade has witnessed a quiet revolution in the way the US projects its power abroad. In the first Gulf war, the ratio of American troops on the ground to private contractors was 50:1. In the 2003 Iraq war, that ratio was 10:1, as it was for the Clinton administration's interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo. As these figures reflect, key military functions have been out-sourced to private companies; both Democratic and Republican presidents alike have steadily privatised critical aspects of US national security. For a rough sense of the magnitude of this shift, Halliburton's total contracts in Iraq to date are estimated at \$11bn - \$13bn (£6bn - £7bn), more than twice what the first Gulf war cost the US." (*Financial Times*, 17 November 2004).

Despite the colossal power of US imperialism, which has a greater military firepower than the next combined nine powers, it has limits. The US was defeated in Vietnam, a country of 19 million peasants, as a result of the mutinous mood in the army and the massive opposition at home. As Trotsky once explained, American capitalism has dynamite buried in its foundations. Every adventure abroad sends shock waves through the American people, especially the Blacks, Latinos and other minorities.

Those who dreamed of an ever-growing peaceful capitalism have had their dreams shattered. During the First World War, Karl Kautsky once predicted that imperialism would overcome its contradictions and inter-imperialist antagonisms in a new phase of ultra-imperialism. "The World War between the great imperialist powers may result in a federation of the strongest, who renounce their arms race", he said. Events,

especially today show this to be false.

Rather than an epoch of peace and prosperity, mankind has entered the most stormy period in history. One crisis is rapidly followed by another. The maelstrom in Iraq is not the end, but only the beginning of unending crisis and turmoil. The Middle East is a powder keg. There is not a single stable regime in the whole of Latin America, let alone Asia and Africa. As Lenin explained, imperialism means war. Even in the upswing since 1945, there were only 19 days of peace in the world. Lenin explained that in the past epoch of relatively "peaceful" capitalism, for hundreds of millions in the 'third world' "that epoch was not one of 'peace' but of oppression, suffering and horror, which was more terrible, possibly, for appearing to be a 'horror without end'. This epoch has gone for good, it has given way to an epoch which is relatively much more violent, spasmodic, disastrous and conflicting, an epoch which for the mass of the population is typified not so much by a 'horror without end' as by a 'horrible end'."

Overthrow capitalism

Only the overthrow of world capitalism can eliminate these horrors of war, famine and poverty. The consciousness of the working class is being transformed, as witnessed by the revolutionary developments in Latin America. The red mole of revolution, to use the words of Marx, has burrowed deep. One revolutionary victory will transform the world situation and open a new perspective for the masses worldwide. The impasse of imperialism not only means war, but also places revolution on the order of the day. ●

After Arafat's death Will the Palestinian Authority take the carrot?

by Yossi Schwartz

FOLLOWING THE announcement regarding the selection of the new leader of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Abu Mazen, the government of Israel signalled a possible shift in policy toward the PA. Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said yesterday that if the new Palestinian leadership fights against terrorism, Israel would agree to conduct negotiations over a coordinated implementation of the disengagement plan. At the same time Shalom warned the new leadership of the PA that promises to shoot the Palestinians who oppose the Israeli occupation, whom he called terrorists, are not good enough. He demanded that they spill a lot of blood on the ground. He actually said that Israel would be strict in judging whether the PA had taken actual steps against terrorism. He emphasized that, "the possibility of change on the Palestinian side is not enough. We need to see a change on the ground."

According to Haaretz, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is expected to head talks leading to the formation of new guidelines for Israeli diplomacy, after several security bodies ordered to

provide recommendations on matters relating to the Palestinians have completed their work.

Israel's National Security Council, for instance, is preparing a programme to turn the pullout plan into a process that would be coordinated with the newly emerging Palestinian leadership.

The United States is also talking to Israel about steps that would make it easier for the Palestinians to hold elections, officials said. To give it all an air of respectability the Bush administration has announced that they are preparing to help the Palestinian Authority organize January elections and improve its security forces to crack down on terrorism.

Not by chance they are speaking about a date for the elections of a new puppet government that is the same date for the elections in Iraq. We can expect now a new kind of a war against Fallujah in the West Bank and Gaza.

Diplomatic sources claim that contact has already been made between Israel and the Palestinian Authority regarding Sharon's plans. Abbas (Abu Mazen) has indicated that he is ready to



play the role that Iraqi interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi is playing in Iraq, although it is not clear that at the end of the day he is going to be the man for this job. He made a statement last night where he said in regard to the early announcement of his election to the job: "I made no announcement and the matter is still being discussed."

At the same time Palestinian sources said Sunday that Fatah had not yet selected its candidate. The Israeli government is debating whether to support another candidate, Marwan Barguti, who was convicted in an Israeli court and sentenced to five life terms in prison for his alleged involvement in deadly attacks by the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

Israeli gestures

We should note that the Israeli government has proposed gestures including allowing PA security officers in the West Bank to carry weapons, a withdrawal of Israeli Defence Forces from city centres, an abstention from offensive military operations and releasing Palestinian prisoners. Not

only this but Interior Minister Avraham Poraz came under fire yesterday for suggesting the release of Marwan Barghouti for the elections in the Palestinian Authority.

Poraz said at the cabinet meeting that it would be possible to consider releasing the senior Fatah leader "under certain circumstances." He added that it would be impossible to prevent Barghouti from standing in the elections for the leadership of the PA.

In the meantime resistance to the policy of collaboration is taking place inside Fatah. Abu Mazen and Dahlan came under real fire. Yesterday some unknown gunmen directed their fire toward PLO leader Mahmoud Abbas and former minister of security Mohammed Dahlan, who met in a tent in Gaza.

Abbas and Dahlan arrived at the mourning tent for Yasser Arafat at about 6 pm Sunday near the helicopter pad at Arafat's home on the beach in Gaza City. A short time later, after the two had begun to receive public officials as well as ordinary mourners who had come from across the Gaza Strip to express their condolences, a group of gunmen appeared.

According to eyewitnesses, guards on the outer perimeter began to fight with the group, most of which was armed, as it approached the tent. Seconds later, the guards and the gunmen exchanged fire and two bodyguards were killed by gunshot wounds to the neck. The guards closest to Abbas and Dahlan immediately closed in around them and hurried them out of the tent.

The group then published a leaflet claiming responsibility for an "assassination attempt" on the two. "We warn the pretenders to the legacy of Yasser Arafat, no matter how senior they are, not to think of stopping the intifada and betraying Yasser Arafat's legacy."

Abbas, and Dahlan of course, denied that the incident was an assassination attempt. "What happened had no political or personal character. What happened was that we came in and began to receive the mourners. Because of the powerful emotions surrounding Arafat's death, it became very crowded and unintentional firing into the air started. We were then advised to leave the premises and we did so. Dahlan claimed the incident was "the result of a certain confusion in the guarding of the compound, but it was not an assassination attempt."

These denials do not hold water. Since Arafat's death, a number of groups in Fatah have named themselves after Arafat and have begun to attack the supporters of Dahlan and Abbas. The activities of the groups, supported by senior figures in the Palestinian Authority, are designed to undermine

Abbas' authority and the collaboration with Sharon he is coordinating with Dahlan.

Al Jazeera TV, whose cameramen were in the tent when the incident took place, was the first to report the gunshots. Large captions describing the incident as an assassination attempt were transmitted. Other Arab stations, especially in Lebanon, began reporting that an assassination attempt had taken place.

This assassination attempt that failed this time shows the real value of the words of PA Prime Minister Ahmad Quraya, who declared on Sunday that "positive and constructive talks" were being held with the leaders of 13 Palestinian factions and organizations, including the powerful opposition resistance group, Hamas.

Hamas

When we explained in the spring that Hamas wanted to join those who are ready to collaborate with Sharon on the condition that power is shared, many people thought that we were exaggerating. Now it is common knowledge.

According to Al Jazeera, a Hamas representative from Hebron said that while

Hamas wants to be part of the emerging new leadership, this was not to say that Hamas and other opposition groups were willing to give the post-Arafat Palestinian leadership a "blank cheque".

"We are willing to give them a grace period for a few months to prevent the occurrence of lawlessness and chaos... But after that they will have to pay attention to the masses," said a veteran Hamas leader.

Asked what he meant by this statement, he explained that Arafat's autocratic style, which was tolerated for psychological and objective reasons, would not be accepted from the new Palestinian leadership.

"They will have to be answerable to the people, and this could only be put into effect through free, fair and genuine elections."

While careful to display national responsibility, the Hamas leadership is nonetheless worried that the "new leadership" might slip into a showdown with Hamas, since "fighting terror" - which means cracking down on the opposition - would be the essential condition for any conceivable revival of an Oslo-style peace process, including the American-backed "Road Map to Peace" between

Israel and the Palestinians. However, with Arafat no longer around, the evolving Palestinian leadership would be less able to confront Hamas head-on.

PA Prime Minister Ahmad Quraya has said that, "violence is not the solution. Taking up arms is not the solution. Any domestic problem must be solved by national dialogue. This is the only way."

The only thing he proves is that those who in the past promised to liberate Palestine through the tactics of guerrilla war, which turned into ugly terrorism, are ready to sell out and are required by the US and Israeli leaders to use violence against their own people. Like in Iraq, what they will reap is only further and wider armed resistance.

Socialist Federation

Terror is not a method of winning the struggle as we have explained many times, but neither is collaboration with the imperialists.

We can expect the left in Israel to once again support the emerging new leadership and hail them as peacemakers. However, they will simply show once again that they are misleading not only the Palestinian masses but also the Israeli masses. The only way forward in the struggle for the liberation of the Palestinian masses and getting the Israeli masses out of this deadly death trap is not the support for the rotting imperialist order but the road of the class struggle that must unite Arab workers with Israeli workers in the struggle for a common socialist future in the form of a socialist federation of the Middle East. ●



Shooting at a fly that has landed on a horse's head

Onslaught in Fallujah

by Maarten Vanheeuverswyn

If your attack is going exceptionally well, it is probably an ambush.

Old military maxim

AMERICAN MILITARY planners expected to face thousands of Iraqi resistance fighters in the streets of Fallujah, not the hundreds they were fighting during this week's street fights. The explanation usually given was that the insurgents defending Fallujah are simply not as well organised as originally thought. The more plausible reason is that the insurgents are simply fighting the US forces the best way they can, with small-scale guerrilla-type operations. It would have been utter madness for the resistance to mass into static formations, to be outnumbered and out-gunned. The weapons arsenal of the biggest army in the world can devastate large defensive positions and formations. That is why small-scale hit-and-run operations are a better fighting method.

Associated Press quoted Marine Capt. John Griffin saying, "There has always been pockets of resistance in this type of fighting, just like there was in World War II. We would claim an island is secure and fight them for months after that. Claiming the city is secure doesn't actually mean that all the resistance is gone." US imperialism, still does not have control over the city. In all likelihood the resistance is simply waiting to strike hard. It looks more and more likely that half the insurgents had already fled Fallujah before the assault. They are simply repositioning themselves to fight elsewhere.

The more the Americans squeeze Fallujah, the more violence explodes elsewhere with serious clashes in the northern city of Mosul, where resistance members attacked and overwhelmed several police stations and battled US and Iraqi troops.

With US officials claiming Al Zarqawi, now Public Enemy No. 1, has left Fallujah, they are preparing the

way for another devastating round of bombing in whatever city their next target is. Gen. Myers, speaking on NBC stated, "If anybody thinks that Fallujah is going to be the end of the insurgency in Iraq, that was never the objective, never our intention, and even never our hope."

Atrocities

Reports about what is going on in Fallujah are contradictory. At this moment there is little or no independent press inside the city to report on the situation. Instead, some reporters are "embedded" with (in bed with) the US Marines and are only allowed to write under the scrutiny of US officials. Woe betide the one who dares to call this censorship! They pretend to bring democracy - a shameless lie - and do not even allow any independent press reporting on their actions.

"The US forces are there to prepare the ground for democratic elections", claim the mass media "therefore we have to get rid of these terrorists so that Iraq can make the move to democracy." This nonsense passes for "objective information". Very little attention is paid to the human catastrophe inflicted upon the city and the real nature of the whole operation. Nevertheless, if one looks carefully at some articles written on Fallujah, it is possible to get an idea of what is really going on. Fadhil Badrani, a journalist in Fallujah reporting for the BBC World Service reported:

"For people in the city, life has become even more extreme. Food is in short supply and the shops are all closed ... Electricity is cut off because of damage to the main power station from the bombardment. The water supply has been cut off too. The roads are

now heavily cratered. People, particularly children and women, tend to stay at home, fearing being mistaken for a military target.

"Doctors say medical supplies at the main hospital, which has been in American hands since Sunday, are low. Most of the city's population has left, some for other parts of Iraq, others, I hear have left the country altogether for neighbouring Arab counties."

Civilians still in their city, now besieged by a foreign army, run a high risk of being bombed or shot. Even dogs are no better off, they are being shot to prevent them being rigged with explosives.

What offence have the inhabitants of Fallujah committed? They did not threaten the world with weapons of mass destruction nor did they bring down the WTC towers. It seems that their only crime is resistance to the occupation by a foreign army.

In one of the few interesting articles in *The Washington Post*, which openly backs the war in Iraq, we read that in Fallujah some artillery guns fired white phosphorous rounds that create a screen of fire that cannot be extinguished with water. Insurgents reported being attacked with a substance that melted their skin, a reaction consistent with white phosphorous burns. The *Washington Post* quoted Kamal Hadeethi, a physician at a regional hospital: "The corpses of the mujahedeen which we received were burned, and some corpses were melted. The Jolan and Askali neighborhoods seemed particularly hard hit, with more than half of the houses destroyed. Dead bodies were scattered on the streets. Blood and flesh were splattered on the walls of some of the houses, witnesses said, and the streets were full of holes." If this kind of report slips in to the billion-dollar press, one can imagine what kind of butchery is really going on.

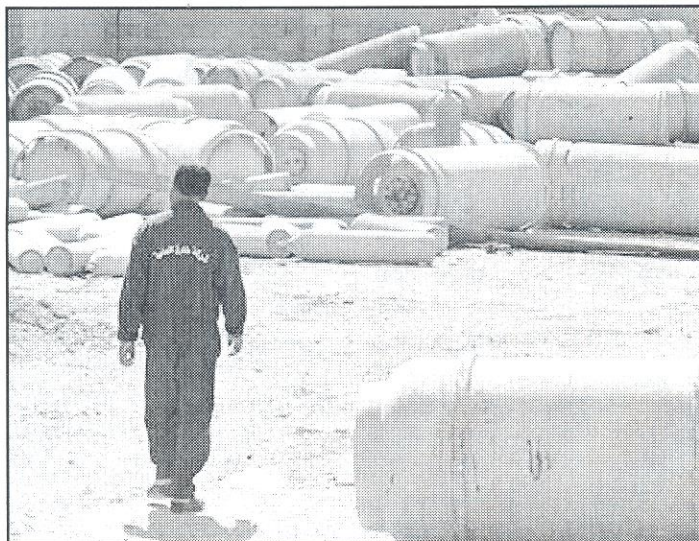
In spite of rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire forcing

two US helicopters to make "hard landings" and some twenty men down, the push through Fallujah has been going relatively well for US imperialism. But from their point of view, they should not fool themselves. This is not the endgame. After they have destroyed Fallujah "in order to save it" (!), the US forces will have to leave a fraction of its troops behind to "secure" the city. At that point, the resistance could come out of hiding and attack the diminished force and retake the city. This is exactly what happened in Samara.

The occupation forces confronted an enemy with as many heads as a hydra. No sooner have they cut off one head than another two or three grow in its place. Now Fallujah has been decapitated, but so-called pockets of resistance (which are in fact a mass movement) pop up at other places. In Baqubah, Samara, Kirkuk, Mosul and Baghdad, attacks using car bombs, improvised explosive devices and rocket-propelled grenades are on the increase, with Iraqi police as favoured targets.

Fortunately for them, US forces can count on the services of the new Iraqi Army. Scott Ritter, former UN weapons inspector in Iraq, exposed the real situation: "The reality is there is no Iraqi Army. Of the tens of thousands recruited into its ranks, there is today only one effective unit, the 36th Battalion.

"This unit has fought side by side with the Americans in Falluja, Najaf, and Samara. By all accounts, it has performed well. But this unit can only prevail when it operates alongside overwhelming American military support. Left to fend for itself, it would be slaughtered by the resistance fighters.



"While the Bush administration has suppressed the formation of militia units organized along ethnic and religious lines, the 36th Battalion should be recognized for what it really is - a Kurdish militia, retained by the US military because the rest of the Iraqi Army is unwilling or unable to carry the fight to the Iraqi resistance fighters," he said. (Aljazeera.net, November 11, 2004)

Members of the Iraqi police and army are rightfully seen as collaborators with the occupiers, as traitors by the majority of the population. That explains why in Fallujah no Iraqi Army or National Guard unit fought. Some Iraqi National Guard units have refused to attack guerrilla positions and some officers were siding with the troops.

Free elections?

Last year, after the fall of Baghdad, Bush and Blair rejected the call for free and fair elections. Instead the American troops were simply standing by when the country was looted. The people were "not ready" for elections. In reality the imperialist forces in the country are frightened of the Iraqi people voting for anti-occupa-

tion leaders. They will only accept sham elections supervised by the occupation forces, at most allowing an Allawi-style puppet regime.

Unless Iraq is turned into an openly military dictatorship, Allawi's interim government won't last too long. Already there are divisions in the government. Iraqi interim President Ghazi al-Yawar criticised the plan to attack Fallujah. "I completely disagree with those who see a need to decide the [Fallujah] matter through military action," Yawar told Reuters. It's like someone who fired bullets at his horse's head just because a fly landed on it; the horse died and the fly went away."

The question of free elections is almost never linked with the question of the army and the police. State power, in the last analysis, is armed bodies of men. In theory the army and police are controlled by the Iraqi government, but in practice the coalition forces decide what they do. How can a country be free as long as more than 100,000 foreign troops are stationed on its soil?

Action and reaction

The word freedom as applied to present day Iraq leaves a bad taste in the

mouth. More than 100,000 Iraqis have been killed since the invasion, while Fallujah and other cities are in a shambles. Every voice of opposition to the occupation is brutally crushed. Whereas right after the official ending of the war many Iraqis were prepared to give the Americans some credit, these illusions have now been shattered by their bitter experience of the monstrous crimes inflicted upon them.

The present onslaught on Fallujah will have solved nothing. On the contrary, it will have the opposite effect of what the ruling clique in Washington intended. Far from having weakened the resistance, they will only have made themselves more unpopular with the Iraqi population. More and more Iraqis will cease to stand aside to see their relatives being slaughtered in this dirty war. What else can they do?

The truth is that the United States cannot win this war. The US Empire is overstretching itself. The economic motives for entering Iraq in the first place are not paying off. Instead they see themselves more and more trapped in a Catch 22. They cannot simply leave Iraq because that would go against their economic and strategic interests. On the other hand, the more they crush the resistance by turning Iraqi cities to dust, the bigger the resistance grows. These elemental truths won't remain hidden forever to the American public. There is a limit to the extent rulers can fool the people. Once these facts grip the consciousness of ordinary working people in America and elsewhere, things will move at a fast pace.

Marxists and the conflict in the Ukraine

Both sides are reactionary! Fight for a workers' alternative!

by Fred Weston

THE SITUATION in the Ukraine is extremely tense. Viktor Yanukovich was declared the winner in Sunday's presidential second round elections. He is seen by all as the pro-Moscow man. Viktor Yushchenko, the openly pro-Western candidate, has challenged the results. It seems clear that significant levels of fraud may have taken place in the elections.

It is an indication of the position that the Ukraine occupies that the major candidates in the presidential elections are seen as either pro-Russian or pro-Western. As the BBC has reported "it is seen as an east-west showdown". This reveals the weakness of the ruling elite in the Ukraine. It cannot follow an independent road of development and becomes a mere pawn in the struggle between stronger powers. Thus within the ruling circles there is a conflict over which way the country should turn: either build closer links with Russia or openly espouse the West. This is also reflected in the geographic spread of support for the two candidates, with the East leaning towards Russia and the West towards the European Union and the USA.

We have to say clearly that neither Russia nor the West can offer a solution to the problems of the Ukrainian workers. The choice is between two forms of capitalism, neither of which can offer long-term solutions to the people of the Ukraine. Both sides are trying to get control over the Ukraine's economy. But there is more to it than mere economics. The Ukraine is extremely important from a strategic point of view.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Ukraine broke away and declared independence. At that time Russia was extremely weakened by those events, but since then it has been trying to rebuild its spheres of influence. That is why Putin gave his full support to Viktor Yanukovich against the opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko.

Since 1991 the European Union and NATO have absorbed new members,

such as the former Soviet Republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, bringing their sphere of influence right up to Russia's borders. Another - Georgia - now has a pro-American government. Further east, Kyrgyzstan, now hosts a US military base. In this situation Russia feels encircled and vulnerable. The Kremlin is desperately trying to roll back this process.

The Ukraine is a key element in Putin's plans to widen and strengthen Russia's international position. The Joint Economic Space Treaty signed by Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine is part of this project. According to the treaty national governments would delegate some of their powers to a body somewhat like the European Commission. Yanukovich backs this plan to the hilt, while Yushchenko would resist this as it implies clearly supporting a wing of the Ukraine bourgeoisie which has close links to the Russian oligarchs and to the Russian regime. For Russia to lose its influence over the Ukraine would have serious political consequences for Putin.

Defender of Democracy?

At the moment Yushchenko is being presented by the media as the man who defends genuine democracy and who would lead the people of the Ukraine to wealth and prosperity. But if we look at his track record a different picture emerges. In the past he was far from being an audacious leader of the masses. He was very careful in his moves and was seen as a loyal technocrat. He trained as an accountant, and in 1993 he became head of the national bank of the Ukraine.

Leonid Kuchma became president of the Ukraine in 1994 and was re-elected in November 1999. Kuchma was seen in the west as an obstacle to the "liberalisation" of the economy. They were constantly complaining that the process was too slow and were demanding that the process be speeded up.

Yushchenko loyally served in President Kuchma's government and in 1998 Yushchenko was appointed Ukrainian prime minister. In that period he gained popularity among western capitalist circles for his efforts to speed up the process of privatisation of Ukraine's state owned assets. In this he was in constant conflict with other members of the government.

We have to remember that the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the consequent return to capitalism was an absolute disaster for the Ukraine, as for most of the former Soviet Republics. After Russia, the Ukraine was the second most important Republic in economic terms. It provided more than one quarter of Soviet agricultural production. Its heavy industry and raw materials were a key component in the overall development of the former USSR. Now, however, the Ukraine depends heavily on imports of energy, especially natural gas.

After 1991, the Ukrainian Government introduced a legal framework for privatisation, but the process was slow as there was strong resistance among important layers of the bureaucracy. By 1999 production levels had fallen to less than 40% of what they had been in 1991. There was hyperinflation in late 1993.

There was also a growing economic polarisation of society. By 2003 the percentage of the population living below the poverty line had reached 29%. But a minority at the other end of the spectrum was enriching itself. The poorest 10% of the population only consumes 3.7% of national wealth, while the richest 10% consumes 23.2%. Many workers were receiving their wages with long delays. The same was true of the pensioners.

But after almost a decade of economic decline, the Ukrainian economy started to revive in 2000 with an annual growth rate of 6%. This was the first growth since 1991! In 2001 there was a further growth of 9%, and it has contin-

ued to grow since then. Salaries and pensions started to be paid on time. This year growth is expected to be around 12.5%.

It must be said however that all this is also leading to inflationary pressures. It already stands at around 11%, and the National Bank of Ukraine has had to raise interest rates from 8% to 9% and whoever takes over now will be forced to introduce even tighter monetary policies. This, combined with economic slowdown on a world scale, will have an impact on the Ukrainian economy and will dash the hopes of many that finally the country is facing economic prosperity. This will have an effect on the political scenario as well, as millions of Ukrainians will lose any illusions they may now have in the present opposition.

As *The Economist* recently said, "Regardless of the electoral outcome, economic and political reforms are likely to proceed more quickly with the departure of the president, Leonid Kuchma." This shows the cynicism of the western bourgeois, but it also reveals how thin the line is that divides the opposition from the Kuchma regime. As we have said, it is a question of tempo, of the speed of the process - not the direction. Whoever will govern will carry out fundamentally similar policies. Yushchenko is also promising the impossible. In a country of just under 50 million he has promised to create five million jobs. Capitalist Ukraine cannot provide these jobs. But this is the music of the future.

For now Yushchenko has benefited from this economic revival. He was seen as being partly responsible for it when he served as prime minister under President Kuchma. The more western

inclined liberal opposition wanted him as their leader but he refused. Eventually he came into conflict with Kuchma and in 2001 he was dismissed as prime minister. Yushchenko had linked up with Western business interests. But Kuchma had his power base in the industrial groups of eastern Ukraine, and Western interests were losing out to the Russian and local oligarchs. The main trading partner of the Ukraine is still Russia, with 33% of its imports coming from its neighbour and over 17% of its exports going there. Although, it is also true that a large part of its imports now come from the European Union, something which is reflected in the present conflict.

That explains why Yushchenko moved into opposition. It has nothing to do with democracy. It is about who is to get the spoils from the process of privatisation that started after 1991. It is a conflict between two different capitalist camps. It was in this scenario that Yushchenko decided to accept the offer to become leader of the opposition and thus he became head of the "Our Ukraine" bloc.

After such a long and deep decline in the economy a revival at some point was inevitable. Yushchenko was

simply in the right place at the right time.

He is now the man the West is backing, and they are doing it for a very concrete reason. Through him they hope to break the power of the Russian backed oligarchs, to get greater control over the economy and to pull the Ukraine under their sphere of influence.

Yushchenko says he is pro-western and for the free-market and he would also seek membership of the EU and NATO. But it is a myth that the people he is fighting are totally opposed to this. Let us remember that the Ukraine has taken part in Nato's "Partnership for Peace" programme and has also declared membership of the EU to be a strategic objective. As far back as 2002 it declared that its intention was to abandon neutrality and apply for NATO membership. Thus Kuchma also has been pushing in this direction. The difference is one of tempo, not of direction.

Total control

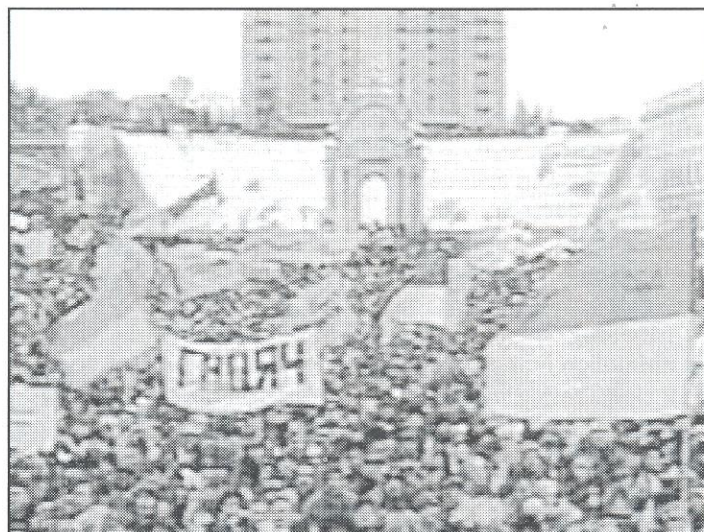
However, the reaction of NATO was interesting. Although it welcomed this turn, it added that further political, economic and military reforms were needed before any such process

could go ahead. This shows that they are not yet convinced that Russia's hold on the Ukraine has been broken. They want total submission of the Ukrainian ruling elite to the whims of western imperialism. And yet the Ukrainian authorities have already shown their willingness to help the imperialists, in particular the US imperialists. They have sent over 1500 troops to Iraq as part of the force led by Poland, a NATO member. They have also sent troops to Kosovo and Afghanistan. But it isn't quite enough! The imperialists want total control over the Ukraine and to further isolate Russia.

This brings us to the present situation. In the first round of the recent elections Yushchenko received 39.87% of the votes, slightly more than Yanukovich's 39.32%. All opinion polls indicated that Yushchenko would win in the second round. But the country's electoral commission announced that Yanukovich had won by a margin of three percentage points, with 49.4% to Mr Yushchenko's 46.7%.

This immediately led to mass protests reminiscent of what we have seen in Eastern European countries in the past years. According to some reports up to 200,000 Ukrainians have been protesting outside the parliament building and the number seems to be growing.

The capital, Kiev, is a strong base of support for Yushchenko. It reminds one of the events in Moscow in 1991. But Moscow did not represent the real mood of the whole of Russian society, as was revealed by later events. Today Kiev is probably one of the places that has benefited most from the introduction of capitalism. It will have a high concentration of the petit bourgeois elements, and these will be a



Ukraine

significant part of those who are demonstrating now. They believe they have something to gain from a speed up in the process of privatisation and consolidation of capitalism.

These demonstrations do not represent anything progressive, and even less do they represent the real interests of the Ukrainian workers. The country is in fact divided. A significant minority of the population are Russians or use Russian as their first language and are therefore more inclined to support closer links to Russia. Yanukovich in spite of everything still received significant support, especially in the east. Left-wing voters are in fact concentrated in the eastern Russian-speaking regions, where people fear the disruption of economic links and communication between Ukraine and Russia. In fact there have been reports of protests in the east against the opposition. Therefore it is not a clear-cut situation.

What happens next depends on many factors. How big will the movement become? That cannot be predicted. There have been some rumours of a possible general strike taking place. If this were true then it would be an important element in deciding the outcome of the present conflict. The end of Milosevic, after all, was sealed by the movement of the miners in particular. But so far we have not seen any of this in the Ukraine.

Another important factor is how the Ukraine's security forces will move. On Monday, they seemed to be ready to put down the demonstrations "quickly and firmly". Last year Shevardnadze in Georgia was hoping for similar help, but was then forced to concede defeat. After all, what is being posed here is not a fundamental change of

regime. Whoever comes to power will follow the capitalist road.

Yushchenko has appealed to the police and the army to join the protest movement and not fire on their own people. For now, the reports are that significant numbers of troops are being sent into Kiev in preparation for a showdown. Contradictory messages have been coming from the different sections of the security forces, some even declaring neutrality. In such a scenario it would only need a small force to tip the balance, as occurred in Russia in 1991.

Russia is an important element in the equation. Putin's first reaction to the election was to declare that it had been "fair", a clear message to the West that Russia is going to defend its interests in the Ukraine. The last thing Putin wants is a Georgian scenario.

Hypocrisy of Imperialism

Meanwhile western imperialism is mounting big pressure for the opposition to be declared the winners. One example is that of Senator Richard Lugar, a Republican sent by President George Bush to monitor the Ukrainian elections. He has accused the Ukrainian authorities of supporting a "concerted and forceful programme of election-day fraud and abuse". The White House is now talking of imposing punitive measures against the Ukraine if the abuses are not investigated. The Republicans should know a thing or two about this as they seem to be experts in it themselves. The hypocrisy of these people is limitless.

The outcome of the present situation in the Ukraine is not clear. Yesterday the opposition seemed to be prepared to "negotiate", as President Kuchma had called for talks to try and resolve

the crisis. But the latest statements of opposition leaders is that, "the only thing to negotiate with the authorities is the transfer of power."

There are different ways in which the outgoing government could concede defeat. The Agrarian Party is allied with the outgoing government of Yanukovich, but some think it could decide to place its MPs at the disposal of Yushchenko. The courts could also intervene. How they swing depends on the real balance of forces on the ground.

In Georgia we know how things went. But in Azerbaijan and Armenia there were also similar situations last year. In Azerbaijan, there was rioting on the streets after similar election results, but the security forces simply moved in and violently crushed them. In Armenia, after other alleged electoral fraud the people simply saw no way out and accepted the situation.

In all these countries the choice was not one between pro-capitalists and genuine workers' parties. The choice was always between different capitalist interests. Therefore what should be the position of genuine socialists in such a situation?

We must turn to the working class and explain that we cannot support either side in this conflict. Whichever of them comes out on top they will carry out policies against the working class. They will continue to dismantle the old welfare state; they will attack pensions, social security, healthcare, education and so on. They will work to enrich a minority on the backs of the working class.

The choice for Ukrainian workers cannot be between Russian imperialism and Western imperialism. There is nothing progressive in either side. They are both enemies of the working class. Today some layers of Ukrainian

society may have illusions in Yushchenko and the opposition he leads. But if he comes to power they will learn a bitter lesson. As quickly as he has become popular he can become extremely unpopular. Real life experience will teach.

What the workers of the Ukraine need is a genuine political voice of their own. There are several parties that emanate from the old Soviet Communist Party, the main one being the Ukrainian Communist Party. This is one of the main opposition parties, but in the last few years it has lost significant support among its working class base in the industrial regions of the country. This is because it has not systematically opposed the government. In particular it has not put up a serious fight against the policies of privatisation. If it had steadfastly defended the programme of Lenin it would be growing and becoming the real "opposition" in the country today.

Workers' organisations

There must be many workers in the Ukraine who are asking themselves what can they do in this situation. The answer is to build up the organisations of the working class. Strengthen the unions, for they will be needed in the next period to fight whoever will be in power. Reclaim the Communist Party and all of the left forces to a genuine programme of defence of workers' interests. If the Communist Party were genuinely Communist there would not be such levels of confusion among the Ukrainian workers.

The present situation will be merely one part in an overall process in which the Ukrainian workers will learn that they can trust none of these politicians and that they must take control of their own destiny. ●

Prosecutor investigating anti-Chavez coup killed in terrorist attack

by Jorge Martin

THE EXPLOSION of two bombs in his car took the life of 38-year old State Prosecutor Danilo Anderson, late on Thursday night in Caracas, Venezuela. The terrorist attack took place at 11.50 pm in Los Chaguaramos, in south east Caracas, where Danilo Anderson was coming away from evening classes he was attending at the University.

As State Prosecutor Danilo Anderson had waged a tireless struggle to get the leaders of the opposition prosecuted for the crimes they have committed and particularly for the military coup they organised on April 11th 2002.

In August 2002, Venezuela's Supreme Court ruled that in Venezuela there had been no coup d'état. As amazing as this ruling can seem, the Court decided that there had instead been a "vacuum of power", because Chavez had "resigned" (in reality he had given himself up when the coup organisers threatened to bomb the presidential Palace!), and that this "vacuum" had to be filled somehow and... Pedro Carmona happened to pass by and filled the vacuum of power! This surreal ruling prevented any action from being taken against those involved in the military coup for two years. Its main public figure, Pedro Carmona, was put under house arrest from which he fled to a comfortable exile in Colombia and Miami, and from where he has continued to pull the strings of the reactionary conspiracy to remove Chavez from power and put an end to

Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution.

In spite of the scandalous ruling of the Supreme Court, recently Danilo Anderson had started a number of legal cases to bring the opposition leaders responsible for the coup before the courts. At the end of October he presented charges of conspiracy to commit homicide against former Caracas Mayor Alfredo Pena, Metropolitan Police (PM) Commander Lazaro Forero and Public Security secretary Henry Vivas, "for the (eve of the coup d'état) events of April 11, 2002, in which 20 people died and 87 were injured on the Avenida Baralt." None of them turned up to face the charges and the judge issued arrest warrants against Pena and the others and also orders preventing the three of them from leaving the country.

He was also working closely in the case against the SUMATE directors, for receiving money from the US National Endowment for Democracy and plotting to overthrow Chavez.

At the same time Anderson presented charges for conspiracy and civil rebellion against the 400 people who were present at the swearing in ceremony of coup installed "president" Pedro Carmona (popularly known as Pedro "the brief" since his coup collapsed in less than 48 hours, defeated by the mass mobilisation of the people of Venezuela). Danilo used the attendance book for that ceremony, which took place on April

12, 2002, to cite everybody who had signed it as part of the conspiracy. This list reads like a "who's who" of Venezuela's oligarchy. They were all there: the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the owners of the media, industry and banks, the corrupt and un-elected leadership of the CTV trade unions, etc.

Danilo Anderson's investigation represented a severe blow against Venezuela's oligarchy and was a serious attempt to put an end to impunity for those who have tried by all means (legal and illegal) to put an end to Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution. His investigations mean that all those leaders of Venezuela's reactionary opposition who are now pretending to be nice and democratic would be exposed. This is the case for instance with the current leader of Fedecamaras, Albis Munoz, the owners of the main private media outlets, the current leaders of the CTV, etc. As we have argued for a long time, these people should be in jail, and should not walk free and be left to continue to organise conspiracies to put an end to the revolution.

The death of Anderson clearly benefits all these people. Because of the nature of his investigations, Danilo had already been the object of all sorts of threats. He was prominently displayed by the extremely reactionary Reconocelos web site which aims to "expose" leaders and activists of the Bolivarian revolution. Danilo was also attacked by two opposition supporters while shopping in the well-known Sambil mall in October.

A section of the Venezuelan opposition, having been defeated on three separate occasions in their attempts to topple Chavez, has increasingly resorted to death threats. Former president Carlos Andres Perez declared openly that Chavez should be "killed like a dog".

It is quite clear from their track record that the Venezuelan oligarchy will not stop at anything in their attempts to overthrow the Chavez government, put an end to the revolutionary movement of the masses and maintain their privileges. The revolutionary movement, which has proven on numerous occasions that it has the overwhelming support of the majority of the Venezuelan people, should act accordingly.

The only way to defend the revolution is by going on the offensive and wresting from the oligarchy all the levers of power that they still have. The property of all those involved in the April coup should be confiscated and put under the democratic control of the workers and the people of Venezuela. Otherwise they will continue to use their positions of power in the economy, within the judiciary, in the media, etc. to conspire to drown the revolutionary movement in blood.

● From the Hands Off Venezuela Campaign we offer once again our support to the Bolivarian revolution.

**En Venezuela,
no pasaran!**

Enthusiasm greets Chavez in Madrid

by Emilia Lucena, *El Militante* in Madrid

IT IS five o'clock. The autumn sun bathes the street on our way to the headquarters of the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) in Madrid. We arrive two hours early and 300 people are already queuing to get into the meeting hall. President Hugo Chavez which is scheduled for 7 pm.

There is chaos as more and more people arrive. The stewards are overwhelmed, some surprised by the enormous expectation. The police are bemused. One of them tries to show he is in charge, and demonstrates the usual arrogant and contemptuous attitude of the police. Nobody pays any notice. During the two hour wait, the queue sings and shouts slogans in defence of the Venezuelan revolution and its president.

It is nearly 7pm when the doors open, and the human tide is allowed in, in groups of five. We must go through a metal detector. It is just four days since the State Prosecutor investigating those involved in the April 11 coup was assassinated in a terrorist attack carried out by the forces of reaction. Nobody complains. We all understand the need to take all necessary security measures. We are aware that the international counter-revolution has set its sights on Chavez.

As the hall fills up slogans and songs punctuate the air. We are shown a

video of the revolution. Singers and musicians entertain us the people before Chavez's arrival. keen to show their solidarity and sympathy for the revolution.

But then a terrible moment. It is announced the president will not come. It is half past eight. The audience is stunned. Disillusionment runs through us all, but it is agreed that the meeting will continue. We want to show our support for the revolution, but the mood has changed from one of enthusiasm to a disheartened one.

William Lara, the former president of the Venezuelan National Assembly and Member of Parliament, addresses the audience. However his speech does not connect. He says that Venezuela is a paradise for investment for Spanish businesses. There is a stunned, and a little bit of an angry silence. These are the same businesses that exploit us day in day out. These are the same businesses that hire young people and immigrant workers as cheap labour without rights, and demand more flexibility for wages and working conditions! We know they are not going to create wealth in Venezuela, in the same way they do not create wealth for the people here. William Lara continues with his speech and at the end adds, like an afterthought, that this investment will not



have the same exploitive character as in the past. That their profits come from our exploitation? Does he realize that they will not invest a single cent unless they have a firm guarantee that they will recover their investment tenfold by keeping the majority of the population in poverty? While Lara speaks a rumour makes the rounds: "Chavez is coming", first it is just in the front rows, then moves throughout the hall. Nobody pays much attention to anything apart from whether Chavez is coming or not. At the end a powerful voice from the audience says: "Chavez is coming". There is a spontaneous ovation. The mood is cheerful again. The musicians perform. We all sing along. Later we found out what had happened. A group of people, led by Manolo Espinar of the Haydee Santamaria organisationa and JM Municio from El Militante, had gone to the Circulo de Bellas Artes, where Chavez was meeting a group of intellectuals and actors, and explained to him that 1500 workers and youth were waiting for him in the CCOO meeting hall. When Chavez found out we were waiting, he did not

hesitate: "I am going over there, even if it is just to give a 15 minute greeting". As he himself said later: "thank you, you have rescued me from the intellectuals to bring me to the workers".

The hours go by and he still does not arrive. The banners in the hall still speak solidarity from the walls. Amongst them is one from *El Militante* and the Sindicato de Estudiantes (Spanish Students Union) which reads: "Venepal: nationalization under workers control".

Nobody leaves. Now and then the news is confirmed: despite the delay, Chavez is coming. Messages of support are read to the meeting. Including one from the Sindicato de Estudiantes, which was interrupted by ovations twice. In between the songs, others are read: from the Communist Party, the Red Current, *El Militante*, the international Hands Off Venezuela Campaign. We sing the Internationale. The whole room has raised fists as The Internationale comes out of our throats like the shout of revolutionary struggle, solidarity and proletarian internationalism.

"The working class must be the vanguard of the revolution"

At last, at 10:30 pm, after waiting for more than 5 hours, Chavez arrives! The enthusiasm is overwhelming. There is a standing ovation and raised fists as we greet him.

He is on stage, obviously tired, but also moved by the greeting and the enthusiasm overflowing the hall. He apologises for the delay, and starts by reciting a poem by Spanish revolutionary poet Garcia Lorca.

He talks about the revolution, the oppressed, the oligarchy and imperialism which organised the coup in April 2002, how he thought he was going to be shot dead, and how the soldiers, arms in hand, avoided it. "There, facing the death squad, I thought of Che (...)" He explains how thousands and thousands of workers, the poor, surrounded the Miraflores Palace defending the revolution. "They tried once and failed, and if they tried again they would fail again, because in Venezuela the arms are in the hands of the soldiers, who are part of the people". He mentions the coup against Allende: "the Chilean revolution failed because it was a peaceful and unarmed revolution. The Bolivarian revolution is peaceful... but armed". The audience begins to shout, fists raised again, "the people, armed, will never be smashed" ("el pueblo armado, jamás será aplastado").

Now he talks about the money from [state oil company] PDVSA, which is being used for social programs, and he mentions Cuba and the Cuban doctors. There is another standing ovation and shouts of "Chavez, Fidel y el Che".

He mentions the shipyard workers fighting for months against the closure

of the shipyards. The whole audience shouts, "The shipyards will not be closed down!" He talks about the democratic revolution in Venezuela, of how the people support the revolution. He talks of the peoples of Latin America. "If Bolivar lived today, he would be a socialist". He also mentions Marx. Incidentally, on his way in, he stopped to browse at the bookstall of *El Militante*. When he saw Alan Woods' (*Socialist Appeal's* editor) books he said: "Alan Woods. He is a friend of mine". We tried to give him the books he has chosen as a present, amongst them several by Alan Woods, Ted Grant and Trotsky, but he insists he wants to pay for them. At the end he accepts Alan Woods' *Bolshevism, the road to revolution* as a gift.

He talks about the need for unity. "There is a socialist international and a Christian Democratic international. Why can't we form a democratic and revolutionary international? Unite all the oppressed peoples, the workers, the indigenous peoples ...". There is another standing ovation. He develops the idea: "the working class must be the vanguard of the revolution."



Chavez at *El Militante* bookstall

It should not only concern itself with immediate or wage demands, which are necessary and must be fought for, but it must also look beyond, to the transformation of society as a whole". The enthusiasm is overwhelming. "Long live the working class", and "the working class has no borders" are slogans shouted by the whole audience as one.

Chavez has had a packed day. He was at the Complutense University, where the students received him with enthusiasm, surpassing all expectations. He met with Zapatero, with artists and intellectuals in

the Circulo de Bellas Artes, and then. Today the media complain about Chavez because he snubbed a meeting with 200 "business leaders".

It is past 11:30. Finally he says goodbye. As he leaves the hall, as when he came in, there is a standing ovation. We are all shouting, "the revolution forward, forward, and those who do not like it, will have to stand it."

As always, everywhere he goes, this enthusiasm is also expressed in the desire to get close to him, to greet him personally. Despite the bodyguards and security measures, when he comes out he is surrounded by a sea of hands showing their solidarity and support for the Venezuelan revolution. He is extremely polite, tactful and educated, and in an impossible attempt, he tries to greet and talk to all those who come close to him. He understands this show of solidarity reflects the expression of workers, through him, to the workers and the oppressed in Venezuela, the hopes that their revolution has raised amongst workers and youth around the world. ●

Chavez speaking to workers



What make us human?

Questions raised by the discovery of Homo Floresiensis

by Espe Espigares

THE DISCOVERY of the remains of an unknown prehistoric human on a small island near Indonesia has shaken the scientific community. This has been considered one of the most important event in paleo-anthropology for decades. The bones of seven different individuals were found in the Liang Bua cave of Flores Island, with unique characteristics classifying it as a new species of human: Homo Floresiensis. This hominid lived between 85,000 and 13,000 years ago, was 3 feet tall, had a brain smaller than that of a chimp and was able to build quite sophisticated tools.

Homo Floresiensis appears to be a descendant of Homo Erectus (which appeared some 1.8 million years ago) that dwarfed once it got to the island. This phenomena, called "island dwarfing", has been seen several times. Species that become extremely isolated can dwarf due to a combination of lack of high calorie food and a lack of predators. A rabbit size animal in such conditions would have the most energy efficient size. Big animals tend to dwarf and small animals tend to get bigger in order to adapt to this isolated environment, as the Stegosaurs did, which were primitive dwarfed elephants.

The fact that Homo Floresiensis appeared 85,000 years ago, and bones have been discovered

dating from 13,000 years ago, confirms that several species of humans shared the planet at the same time. This is an idea now accepted in the scientific community, but articles on Homo Floresiensis in newspapers seem reluctant to accept it. It is proven without doubt that Homo Sapiens and Neanderthals lived in Europe at the same time. Whilst this is presented as an exception to the rule, it is likely that different species of hominids existed at the same time.

Evolution is not a linear and gradual matter. Evolution works in a dialectical way in which for long periods nothing much seems to change. During these periods there are quantitative changes taking place, and these quantitative changes accumulate. These longer periods are interspersed with shorter periods where quantity changes into quality, where the accumulated quantitative changes transform into massive qualitative changes, shaking the old arrangement of the species.

Evolution is not a linear process in which less developed species kindly disappear leaving room for the most advanced ones. It is not a step-by-step process of gradual evolution, but proceeds dialectically with periods of changes and development overlapping one another. Paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould in his

1980 work "A Quahog is a Quahog", *The Panda's Thumb* describes it in this way: "Evolution is a theory of organic change, but it does not imply, as many people assume, that ceaseless flux is the irreducible state of nature and that structure is but a temporary incarnation of the moment. Change is more often a rapid transition between stable states than a continuous transformation at slow and steady rates." It would be absurd to think that Neanderthals simply disappeared over the course of one day or just a few years in order to clear the way for Homo Sapiens.

Scientists are puzzled by Homo Floresiensis ability to make tools having such a small brain. This is another example of anti-dialectical thinking. Size does not always matter. The proportion of brain size in relation to the body is more important than the size itself. Quality is more important than quantity. The fact that Homo Floresiensis had the capacity to make tools should not be surprising. Its brain may have been smaller than that of other tool-making hominids but its structure is sophisticated enough to make tools. Homo Floresiensis is a descendant of Homo Erectus, who was able to make tools. That Homo Floresiensis evolved by reducing its body size to adapt to the environment of an isolated island, doesn't mean it lost brain capacity in the process.

What makes us human?

Such a question can only be answered correctly from a dialectical point of view. On the one hand there is a school of thought that describes Homo Sapiens as the most intelligent and

clever species of hominid, distinct from all of the other species. The abilities of early Homo Sapiens are over-estimated and exaggerated while the abilities and intelligence of all other hominids are often under-estimated. On the other extreme you have scientists who exaggerate the abilities of primates.

The study of apes, with whom we share 98% of genetic code, is important but has its limitations.

Language is an important difference. But is it exclusive to humans? Studies show that monkeys and other animals can use sounds to communicate to each other. Animals have sophisticated ways of sharing information. Bees can communicate to each other the exact position of where flowers are to collect pollen. But they are unable to compare this information with the location of flowers on previous days. Monkeys use different sounds to warn each other about dangers. The sounds can be quite specific, being different when danger comes from above (to which monkeys will react by looking up and hiding) or from below (to which they will react by climbing and hiding in the trees). But this cannot be considered a language of monkeys because other animals from completely different species can "understand" these sounds and act accordingly to protect themselves. It is certainly a method of communication, but not language.

Monkeys cannot learn to speak - their brain is not developed enough.

Language requires a level of abstract thought they do not possess, and also it is physically impossible, because they lack the necessary vocal apparatus. Our ancestors were able to develop lan-

guage by the lowering of the larynx in a way that enlarges the resonance chamber in the throat and mouth, enabling us to produce a range of sounds well beyond the capabilities of apes.

Learning is also an important characteristic that makes us human. Most animals can also learn, but can animals teach? No. They learn mostly by imitation. Animals can facilitate learning to their offspring, for example slowing down what they are doing so it is easier for their young to pick up the technique. However, this is not teaching but facilitating learning.

Making tools

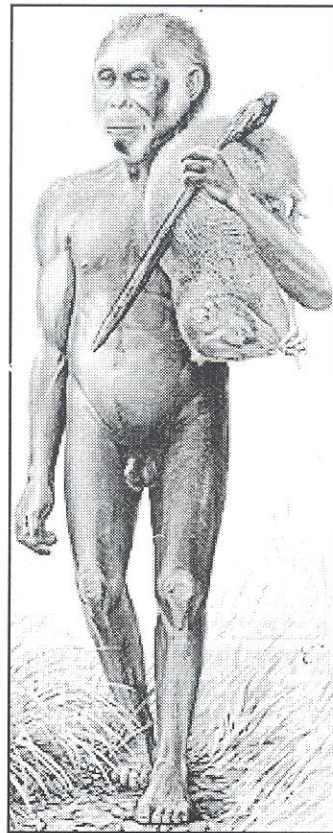
Most important is the ability to create tools. There are some examples of alleged tool making by monkeys. Some monkeys chew leaves to create a sponge to get to hard to reach areas to soak water to drink or use sticks to get ants in a safe way. These tools are so rudimentary they cannot be considered as such. They are very different from the tools made by hominids. Chimps do not have the capacity for abstract thought that would allow them to make something more sophisticated. They are bound by the limits of their natural surroundings and are "using", not "making". Even if you consider chewing a leaf to use as a sponge a tool, what is clear is that these are never built before the moment in which they need them, and they forget about them the moment they finish the particular task. This can be more accurately described as using the environment than as creating tools.

Even so, in decades studying monkeys we have only found a few examples of monkeys using "tools". These examples are so

scarce they are anecdotal, while we have thousands of examples and ample evidence of tools made by hominids of all kinds, shapes, usefulness and sophistication.

It is the combination of all these things that make us human - language, the ability to teach, culture, and tool making. Some animals have what is a very embryonic or primitive version of some of these abilities, but the qualitative difference is more than relevant. What made us human, what made language, culture and complex learning a necessity was labour. Labour is a unique characteristic that we share with no other animal on the planet and this is the crucial difference that separates us from them. Through labour we are the only species that has been able to transform the environment and use it consciously for our own benefit. In the words of Engels: "the animal merely uses its environment, and brings about changes in it simply by its presence; man by his changes makes it serve his ends, masters it. This is the final, essential distinction between man and other animals, and once again it is labour that brings about this distinction." (*The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*)

The climate was the most important factor that forced life to evolve. From the very beginning evolution is a race to adapt to the environment. The retreat of glaciers created a dramatic change in climate which transformed the jungles of Africa (the cradle of humans) into savanna. All natural life had to adapt to this new environment and for early apes this meant they had to leave the trees and forests. In an open space an upright position was more advantageous allowing hominids to see



danger from a distance. This was the first stage in freeing the hands for labour, and the whole body had to adapt to this change.

The upright position had another major advantage: it allowed apes to walk longer distances. Again it was necessary to adapt the centre of gravity nearer to the trunk of the body. Freeing the hands was a major breakthrough because it allowed hominids to start building the tools needed to adapt to harsher environmental conditions. This labour developed the brain, which allowed us to build even more complicated tools. As the complexity of the tools grew, collaboration between different individuals and language became a necessity. Engels brilliantly describes this process: "the development of labour necessarily helped to bring the members of society closer together by increasing cases of mutual support and joint activity, and by making clear the advantage of this joint activity to each individual. In

short, men in the making arrived at the point where they had something to say to each other." (Ibid) This led to our mastering of nature.

This is the basis of Marxist philosophy: Materialism. In the study of the origins of humans and evolution this means that we have to analyse the objective conditions to understand the course of events. Humans evolved in a sophisticated way, not because they had been given the gift of reason, but because the material conditions demanded it. Reason and the capacity of abstract thought evolved from these material conditions.

The application of the method of Marxism, dialectical materialism, allowed Engels to draw the general lines of the evolution of man as early as in 1856 when there was very little fossil evidence to support it. In those days the most important trend in evolutionary theory was idealistic.

Consciously or unconsciously, we all have a philosophy which we use to analyse the world around us. If we do not consciously use a philosophy, we use the one of the dominant capitalist class, which is permeated by prejudices and idealism. This philosophy looks at events from the point of view of a class divided society and aims to justify the status quo. The most recent discoveries in all fields of scientific research have confirmed nature works in a dialectical way. Marxist philosophy, dialectical materialism, is the most advanced method of analysis available to us and a vital tool for workers to understand where we are and where we want to go but also where we came from. ●

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www.marxist.com

The best present - a socialist future

ON BEHALF of the editorial board of *Socialist Appeal*, I would like to wish all our sellers and readers a very Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year and best wishes for 2005.

Of course at this time of year it is traditional to give due homage to the gods of Visa and MasterCard as we all attempt to relieve the crisis of capitalism by raising the nation's collective personal debt. But this is just storing up problems for the future - both for us and for capitalism for that matter. So I would like to suggest a more constructive alternative... making a seasonal donation to the Socialist Appeal Fighting Fund.

Why? Well let's look at some facts. We are a labour movement publication run by and for workers. We have no rich backers, no dubious slush funds to fall back on, no income from advertising - just the income we get from sales and donations, from readers and supporters. We have kept the cost of our journal at just a quid since we started producing *Socialist Appeal* in 1992, 12 years ago. This is important so that the maximum number of people can buy and read our publication.

But the costs of production have risen: paper, ink, postage, rent, electricity and so on! We have to regularly service and effect repairs to our printing press - including a major repair last summer. The cash to meet these bills has to be found, month by month.

So our budgets are tight and our available income even tighter. Yet we have achieved a lot over the last year. Apart from the publication of the journal itself we have published a whole series of documents and leaflets on the important issues of the day, as well as the vast amount of stuff deposited, almost on a daily basis, on our websites. Some of this printed material has been printed on our new Duplo printer purchased in the summer and paid for by individual donations.

Our publishing arm has continued the task of producing socialist books to arm activists and class conscious workers and youth. At the end of 2003 we published a history of the British trade unions, 'In The Cause Of Labour' and this year we have started republishing important Marxist classics with Trotsky's 'My Life' and 'Permanent Revolution' being the first off the presses. We also launched our new subscription-only publication, the Marxist International Review, which has produced two issues to date. The importance of ideas and analysis cannot be overestimated.

Particular attention has been given to the question of the unfolding revolution in Venezuela. We have given full and active support to the Hands Off Venezuela campaign, recognising the importance of this struggle and

the need to explain what is happening and why. *Socialist Appeal* is above all an international and internationalist publication, dedicated to the unity of the workers of the world.

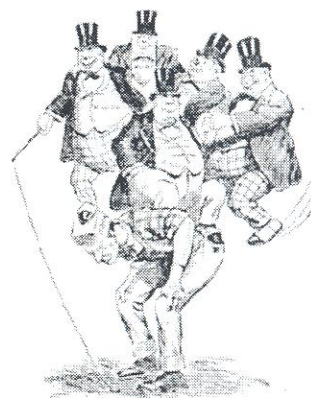
On all the important issues it is necessary to both inform and explain, providing a way forward for those entering struggle. 2005 will most likely be an election year - either Labour will win a third term, but under Blair and company, or the Tories will get in under Howard or maybe someone worse. Now we do not want the Tories back and support a Labour victory but the question of Blairism must be tackled. This must involve a fight inside the movement for the adoption of socialist ideas and a fighting workers leadership. The various promised alternatives to this task have produced nothing. Respect, the one-size fits all alternative, has got nowhere and is set to join the residents of the political graveyard alongside the SLP, Socialist Alliance and all the rest of the 'new dawns.'

The real fight cannot be avoided but requires political ideas and a fighting programme steered with the methods of Marxism. *Socialist Appeal* can play an important role in the process, building up the forces of socialism, but to do this we need your help.

We have launched a drive to raise £5000 over the Xmas period to ensure that we get the new year off to a flying start. We want to develop our resources and spread our ideas still further. So far we have got just over a £1000 in, so we have a month to get in £4000. It can be done if every reader and seller contributes. So please consider what you can give and rush it to us at PO Box 50525, London E14 6WG. Cheques etc should be made payable to *Socialist Appeal*.

Thanks in advance

Steve Jones





Hands off Venezuela Public Meeting

Wednesday 8th December at 7pm
Headland House, National Union of Journalists,
308-320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1

Hear: **Oscar Negrin**
from Caracas, Venezuela

Marxist International Review

Issue 2

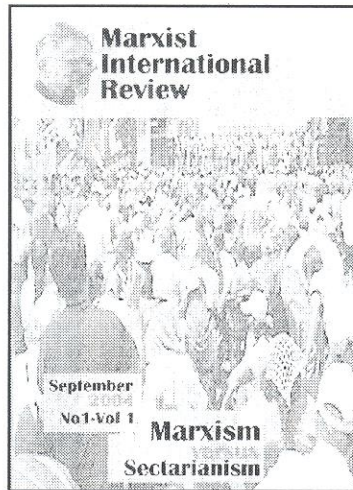
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noticeboard

December 2004

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Socialist Appeal Stands for:

✚ **For a Labour government with a bold socialist programme!** Labour must break with big business and Tory economic policies. Vote Labour and fight to reclaim the party.

✚ **A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.** £8.00 an hour as a step toward this goal, with no exemptions.

✚ **Full employment!** No redundancies. The right to a job or decent benefits. For a 32 hour week without loss of pay. No compulsory overtime. For voluntary retirement at 55 with a decent full pension for all.

✚ **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.

✚ **The repeal of all Tory anti-union laws.** Full employment rights for all from day one. For the right to strike, the right to union representation and collective bargaining.

Election of all trade union officials with the right of recall. No official to receive more than the wage of a skilled worker.

✚ **Action to protect our environment.** Only public ownership of the land, and major industries, petro-chemical enterprises, food companies, energy and transport, can form the basis of a genuine socialist approach to the environment.

✚ **A fully funded and fully comprehensive education system under local democratic control.** Keep big business out of our schools and colleges. Free access for all to further and higher education. Scrap tuition fees. No to student loans. For a living grant for all over 16 in education or training.

✚ **The outlawing of all forms of discrimination.** Equal pay

for equal work. Invest in quality childcare facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act.

✚ **The reversal of the Tories' cuts in the health service.** Abolish private health care. For a National Health Service, free to all at the point of need, based on the nationalisation of the big drug companies that squeeze their profits out of the health of working people.

✚ **Reclaim the Labour Party!** Defeat Blairism! Fight for Party democracy and socialist policies. For workers' MPs on workers' wages.

✚ **The abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.** Full economic powers for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, enabling them to introduce socialist measures in the interests of working people.

✚ **No to sectarianism.** For a Socialist United Ireland linked by a voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain.

✚ **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.

✚ **Socialist internationalism.** No to the bosses European Union. Yes to a socialist united states of Europe, as part of a world socialist federation.



Socialist Appeal

Marxist voice of the labour movement

British MPs condemn murder of Venezuelan prosecutor Danilo Anderson

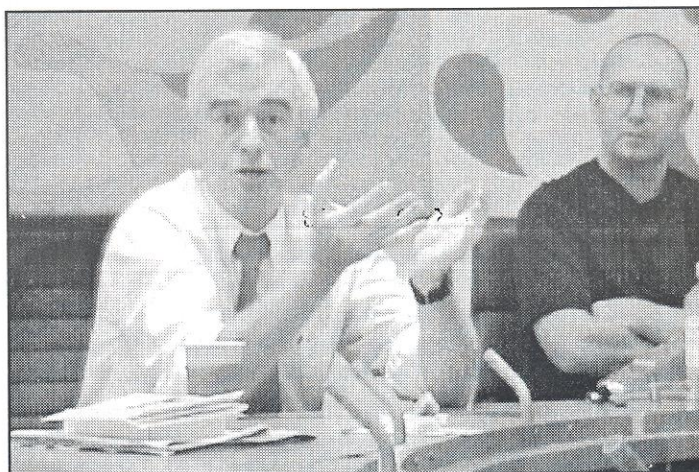
The left wing Labour Member of Parliament John McDonnell has tabled an Early Day Motion condemning the murder of Danilo Anderson, the Venezuelan prosecutor investigating the April 2002 military coup against president Chavez. John McDonnell has been a vocal supporter and collaborator of the Hands Off Venezuela campaign from the very beginning. The motion comes after another motion also moved by John McDonnell on November 17th (EDM 854), which also condemned US interference in Venezuela and its efforts to remove the democratically elected president Hugo Chavez. On the House of Commons web site you can see the full text of the November 17th motion and the list of thirty-two MPs who signed:

http://edm.ais.co.uk/weblink/html/motion.html/EDMI_SES=03/ref=854

The current EDM condemning the murder of Danilo Anderson is still open. This means that MPs can still add their name to it (at the moment of writing, 7 have done so). The motion (EDM 127) reads:

HANDS OFF VENEZUELA CAMPAIGN

That this House condemns the murder by a car bomb of Danilo Anderson, the leading prosecutor investigating the coup attempt in 2002 against President Chavez of Venezuela; expresses its concern that this crime is a further attempt to destabilise the country by those elements in Venezuela and elsewhere who refuse to respect the will of the Venezuelan people expressed in the referendum in August which gave overwhelming support to President Chavez; and congratulates the Hands Off Venezuela campaign for the work it is undertaking to support the people of Venezuela.



You can check whether your MP has signed or not (<http://edm.ais.co.uk/weblink/html/motion.html/ref=127>), and then ask them to do so if they have not already.

The motion correctly points to elements within the country and also elsewhere as responsible for the murder of Danilo Anderson. This is quite correct. In fact over the last few months there has been a consistent campaign in Miami, by opposition elements, openly calling for Chavez and other prominent figures of the revolutionary movement to be killed. The latest, but not the only, example of this was that of known TV presenter and prominent oppositionist Orlando Urdaneta. In an interview on Miami's Channel 22 TV station on October 25th, he said that "the way out of all of this is for this character [Chavez] to be eliminated". The interviewer asked how Chavez could be "eliminated" and Urdaneta specified: "easy, just one person with a rifle with a scope". In order not to leave any room for doubt he added: "if people are waiting for someone to give the order, I am giving it right now". These people, Venezuelan and Cuban reactionary oppositionists, are free to openly call for terrorist activities while in Miami protected by US visas. This, like the case of the Miami Five shows the hypocrisy of the US administration and their so-called "war on terror".

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