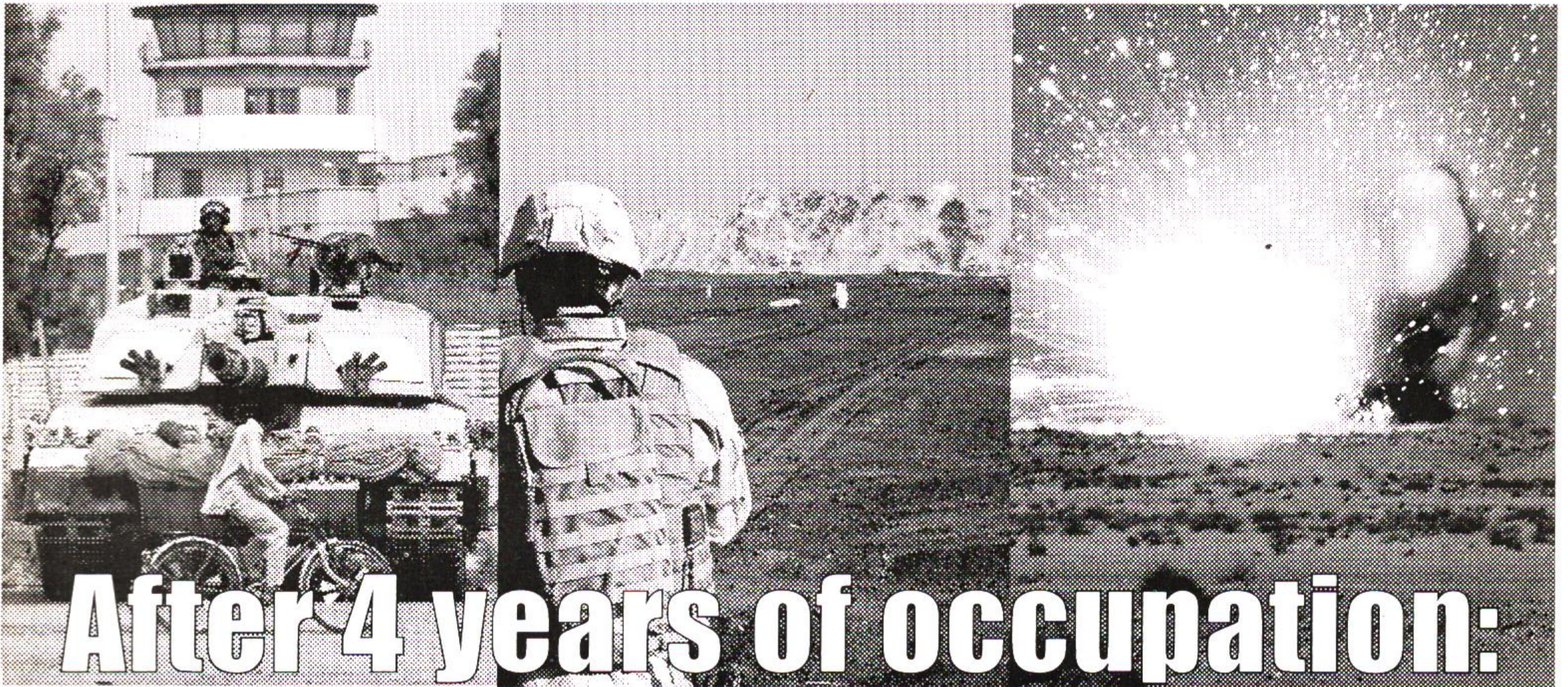


# Socialist Appeal

April 2007 issue 151

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DEAD IN IRAQ**

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**editor: Alan Woods**  
**PO Box 50525**  
**London, E14 6WG**  
**tel 020 7515 7675**  
**contact@socialist.net**  
**www.socialist.net**  
**www.marxist.com**  
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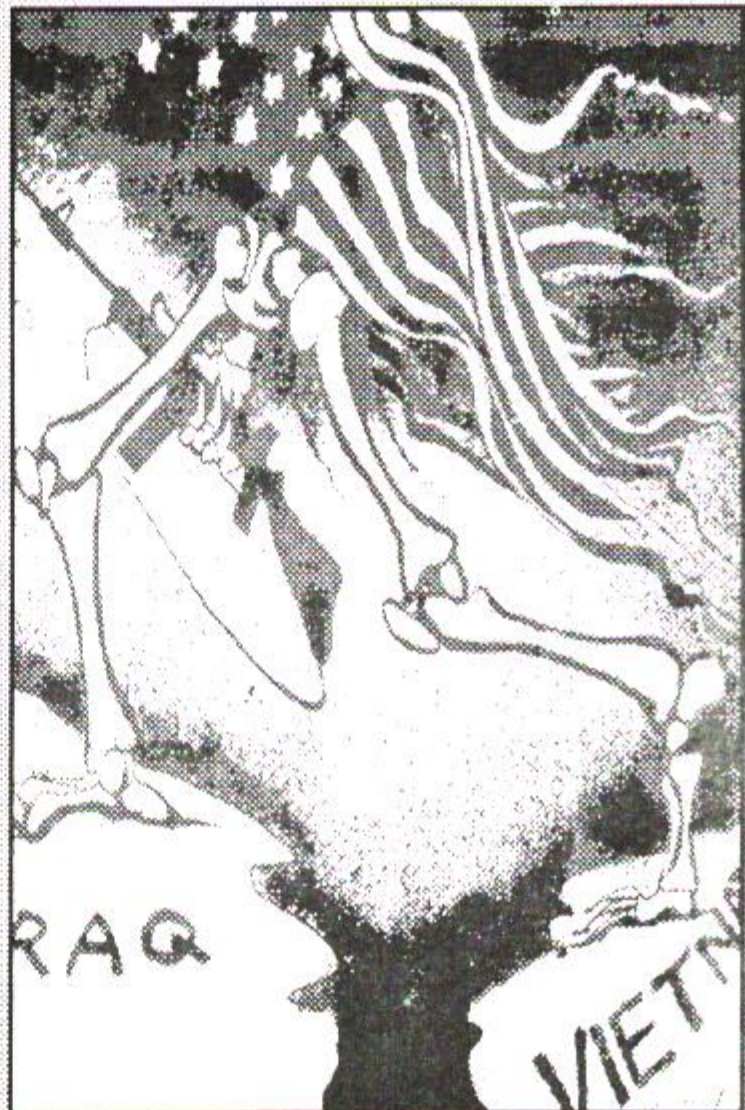
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**The Deadline for Issue 151 is March 17th**

# Blair's blood price legacy

ONE MILLION Iraqi men, women and children have been slaughtered since "shock and awe" was inflicted on their country in March 2003. This is the horrendous "blood price" which Blair said he was willing to pay for the "liberation" of Iraq.

This chilling figure, compiled by the Australian scientist Dr Gideon Polya, is a measure of the imperialist barbarism unleashed on Iraq. It has been the bloodiest conflict any British government has been engaged in since the Second World War.

As a consequence Iraq has descended into a hell-hole. Military occupation, sectarian strife, murder, violence, rape, widespread crime, as well as desperate fuel and water shortages, are now part of everyday life. The puppet government, faithfully carrying out the bidding of the US and their allies, is busy privatising the country's huge oil reserves, ready to hand them over to greedy western oil corporations.

## Pessimism

A recent survey carried out in Iraq revealed a horrendous picture of pessimism and desperation amongst the "liberated" population. Those who felt life under occupation was improving fell from 71% in 2005 to 38% today. Some 50% stated that their lives were worse than before the US-led invasion.

Significantly, Kadhim al-Jubouri, the man who led the crowd which toppled the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad four years ago, now states he regrets his actions. "The Americans are worse than the dictatorship. Every day is worse than the previous day."

Despite the despatch of some 30,000 extra troops by the Americans, the popular insurgency has become more than a match for the increasingly demoralised Coalition forces. The British are losing the war in Basra. Despite announcing troop reductions, Blair is now deploying heavy artillery in Basra, for the first time since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, in a desperate move to contain the hopeless situation.

Eddie Hancock, the father of a

British soldier recently killed in Iraq, branded Blair a liar who had betrayed the armed forces. "Our soldiers should be brought home now. They are dying for nothing," he said.

The financial cost of the Iraq campaign to British taxpayers now exceeds £5 billion and will be an additional £1 billion over the coming year. At the same time in Blair's Britain hospital wards are being closed, nurses' wages are cut and health workers sacked.

## Opposition

Millions of people opposed the Iraq war, as was seen in the anti-war demonstration of two million in London in March 2003. Today, four years on, this opposition has increased dramatically. A BBC poll published on the anniversary of the invasion, found that nearly 60% believed the US and UK were wrong to invade Iraq. Only 29% thought the conflict was justified.

More interestingly, it revealed that more than half the British population would not trust the government again if it said war was needed to protect national security. The Iraq war has also left Britons feeling less secure - only 5% said they felt the country was a safer place, with 55% saying they felt less safe.

Significantly, the poll revealed that the war is creating a massive political backlash. This issue could even decide the outcome of the next general election. Half of all respondents believed the war and its aftermath would be very or fairly important in making their mind up at the next general election. Of course, by this time Blair will have departed for rich pickings elsewhere. He hopes to have handed the poisoned chalice to his "appointed" successor Gordon Brown, who is also closely associated with the war.

If this is the case, Brown will be, as with the rest of the Blairites, an electoral liability. This was revealed in a new Guardian/ICM poll which shows that Brown would hand the Tories a 15-point lead if he was leading the party at the next election. Such a scenario would put Cameron into

Downing Street with a sizable majority. This is where the legacy of Blairism is leading us.

The alarming prospect of a new Tory government would not be due to increasing popularity for Toryism. Everything they stand for: privatization, tax cuts for the rich, tax breaks for big business, private education, private health care, etc. is opposed by the vast majority in one opinion poll after another. Such a victory could only arise from the disappointment and disillusionment of millions of ordinary working class voters, demoralized by New Labour, and who simply refused to vote. And who can blame them?

The only way to turn things around, after an early departure of Blair, would be to clear out the Blairites from the Labour Party entirely. They are inextricably linked to the interests of big business, which they have faithfully served over the past decade. They are the ones responsible for this mess. No doubt these creatures will attempt to blame the working class if the Tories are returned to power.

Only with a clean sweep and a complete renovation of the Labour Party can a real socialist alternative be offered to the working class. Only if the party bases itself upon a genuine socialist programme can we be sure to defeat the Tories. This means demanding that John McDonnell be allowed to stand in the election for Labour leader. Any attempt to impose Gordon Brown from above will be seen for the blatant manoeuvre that it is. It will create a storm of protest throughout the Labour movement.

The New Labour apparatchiks are attempting to avoid an election at all costs, as this would expose the pro-capitalist direction of the current bankrupt leadership. Such a manoeuvre must be defeated by the trade unions and the rank and file. The party must be transformed from a vehicle of Blairite careerism into a weapon that can fight for the socialist transformation of society. Only in this way can the millions of working people, let down and betrayed by New Labour, be re-enthused and involved not only in defeating the Tories but in fighting for a real socialist future. □

## Lost opportunities

by Michael Roberts

Chancellor Gordon Brown made a big song and dance about cutting income tax rates in his final budget. That summed up "New Labour". All they have done in ten years is try to ape the Conservatives in privatisation, farming out public services to private contractors, deregulating transport and boosting big business. Now Gordon makes a big noise about cutting taxes to "steal the Tories' thunder".

After the dust settled, it soon became clear that the income tax cuts were being taken back by increased tax rates for some of the poorest households while the richest income earners would benefit the most. And anyway, it was not being introduced until 2008!

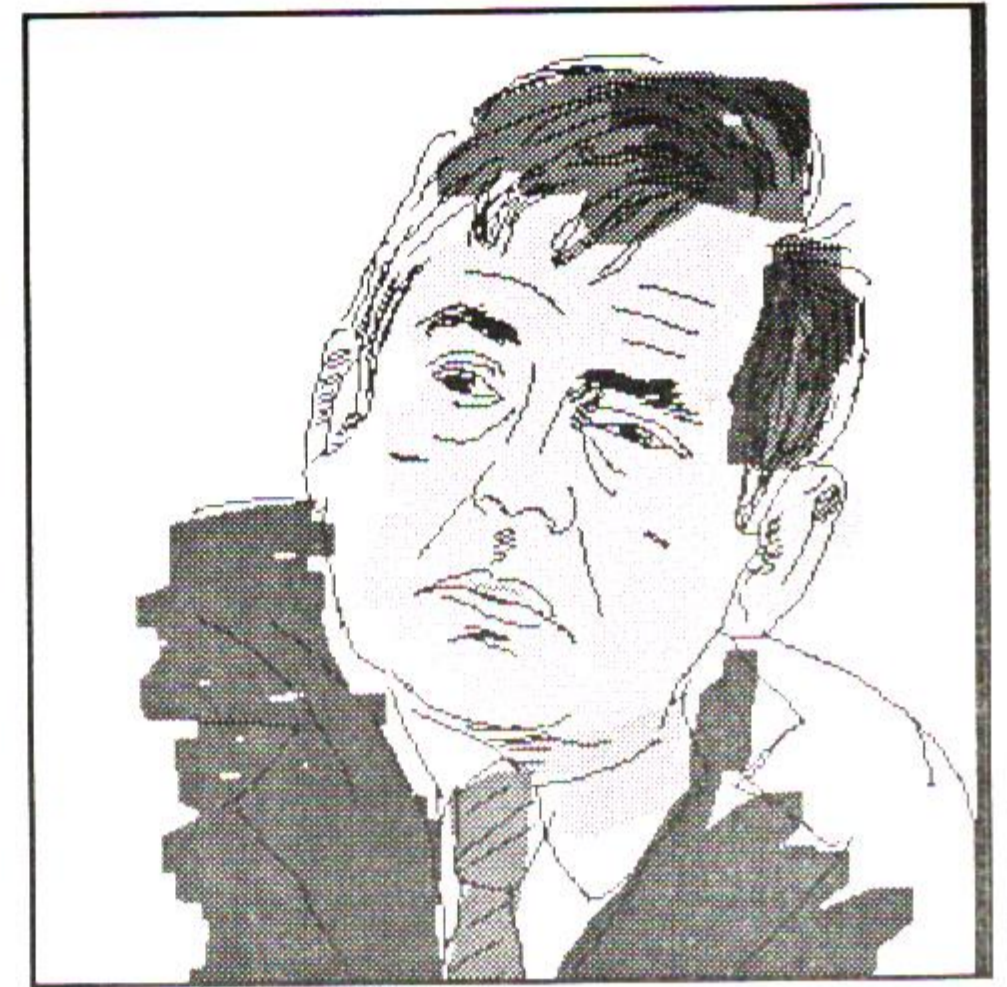
Less publicised, but very nice for big business, was the planned cut in corporation tax. The biggest and most profitable multinationals would pay less tax on their huge profits, while ironically, small businesses and self-employed (people who have set up businesses when losing their jobs in big business) received a tax rate hike!

Big business had been blackmailing the Chancellor by saying that companies would leave the UK for cheaper tax loca-

tions like Ireland or Switzerland unless corporate taxes were cut. And this was after years of corporate tax rate reductions under New Labour so that the UK has some of the lowest big business taxes in the world! Indeed, I worked out that in 1997 when Labour came into office, corporate tax revenues as a share of GDP were only 3.5% of GDP. Now under Labour it has fallen to just 3.2%, while the overall tax burden has risen from 35% to 38%!

One policy of New Labour of the last few years that should have benefited working people was the increases in real spending (after inflation) on the health service and education. Those increases have been faster than the rise in real economic growth.

The debate remains on how much of this extra money has been wasted on private consultants, a huge overpaid management bureaucracy and big "private finance initiative" contracts on school and hospitals that will leave the public sector burdened with rising costs years down the road. Indeed, recently, nurses and other jobs have been cut back and wage increases restricted while many local "trusts" are now in



deficit.

But the budget also revealed that this extra spending is now over. Health service spending growth is to be cut back from next year. Brown said education spending would still be increased, but real growth will actually be less than the expected overall economic growth.

So the legacy of New Labour under Blair and Brown will be one of dubious improvements in public services financed by higher taxes on the average household alongside increased inequality of income and wealth and the announcement that the UK, according to the UN, has the worst record on caring for children in the advanced capitalist world.

And all this is in a period where there has not been a major capitalist economic recession. God (or socialism) help us when the slump comes! □

## Selling off student loans

TUCKED AWAY in the budget speech was a reference to further privatisation. Brown is determined to pay for his tax cuts for the well-off by the sale of state assets. In true Thatcherite style, Brown is continuing to sell off the "family silver".

He has already signalled his intention to sell off the government's student loans, which is expected to raise about £6 billion, "swelling the proceeds from a string of privatisations designed to free cash from public spending", to quote the Financial Times. This sale would also be used to fiddle the books to lower government debt.

Again, according to the FT, "The move marks a resumption in sales after a hiatus of more than seven years." In fact the last time a government sold its future revenue streams for student loan repayments was in the late 1990s, the first tranche sold by John Major's Conservative government. Between 1997 and 2000, some

£4.1 billion was sold off.

The Blair government has also announced plans to sell off its stake in British Energy, the nuclear power group. This was delayed when cracks appeared in the boiler tubes of reactors at two of the eight nuclear power stations. The Ministry of Defence is to start selling parts of the spectrum, together with other surplus bands.

The government is expected to sell its one-third stake in Urenco, a uranium enrichment company. It is also finalising the sale of the Tote. The Treasury said it is looking at the sale of "other public corporations, trading funds and assets" as part of its spending review. It was well on the way to meeting its target of £30 billion public sales, having reached £12 billion so far.

by Rob Sewell

# East Anglia support for Venezuelan Revolution

by Daniel Morley

ALAN WOODS' stirring speech at a meeting of about 150 people at the University of East Anglia massively boosted the interest of students and youth in the Venezuelan Revolution, thus proving the huge potential in this 21st century revolution for invigorating and giving hope to the workers and youth of the world. Venezuela is the key to the world revolution and the alternative this offers to people everywhere who are sick and tired of the status quo, and the sense of hope, empowerment and the need to know more and help extend the Revolution that this key event engenders was typified at the meeting by a series of questions based mainly on the theme of "How can this be continued and furthered?" "Is there a danger the enthusiasm will fade?" and "Can

Venezuela survive on its own?", and also by the unprecedented (at UEA at least) numbers of books and journals sold. In the run up to Alan's meeting we had a successful meeting led off by Rob Sewell on Venezuela and Trotskyism, and it looks as if the continuing work towards highlighting the issue is paying off. Hopefully we can now build a series of important meetings and events to raise awareness of the key questions, such as workers' control and link the Revolution to Britain, through HOV and John McDonnell's campaign. Aptly, the meeting was held on the day of student elections (which more often than not take the form of popularity contests, with candidates handing out sweets as a bribe for votes) which were preceded by a debate and public question

time between the various candidates, garnering an audience of twelve! The contradiction between the scales of the two meetings is a brilliant metaphor for why apathy towards bourgeois politics exists, and how revolution is the only way to change this. All this reflects two things - that the Venezuelan Revolution truly is the key to the world revolution and a fantastic draw for the youth, and that 'patiently explaining', consistent work, honesty and discussion are the best and only methods for building solidarity with it. We must build on this success and make Norwich a stronghold for Hands off Venezuela. This is the best and most concrete way to defend the Venezuelan Revolution! Viva La Revolución! □

## Privatising Youth Work services!

The recent Education and Inspections Act effectively commercialises schools. Now statutory guidance out for consultation on Clause 6 of the Act wants to make youth work subject to contestability. By forcing positive activities outside school for children and young people to be subject to statutory contestability, it is privatising Youth Services.

The Community and Youth Work Union, which has recently become a section of the TGWU, organised a rally in Birmingham, on Saturday 17th March to focus opposition to this proposed opening up of youth work to commercial markets.

Youth service budgets are being cut, and services are increasingly being put out to tender. But, outside some local authorities and well-established voluntary organisations, there are no private youth work providers with any credible track record. This is another example of New Labour's free market madness - they have already spent millions on consultants to put the policy into motion. It must be stopped. □

## New films from Hands Off Venezuela



**HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!** [www.handsoffvenezuela.org](http://www.handsoffvenezuela.org)

**FILM COLLECTION**

TV  
5 short films  
DVD PAL

**Election Day, Caracas (4mins)**  
Dec 3, 2006, Venezuelan Election Day. The Hands Off Venezuela Delegation went to Chavista and opposition neighbourhoods to observe the Electoral process in action.

**Sanitarios Maracay Factory Tour (8mins)**  
Hands Off Venezuela delegation tours Sanitarios Maracay, a factory in Venezuela under workers control, to learn more about the revolutionary process taking place there, and to offer solidarity to the workers.

**Sanitarios Maracay Workers' Assembly (11min)**  
In an assembly held in November 2006, the workers of Sanitarios Maracay decided to take over and run their factory under workers' control, after the boss, Alvaro Pocaterra, abandoned it and refused to fulfil his obligations.

**Sanitarios Maracay Demo for Nationalisation (7min)**

**Solidarity! HOV FILM (13min)**

TV  
5 short films on one DVD (PAL)

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### Sanitarios Maracay Demo for Nationalisation (7min)

### Solidarity! HOV FILM (13min)

Send us your order with your name and address and a cheque for £5.50 to HOV Armadale Close, London, N17 9PL

# A socialist policy for education

by a head teacher

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS have faced media storm after media storm fanned by New Labour. The farce over "choice" of secondary schools, where there is no choice, especially for the working class and marginalised members of society, is just one recent example.

But this is not to say that the alternative offered by the Liberals and the Tories is any better. Their policies will lead to the ruin of state education with lower and lower funding.

- It is every child's right to attend a good, inclusive, comprehensive, local, community school.

The most successful state comprehensive schools are the rural schools where there's no "choice", children go to the local school and thrive there. Some rural community schools have better league table positions than selective schools, why? Because comprehensive schools work for all children, they are schools where Every Child Really Does Matter. No to special-ists schools, selective schools, academies and so on. Yes to all schools being specialist and brilliant.

- Equal access to education for all, the right educational environment available for every child in the local community no matter what their needs or abilities.

Inclusion does work, with the correct investment in training and effort. No person should have their life chances poorly affected by the prejudice of others or lack of access to opportunities. For true inclusion there needs to be investment in infrastructure and training. Many Education Authorities and the government seem to be in favour of inclusion because it is cheaper. True inclusion can not be done on the cheap. We say; No to the politically correct, self serving, money grubbing current inclusion agenda. Yes to true inclusion for all.

- All teachers qualified and capable, no unqualified teachers educating children at anytime; high quality access and qualification routes for non-qualified staff, teaching assistants and so on; a qualified teacher in every class, for every child, always.

PPA time is an excellent idea to provide professional time for teachers but all children have a right to a qualified

teacher teaching them at all times. If parents knew that non qualified staff, some with no qualifications, are currently in classes "teaching" children, there would be a massive outcry.

- A secular education for all, an end to state funding of religious schools and no teaching of religion in state schools

The effect of religious schools on the whole of the country is appalling. Sectarianism is a terrible indictment on our society. Few European countries allow religious education in their state schools, why do we? This is not a radical point of view but simply a main stream idea throughout Europe.

- No privatisation, no big business involvement in education, no academies, no sponsorship, no PFIs, and no big business interference in teaching.

Big business has no part in education full stop. We are educating people to be free, intelligent and enthusiastic people not the next cohort to make profits for fat cat capitalists.

- No political interference in the teaching of children; all curricula based on sound educational values and the professionalism of the teachers and the schools, no league tables, no SATs.

As a teacher I am tired of people who have had no time in a classroom telling me how and what to teach, the new clamour for synthetic phonics is an example. Curricula should be based on sound ideas of learning and teaching, and nothing else.

- Lower class sizes to lower workload and stress and to improve achievement and attainment of children. No redundancies or school closures but lower class sizes.

As the number of children at school

And even more involvement of big business and religious organisations who have no interest in education beyond their own profit and the furtherance of their own narrow agendas.

I myself taught under a Tory regime and suffered three consecutive years of pay cuts in real terms. A new Tory government would be no different. This is what I see as the most important demands of a socialist education policy.

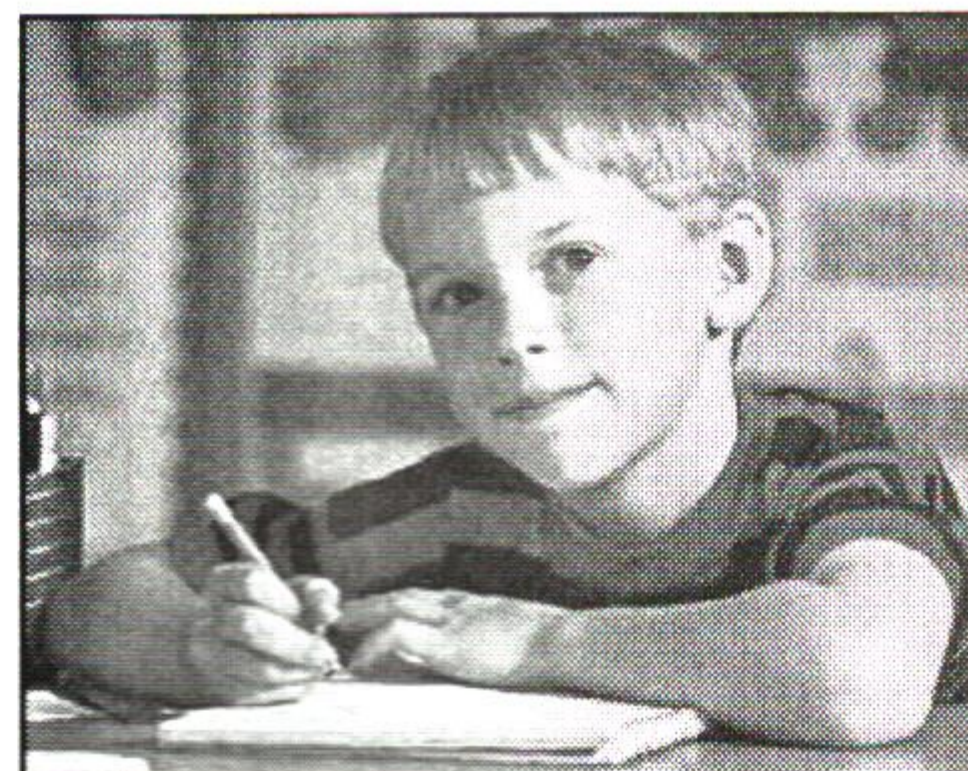
age decreases there must be no redundancies or school closures. All teachers' pensions guaranteed, no loss of pension for any teacher; all teachers able to retire at 60. A working pension for all involved in education. Build a campaign to ensure that the attacks on local government pensions are ended.

- Free access to high quality education, training and child care from birth to twenty one, for all; an end to tuition fees and student loans, a fair grant for all students, student grants guaranteed for all over the age of 18 and given on the basis of need from 16 onwards.

Student loans are simply a graduate tax; we can pay for university education by taxing the rich not the poor.

- One union for teachers, active and engaged in campaigning for better education.

Campaign so that all unions affiliated to the TUC who are signatories to the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group withdraw their signatures and build a campaign to ensure all children are taught by qualified teachers all the time. Stop attacks on the quality of education and the pay and conditions of all employed in education which the agreement perpetrates. □



# John McDonnell in Peterborough

by a Peterborough trade unionist

IN THE plush surroundings of Peterborough's Great Northern Hotel, seventy-two workers from the Labour Party, trade unions (including PCS, AMICUS and UNISON) and members of the Pensioners' Association gathered for the annual Tom Browning Meeting. The meeting was established several years ago as a living monument to a life-long working class activist, who had throughout the Thatcher period played the leading roll in keeping Peterborough Trade Union Council alive, and to all workers who have given their lives to the struggle for a better world.

The main purpose of this year's meeting, held under the title of "Another World is Possible", was to discuss John McDonnell's campaign to challenge Gordon Brown for the leadership of the Labour Party.

Ed Murphy, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for

Peterborough, spoke first about some of the serious problems affecting the city and highlighted the growing radical alliance of people within and outside the Labour Party, including young people, who have been radicalised by such events as the invasion of Iraq. Following Ed, Kerry Fairless, PCS Regional Chair, spoke about the campaign on pensions and was loudly applauded when he made it clear that the PCS would continue with its action (including strikes) to defend public services. This commitment was greeted with particular enthusiasm by members of Peterborough Pensioners Association who having built the Welfare State now find themselves embroiled in a battle to preserve it.

When John McDonnell spoke he was listened to attentively as he explained the need to challenge



Brown's pro-capitalist policies with a socialist programme. Whilst acknowledging that the Labour Government had made some progressive gestures (such as introducing the minimum wage) he patiently pointed out the inadequacy of even those small steps. John echoed Ed Murphy's comments about the radicalisation of public opinion and supported the continuing industrial action of the PCS.

During the discussion that followed, John emphasised that his candidature for the leadership of the Labour Party was not simply a device to start a debate, nor was he a stalking horse. On the contrary, the John4Leader campaign was gaining support wherever he spoke - and that included within the Parliamentary Labour Party. One supporter of *Socialist Appeal* said that

a conclusion to be drawn from John's remarks was that certain questions were being posed, which sooner or later would have to be answered: questions like whether or not capitalism can meet the needs of the people who live on this planet. "If we conclude that capitalism cannot meet those needs, we will have to decide what kind of society we need to replace it with. John's socialist campaign is about those questions".

At the end of the meeting, a dozen copies of *Socialist Appeal* were sold and handfuls of John's leaflets and LRC membership forms were taken away.

Whatever is the result of the Labour Party leadership campaign, it is apparent that the slumbering giant of the working class is cautiously beginning to stir. □

## The fight is on

by Steve Jones

ALL AROUND the country meetings have been taking place with John McDonnell speaking in support of the campaign to get a socialist onto the Labour leadership ballot.

Whereas the other possible candidates have been hard at work providing spin stories for reporters, John has actually been out meeting the people who really matter - the labour and trade union members who are supposed to have a vote in this election. Of course, the Labour NEC - who claim to be defenders of party members' rights - have refused to lower the nomination level of 44 MPs and have indicated that when the election is called there will only be a matter of days to gather the required nominations in. All this is designed to limit John's chances. But the fight back has begun. For example, at a London meeting of TGWU members, John called for the support being given by the

union Left to be put into action and reminded those present that if the TGWU pushed its sponsored MPs to nominate him in the interests of having a proper election then the 44 barrier could well be breached.

In Newcastle over 50 turned up to a morning meeting to hear him speak, including a number of union branch secretaries, activists and so on. Later on that day 15 turned up to a meeting in Stockton called by the MP for Stockton North to give support. Every day more meetings are taking place and more support is being pledged. With the big rally set for the end of March in London the stage is set for a last vital push to upset the plans of the right wing manipulators. For the latest news and events visit the john4leader website at [www.john4leader.org.uk](http://www.john4leader.org.uk)

# Civil Service Jobs- Let's Keep up the Pressure !

by Matt Wells

31 JANUARY 2007 saw the biggest civil service strike in UK history when some 200,000 workers stayed away from work in protest at New Labour's slash and burn approach to public services. The turnout showed that the mood for a fight back is there amongst PCS members and PCS leadership at all levels must respond to this by channelling this into regular action to keep up the pressure.

A massive programme of job cuts is beginning to bite across the service with benefit claims taking a week longer to process and correspondence to tax offices laying in a specially hired warehouse unopened ! Consultants continue to suck money from the public purse at an alarming rate - some £ 7.2 billion in the last three years in an unprecedented pay day for the private sector.

There are now some 200 separate pay units across the civil service meaning that people doing similar work earn wildly different rates of pay from department to department and sometimes within the same department. This is also a massive waste of money as pay teams are duplicating their work every year on pay while the ever stricter parameters of Treasury Guidance are making a mockery of the system. Added to this are punitive and at times frankly bizarre approaches to management that continue to drive those not facing the sack out of the service in despair.

If members are willing to follow up the massive show of force on 31 January, then a national civil strike on 1 May could be on the cards. Many public sector workers are hop-

ing that this could be a focal point to inspire and rally the other unions, like Unison, to link up in a generalised campaign to defend public services.

At a recent meeting of the Public Services Not Private Profit campaign Mark Serwotka outlined his hopes for the 'Make Your Vote Count' plank of the campaign. The intention is to ask all 5000 candidates before the coming local elections where they stand on Public Services and then publish their results to every PCS member. Mark explained that many within the TUC had expressed opposition to this on the basis of loyalty to Labour i.e. Tories might give a better answer than Labour candidates!

I think this is a great idea. With the current disillusionment with public services, any Labour candidate with half a brain is surely going to answer with a pro-public services answer, meaning that they can be held to account when and if they win council posts. There are also many Labour candidates out there who are disillusioned with Blairism and only too happy to stick two

fingers up to Tony Blair and co. Mark expressed the hope that this would signal that the Labour Party was in revolt and shake the Parliamentary Party - another thing that he suggested scared the TUC officialdom, something I'm sure all socialists would welcome!

Some activists have challenged this plank of the campaign on the basis that this would imply that workers should (and maybe therefore would) vote Tory in cases where their candidates take the populist line and give a 'better' answer. PCS are not affiliated to any political party and not going to be recommending that members vote one way or the other. But workers are not stupid. They tend to abstain from voting where the party they are most likely to identify with is offering no solution to their problems. Whether we like it or not this party tends to be Labour.

Socialists do not support Labour blindly, out of tribal loyalty, but critically, from a working class point of view. That is why we are fundamentally opposed to Blair's pro-capitalist clique which

is handing public services over to big business. And this is also why we argue that as long as the union link remains so does the potential to change the party. But this will not happen without a fight and this fight has start in the unions.

1st May will be in many activists' diaries already so let's hope that PCS' consultation with members reveals a mood for a second day of strike action on that day and that unions across the public sector can link up to fight for public services. □





# Victory: sacked Amicus worker wins tribunal

by our industrial correspondent

SACKED AMICUS Press Officer and deposed former editor of the Amicus Unity Gazette, Des Heemskerck, has won his tribunal case for unfair dismissal from his job in the union. Almost exactly a year since the sacking of Des Heemskerck, Jimmy Warne and Cathie Willis, the tribunal have unanimously found that Des was unfairly dismissed from his employment. Jimmy Warne and Cathie Willis have yet to have their tribunal hearings, which are scheduled for later this year in August.

The Tribunal judgement is scathing in its condemnation of the way in which the Head of the Amicus Legal Department, Georgina Hirsch, conducted the "seriously flawed investigation" into Des Heemskerck during his suspension. It points out that she could "have carried out a fair investigation provided she suppressed her resentment of and antipathy towards the Claimant. Sadly she was unable to do so." She "expected that a disciplinary hearing would be inevitable". "Bias against Mr Heemskerck was evident throughout her dealings with the matter - and all her efforts thereafter consciously or otherwise were devoted to seeking evidence proving her presumption".

The Tribunal Judgement amply demonstrates that the sacking of the former leadership of the Amicus Unity Gazette was part of a political witch-hunt conducted by Derek Simpson and his supporters against those who opposed his abandonment of a left programme. The false

charges levelled against the three sacked workers were designed to sow doubts and undermine their credibility in the Gazette. These attacks resulted in a narrow vote to remove them from the leadership of the Gazette, in a coup staged last year with the assistance of right wingers drafted in to take over the Gazette. The same thing happened this year at the Gazette AGM held in March, where known right wingers, one of whom had stood against a Gazette candidate only a month previously, were allowed to vote at a meeting packed with full-time bureaucrats and right-wing careerists.

## NEC meeting

At a meeting of the Amicus NEC held the week after the judgement was announced a motion was moved by Ged Dempsey from the GPMU sector to reinstate the three sacked workers to their jobs. Simpson spoke in the debate for 47 minutes in a tirade of

abuse against the three. He accused them of wanting to bankrupt the union by their support of the Wembley workers during their dispute.

He also accused them of wanting to tear the union apart and destroy the consensus of right and left on the union Executive. This same 'consensus' has led to Simpson supporting Gordon Brown for leader of the Labour Party and giving support to Blair's programme for nuclear power. He said that Des Heemskerck was at the heart of a cesspool, of which the last dregs had been removed from the Gazette Editorial Board at the recent AGM.

In the vote that immediately followed there were 29 votes to 9 to refuse reinstatement with some Gazette supporters lining up with right wingers to oppose giving Des his job back. This was also reflected in elections held later in the meeting to the Joint Executive of the newly-merged union where a consensus slate of

right wingers and Simpson supporters was voted through, with Gazette supporters being opposed by a combination of the right-wing and Simpson supporters.

The outcome of the election for the Regional Secretary in Yorkshire, where the Gazette candidate Chris Weldon stood on a programme that supported the leadership of Amicus and lost by 3000 votes, shows that the membership are not willing to support 'consensus' politics. The independent candidate who won the vote was seen as the anti-establishment candidate and won as a result.

Unless the Gazette adopts a radical left programme in the elections to the new Executive next year they will be defeated by candidates who can reflect the growing mood of anger and discontent with the leadership amongst the membership. Even the 30% vote in Amicus to oppose the merger with the T&G, without any organised campaign of opposition, is a reflection of the mood of discontent amongst the Amicus membership. A 'consensus' slate with the right wing will be doomed to failure. Unless a democratic structure can arise from a merger of the T&G Broad Left and Amicus Unity Gazette, and so alter the right wing policies of the current Gazette leadership, then socialists must question whether the Gazette will be an effective organisation to advance progressive left policies. □

Des Heemskerck and Cathie Willis receive a donation to the defence campaign from Amicus construction workers at Heathrow.



# RMT force agreement

by Paul Gillon, Glasgow

LAST WEEK'S 48-hour strike by RMT signal workers in Scotland has forced Network Rail bosses to agree to implement the working directive which they agreed with the union last July. Network Rail management were responsible for strike action last week and the disruption that affected hundreds of thousands of commuters all over the country. NR's intransigence caused signallers to lose, pay and threw thousands of commuters travel plans into chaos.

The bosses at Network Rail also played fast and loose with passenger safety by their actions, staffing signal boxes with insufficiently trained staff who scabbed during the strike. The RMT said some of the scabs had "only a few hours training". In light of recent tragedies on the railways and with the

fatal crash at Grayrigg, Cumbria still fresh in the public's mind, NR's arrogance defies belief.

Fortunately, RMT officials led by Scottish organiser Phil McGarry convinced NR to come to the discussion table and avoid more strike action over the coming week. The bosses could of course have given a firm agreement to honour their original promise before the action, but did all in their power to cause misery to travellers and RMT members instead. Bob Crow, RMT General Secretary said he was satisfied NR would now implement the agreement in full. "We now hope the matter can be put behind us but the union has warned (management) that any further attempt to renege on this agreement will be met with the reinstatement of strike action". □

## Immigrant workers victory in Enfield

IN A brilliant victory for trade unionism, 70 mainly African migrant workers have won union recognition at National Car Parks (NCP) in Enfield.

Waging five days of strike action in total these workers have shown guts and determination against a hostile employer.

They picketed local depots and held a rally outside the local civic centre, where John McDonnell MP spoke. They even won support from local people, quite an achievement for traffic wardens!

Two days of further strike action was called off when ACAS confirmed that the GMB has over 75% of the workforce in membership.

The union says there will be talks next week to deal with outstanding problems, especially an end to bullying

and harassment by management.

These low paid workers were especially angered when it was announced that 3i, the self proclaimed world leader in private equity, were selling NCP to Australia's Macquarie Bank. It was a deal that produced a profit of 45 per cent - £235m - in just 18 months.

The sale was confirmed last week and NCP is being split into two parts. NCP operates more than 900 car parks, including 52,000 spaces at ten of Britain's busiest airports including Heathrow, Gatwick, Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

It also runs the contract for issuing penalty notices for London's congestion charge. NCP manages 230,000 parking spaces and handles more than 60 million customer transactions a year. □

## Agency workers stitched up

ON FRIDAY March 2nd Labour MP Paul Farrelly moved a private member's bill to give agency and temporary workers equal rights with permanent and directly employed workers. This policy is part of the Warwick agreement hammered out between Labour and the trade unions and is enshrined in the 2005 Labour election manifesto. The bill was 'talked out' by Jim Fitzpatrick with the full support of Labour whips and the Labour cabinet. John McDonnell said the experience 'made him ashamed to be a Labour MP'.

Felicity Lawrence gave as an example in the Guardian (March 2nd) the 'two parallel worlds' for street cleaners and rubbish collectors in Salford. "First, there are the 144 who are directly employed by the city council. They receive a decent wage, get sick pay and have job security. Then...there are the 103 on agency books. This group earns £2-£2.50 an hour less than their directly employed counterparts - and for the same work. Some are asked to turn up between five and six in the morning to find out whether they have work for the day, like dockers in the 1930s."

Though the figures are shadowy, there seem to be over a million temporary or agency workers, who are super-exploited in this way. To be fair, 115 Labour MPs supported Paul Farrelly's bill. That means twice as many went along with the government stitch-up.

Jim Fitzpatrick defended his actions as "maintaining the flexibility that makes agency work popular and creates jobs".

We have two questions for Fitzpatrick. We understand that agency work is popular - with employers. Does he really think it is popular with workers who are super-exploited or with those whose pay and conditions are being undercut? And secondly: we hear all the rhetoric about 'global competitiveness'. Can he explain how this 'flexibility' helps us export street cleaning in Salford into the global economy - to Singapore or Seattle? After all, Salford streets have to be cleaned in Salford. □



Send us your workplace and trade union reports to [contact@socialist.net](mailto:contact@socialist.net)

Wherever possible we will publish them on our newly revamped British website [www.socialist.net](http://www.socialist.net) as well as in the pages of your monthly Socialist Appeal.

# Single status shambles

by Mick Brooks

MORE THAN ten years ago the government sold the idea of 'single status' to the trade union tops. For centuries the public sector workforce had been divided into 'manuals' and white-collar workers, with different contracts of employment and different conditions. This never made much sense and, as unions amalgamated to cover both sets of workers, was increasingly called into question.

Moreover there was a serious commitment to correcting the longstanding injustice of low pay for women workers. The problem of equal pay is not mainly that women get paid less than men for doing exactly the same work, but that they often work in low paid female job ghettos.

OK, so now all public sector workers should be treated the same. Typically manual workers had a forty hour week, while white-collar workers put in thirty five hours. The obvious question: - do we go up to the highest level in the quest for single status, or do we race to the bottom? All the main unions involved produced advice to local negotiators that 'many will gain and nobody should lose' because of single status. That's not happening. For a start a compromise 37 hour week seems to be emerging as the norm. What's the matter with us all doing 35?

The move to single status was to be engineered by job evaluation. People with clipboards would decide whether press officers were worth more or less than street cleaners. Which would you sooner do? Job evaluation has never been popular, and is certainly not scientific.

Ten years later the whole thing is coming apart at the seams. It is certain that by the March 31st deadline, a majority of local councils will not have single status schemes in place. The GMB union reckons it may be as low as 20% in compliance. So

what's the matter - are they all stupid?

It has been estimated that it could cost as much as £10 billion to 'round everyone up' within single status. But the government has not provided the councils a penny to finance the plan. Naturally, cash-strapped councils have complained that to fully implement this year's agreement would cost them £4 billion that they haven't got. So they're trying to stop the wage bill across the country rising more than 4% overall - spending an extra £1 billion instead of the £4 billion needed to fund single status. That must mean that many will lose out. In effect councils have cracked down on their workers' pay, arguing this is the only way they can protect services.

## Good and bad news

The good news is that perhaps half a million workers will gain from single status. The bad news is that more than a hundred thousand and possibly a quarter of a million are to lose out. Some could lose up to £15,000 a year. For instance in Birmingham a social work assistant on more than £35,000 will have their pay cut by £15,000 to equal that of a street cleaner. This should not be allowed to happen to anyone!

In many cases refuse collectors, teaching assistants and dinner ladies - the sort of people single status was intended to help - will lose out. Job evaluation has spread to the NHS under the 'agenda for change' equivalent of single status. Low paid male workers such as porters are likely to have their pay frozen for years while women catch up.

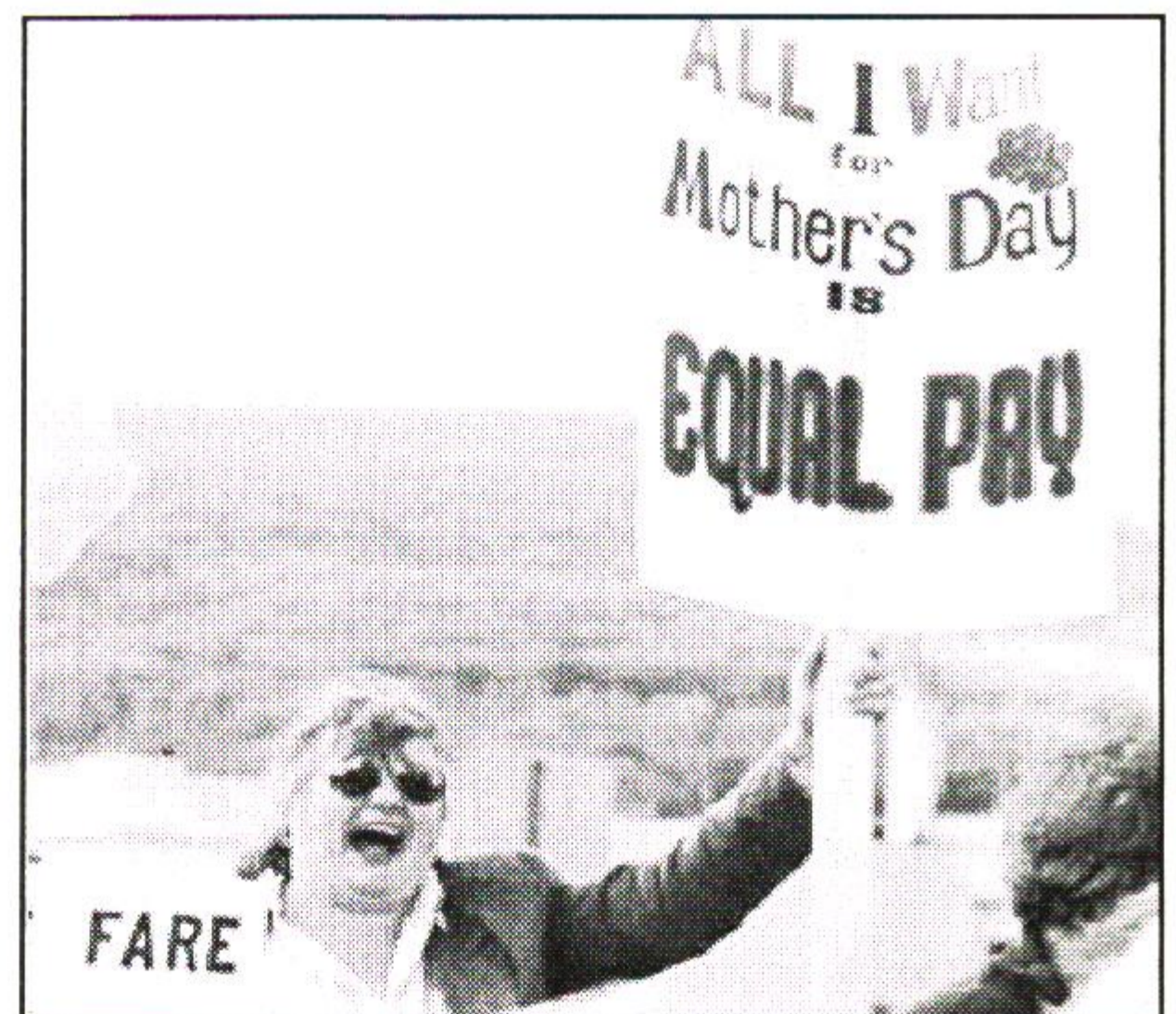
Most losers are likely to be relatively well-paid male white-collar workers but, because of the arbitrary nature of job evaluation, all manner of ridiculous results may be posted. The unions promised their members

that existing staff wages and conditions would be protected. Even if existing office holders' wages are frozen for two or three years, management can move to change your contract of employment and implement a pay cut eventually.

But the unions leadership's uncritical support for the move to single status means that they are betraying potential losers from the move to single status.

The situation has been made more complicated by the emergence of back-dated equal pay claims from women workers, that challenge deals already struck between the unions and the councils. The unions signed compromise deals, sacrificing the rights of low paid women workers to preserve the position of male workers - most of whom were not living in the lap of luxury.

These court claims are likely to cost local authorities more billions of pounds, billions that won't be spent on services. Nevertheless the unions must back these women who are entitled to this money. Unions should not allow themselves to be trapped by the iniquities of local government finance. Their job is to protect their members' interests - all their members. They should remember that. ■



## European workers fight job cuts!

**Airbus workers throughout Europe have reacted with anger to the announcement of the axing of 10,000 jobs as part of the "Power 8" plan. Below TERRY CROW explains the background and opposite French marxists outline a fighting programme**

1,100 JOBS will be lost at Airbus Headquarters in Toulouse, 3,200 will be lost in the rest of France, 3,700 in Germany, 400 in Spain, and 1,600 in the UK. Around 5,000 of these job losses will be temporary or on-site contractors where the cuts have already started.

Airbus manufacture aircraft parts all over Europe, and the planes are finally assembled either in Toulouse or Hamburg. One part of the Power 8 plan is to outsource as much manufacturing capacity as possible to drive down costs, that is to exploit their workers further, in order to increase profits.

The announcement follows extensive discussions between national governments. Alistair Darling, the UK Trade and Industry Secretary, was reported to have threatened Airbus with the loss of military orders if the cuts in the UK were too deep. Thus the bourgeois politicians jostle among themselves to secure the best deal for their individual national capitalist class.

Reacting to the Power 8 announcement on 28 February, the leading Airbus governments all welcomed the news while shedding crocodile tears at the job losses in their respective countries. Darling said, "The long-term future for Airbus in the UK is a good one". French Prime Minister

Dominique de Villepin called the plan "necessary" and added that the French Government would give €100m in aid to Airbus. Chancellor Merkel has also publicly supported the plan. Although at the time of writing, the details are still unclear, it appears that the 1,600 jobs lost in the UK will be shared between Filton near Bristol, which manufactures parts for wings, fuel systems and landing gear, and the plant at Broughton in North Wales that assembles wings for Airbus aircraft.

### British plants

Airbus, like the other main aircraft manufacturer Boeing, wishes to move from aircraft built from metal to aircraft using composite carbon fibre. The assembly line at Broughton is designed to make metal wings. No investment was announced for Broughton to enable the factory to assemble composite wings and therefore the long-term future of the plant is not assured. A second, smaller part of Filton that designs wings will be largely unaffected.

In addition to the job cuts, Airbus Management have announced their intention to focus on "core business", in other words to contract out activities that are not considered to be core. At

three plants, Filton, Méaulte (France) and Nordenham (Germany), Airbus will seek "industrial partnerships" and have apparently already received unsolicited approaches from potential partners. For example, press reports have mentioned that GKN of the UK is understood to be interested in Filton, presumably with the intent of purchasing it from Airbus. Airbus have also made clear their intention to sell off or even close factories at three other sites at Varel, Laupheim (both in Germany), and St. Nazaire-Ville (France).

Airbus currently have a backlog of orders of 2,700 aircraft, which is enough work for years. Business for airlines is booming and new aircraft are in heavy demand. So what has gone wrong? Tom Enders, the joint-CEO of EADS, Airbus's parent company, admitted a few days ago that "serious management mistakes were made". The costs of producing the new Airbus A380 aircraft, the "super-jumbo" have soared owing to management blunders.

### Management blunders

Another new type of Airbus aircraft, the A350, is needed to compete with Boeing's new "Dreamliner", the B787. But the A350 has to be redesigned, because of further management errors, which has meant both that its development costs have risen and that it will not be available for years. This has allowed Boeing to capture the market with the B787 which is ready just about

now. Under capitalism, Airbus workers are now being asked to pay the price for their management's incompetence.

There is no doubt that Airbus is also planning to move some of their production to factories outside Europe. A manufacturing plant outside Beijing will be completed later this year when it will produce Airbus parts and later assemble whole aircraft. There have been press reports that President Putin of Russia is interested in a similar deal. Airbus's only real rival is Boeing of the US and it is no accident that global politics and the competition for markets by each national bourgeoisie impact on the future of Airbus. Both the Russians and the Chinese are looking to Europe to assist their own indigenous industries and to help provide badly needed planes, while not wanting to rely on the US to do so.

Nicolas Sarkozy, the right-wing French Presidential candidate, said, when the job losses were first announced, that the state should not interfere in Airbus. Having now seen the reaction of, he has now cynically changed his mind and is now calling for increased French Government influence in the company, presumably to protect jobs in France at the expense of jobs elsewhere in Europe. Workers throughout Airbus regardless of their nationality must reject such reactionary manoeuvres. It is only by uniting across frontiers that the Power8 plan can be defeated. □



## **NATIONALISATION!**

# **sign and circulate this appeal!**

**THE FRENCH organisers of this appeal demand the transformation of Airbus-EADS into a public company, in France and across Europe.**

**Please sign this appeal, providing your name, city, and political or trade union affiliations to Socialist Appeal or e.mail to: [redaction2@lariposte.com](mailto:redaction2@lariposte.com). If you are a worker at Airbus or a sub-contractor, please specify.**

THE INDUSTRY must be controlled and managed by the workers. Its development must respond, not to the greed of its shareholders, but to the needs and objectives of the industry, determined democratically by the workers themselves, where the elected representatives must occupy a dominant place in the management of the enterprise at all levels.

The international character of Airbus underlines the necessity of a democratic and rational plan of production, free from capitalist competition. A rejection of the "Power 8" plan implies a mobilisation coordinated by the workers in their respective countries. We must strongly reject any attempt, no matter where it comes from, to turn the workers of one country against those of another. The division of the working class can only benefit the backers of the "Power 8" plan.

Various political and trade union representatives demand that the state has a bigger presence in Airbus. The presidents of several Socialist Party governed regions have proposed their entry into the group. These recommendations completely miss the point. For one thing, they do not address Plan 8 at all, and for another, it proposes filling up the coffers of a private company with funds from state and regional

budgets, i.e. the spending of public money to satisfy the greed of the shareholders. We nationalise the losses and privatise the profits!

Buying out some of the largest shareholders, who have already largely pillaged the company's funds, is out of the question. Airbus-EADS is the product of the labour of the workers. They will be able to develop the aeronautic industry far better when it has been taken out of the hands of the shareholders, who only want to bleed it dry. The workers must take control over the management of this industry.

The signatories of this appeal demand the unconditional withdrawal of the Power 8 plan and the nationalisation of Airbus-EADS, without compensation to the big shareholders. No to plant closures and transfers! No to job cuts! For a 100% publicly owned aeronautic industry under the democratic control and management of the workers! □

**Hubert Prévaut**  
(trade unionist at Airbus, Toulouse)  
**Young Communists**  
**Haute-Garonne**  
**Editorial Board La Riposte**

# Strike

FOLLOWING THE announcement of job cuts on 28 February, Airbus workers quickly responded. In just over two weeks mass actions have taken place throughout Europe.

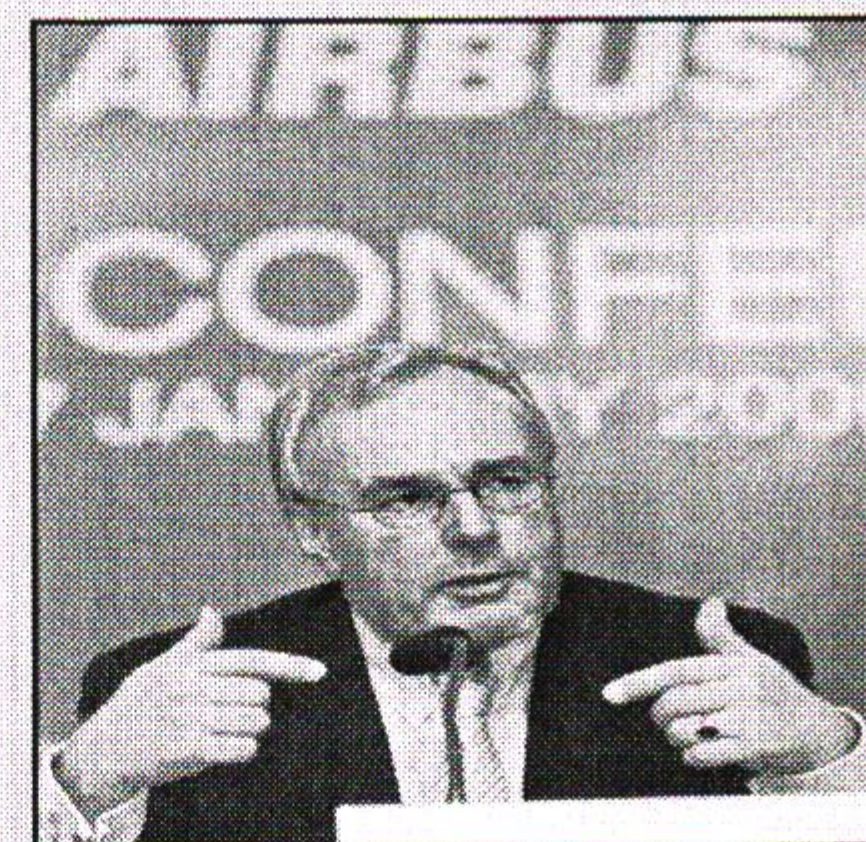
Almost immediate walk-outs stopped production on 1 and 2 March in the Nordenham, Varel, and Laupheim factories in Germany.

There were also stoppages in France including at the St. Nazaire plant on west coast of France. On 6 March, French factories in Toulouse, Méaulte, St. Nazaire, and Nantes shut down as workers marched in the streets. 1,500 marched in Méaulte and around 15,000 in Toulouse. Support for the strike was solid with over 90% out.

On the 16 March Airbus workers showed the potential of united European trade union action. In Hamburg the biggest German union, IG Metall, said 25,000 demonstrators had converged on the city centre, many brought by buses from all over the country. More than 2,000 demonstrated in Laupheim.

10,000 marched in Toulouse, home of the Airbus headquarters. This followed earlier day of protest in France of similar size on 6 March. Workers staged a two hour walk out at Maeulte and there was a small demonstration outside the French headquarters of EADS.

In Spain, two unions, the CCOO and the UGT, called out 9,000 workers at seven sites to protest. In Britain there was a demonstration in Chester, near the factory at Broughton in Wales. □



## Multiculturalism - what is it and will it survive?

by Barbara Humphries

**This article by Barbara Humphries was written some weeks ago. Though the initial controversy has died down the issues raised are important and will, unfortunately, resurface.**

MULTICULTURALISM IS again under attack. Not just by fanatics from the British National Party but by members of the New Labour Establishment. Following the bombings on London transport last year Ruth Kelly and David Blunkett have cast doubts on it and called for a "British identity".

Jack Straw has asked that women Muslims in his constituency, remove their veils (the niqab) in his surgery as he feels uncomfortable with them. Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, who backs Jack Straw, has urged for integration as a way forward - "to stop us from sleep walking into segregation".

What is multiculturalism? Here Trevor Phillips makes an important point. He says "It is important to differentiate the idea of a multicultural society which is a fact of life from multiculturalism". We must defend our multicultural society against reactionaries and bigots. London is one of the most diverse cities in the world which enriches the lives of its inhabitants. Diversity, as the London mayor Ken Livingstone says, is to be celebrated.

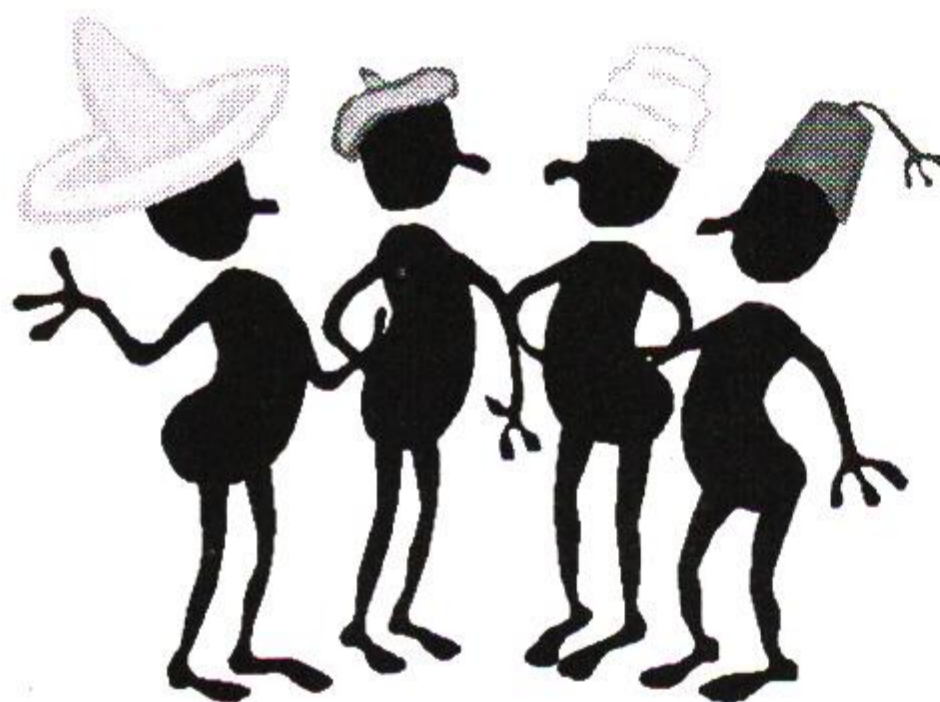
This is not a new phenomenon. For centuries there have been waves of immigration into London and other cities in the UK by workers from throughout the world seeking employment and escape from poverty in their own countries. This has been actively encouraged by the capitalist class as these workers have filled gaps in the labour force often at cheaper rates.

In the 1950s workers came to Britain from the Indian sub continent to work at factories such as Wolfes in Southall where the employers could not recruit as the pay and working conditions were so bad. Workers came from the Caribbean to work on our public transport system and in our health service. These workers could easily be identified as they are black and Asian.

### One Working class

The present wave of large scale immigration, however, are white. They are from the eastern European countries which have recently joined the European Union. But they are all part of the British working class and as such their working conditions and welfare are the concern of the labour movement. The working class in Britain is diverse - any suggestion that there is a "white working class" separate from ethnic minorities is reactionary and misguided.

The working class has always been diverse, based on different industries and communities. It is economics - such as the pit closure programme of the 1980s



and 1990s, not immigration which has destroyed working class communities. However this is in part a reaction against the concept of multiculturalism - because, again to quote Trevor Phillips - "The philosophy of multiculturalism begins by defining people as different and then treating them differently."

The strategy of multiculturalism had its roots in the riots of the 1980s. Discontent amongst ethnic minorities in areas such as Southall and Brixton had to be managed and controlled. This was to be done by ethnic monitoring, funding to interest groups and encouraging separate development by communities. This was not a class approach. Asian communities for instance have millionaires and workers on £12,000 a year. The strategy of multiculturalism would treat them all as the same. Multiculturalism was a top down approach to tackling racism. It aimed to contain the problem rather than confront it.

The campaign against racism in the 1970s was a political campaign waged by anti-fascist groups and the labour movement. After an Asian student was murdered by a white racist in Southall in 1976 a magnificent demonstration was organised by the Asian community and by local labour movement organisations such as the trades council and the Labour Party. Its theme was "one race the human race". (Although Marxists at the time would have called for "one class - the working class") - this theme was adopted to emphasise what unites us, not what divides us.

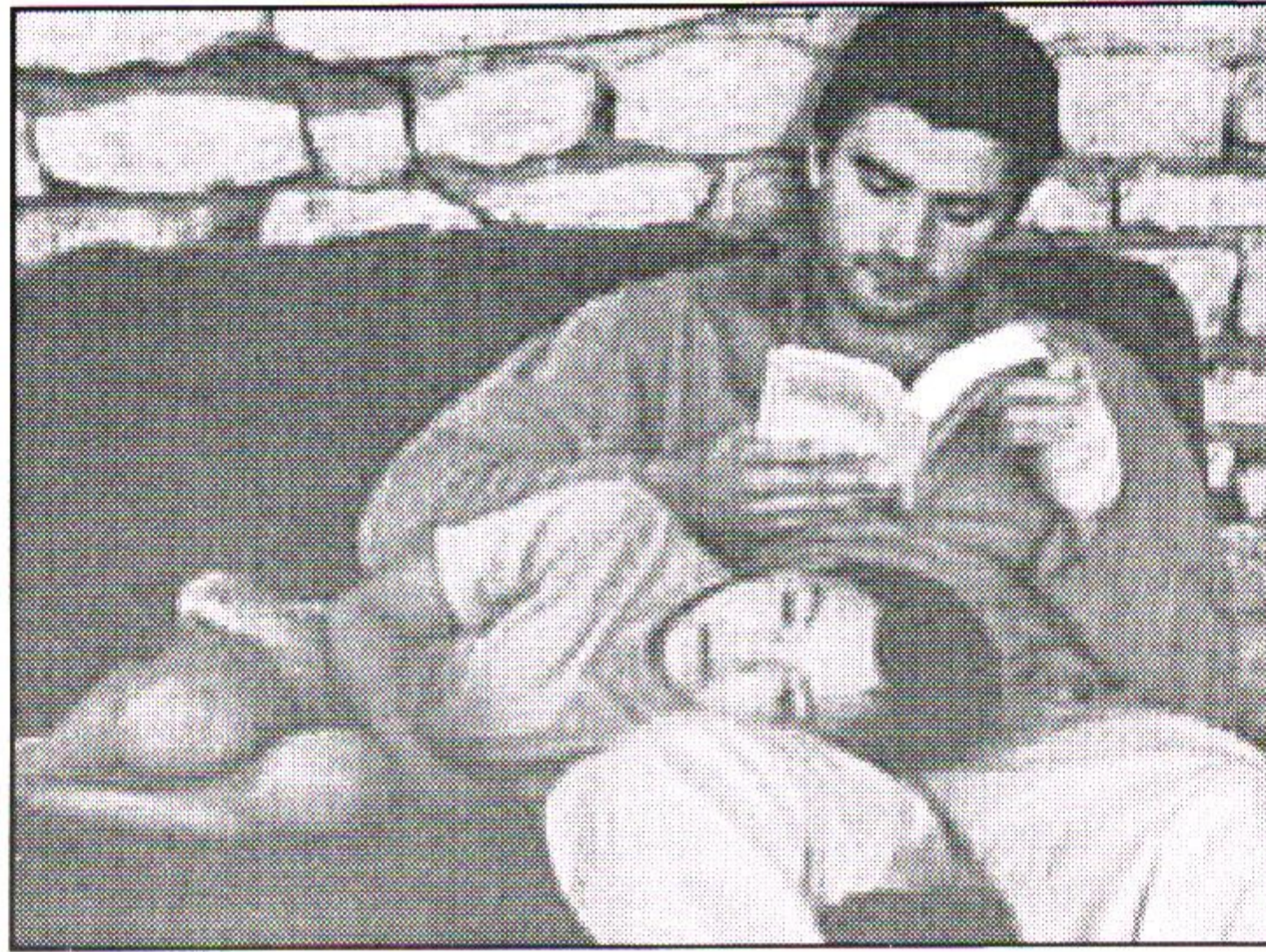
It was a political campaign - in the face of opposition not just from white racists and members of fas-

cist organisations, but the ruling class itself. The Tory Party at the time had a racist agenda. The Tories on Ealing Council just years after the death of an Asian student in 1976 allowed the National Front to call a so-called public meeting in the centre of Southall, which now had a majority of Asian residents. This meeting which led to violence and the death of an antifascist demonstrator, Blair Peach, was a deliberate provocation.

Multiculturalism has been embraced by the establishment - ethnic monitoring is wide spread in every workplace and diversity toolkits are provided for staff. But is this an effective way of combating racism? It is a managerial approach to a political issue. Many workers from ethnic minorities still find themselves in low pay ghettos. It also has a fragile base. Embracing multiculturalism has gone hand in hand with an economic boom in the 1990s where immigrant workers to fill vacancies have been welcome by employers.

At the last election the Confederation of British Industry, the employers' organisation, had doubts about supporting its traditional party - the Conservative Party because of the party's dubious position on immigration. We need these workers they said - there cannot be restrictions or curbs. But would this survive a slump as in the 1970s, when with rising unemployment, immigrant workers were made scapegoats. Racism is not just about skin colour. Bosnians and Poles could face the same hostility as black and Asian workers did in previous years.

In these circumstances multiculturalism could become decidedly flakey. Are we in favour of integration? Yes, if it is democratic and voluntary. Accentuating dif-



ferences can make minorities vulnerable and confine them to ghettos of poverty. Areas inhabited by ethnic minorities who arrive in this country often have the worst housing conditions. Workers stay in these areas because they cannot afford to move out and they fear being attacked by racists. There is security in the ghetto.

## Islam

But the present threat to multiculturalism does not come primarily from the economic situation. It has come about as a result of US and British foreign policy. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have gone hand in hand with attacks on Muslims. They have also had an impact on Muslim youth in Britain. A layer of young people who were brought up as typical British teenagers have turned to "radical Islam" as a response to wars waged in the interests of US imperialism which have led to the slaughter of Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Attitudes have hardened on all sides. Some have even been prepared to kill innocent civilians on a large scale in their home country in the name of their cause. The events of July 7th in London last year in turn provoked an anti-Muslim backlash. It is in the light of this that Jack

Straw's comments on women wearing the veil must be seen.

In a multicultural society where differences are to be celebrated how can one decide what does or does not go? What other forms of dress can be banned? Are we not in danger of falling into the trap of behaving in the same way as religious fanatics in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Iraq women in both Sunni and Shia communities are persecuted for wearing the wrong dress. This is after the so-called US led "liberation" of the country.

But there was always a problem also with the concept of multiculturalism. Do you celebrate all differences? What about forced marriages or female circumcision? The ongoing debate about the veil, which then extended to the dismissal of a teaching assistant, has brought this dilemma to the fore.

Behind it lies the oppression of women in society and the role that religious institutions have played in this. Many of these practices have not previously been challenged by Labour MPs. Within the Labour Party itself cultural differences are used as an excuse to turn a blind eye to practices such as packing meetings. It is only when a scandal emerges that the Labour leadership has been forced to take

some action.

In some constituencies religious and cultural organisations substitute for Labour Party organisation. This inevitably gives power and influence to the "elders" in the community, often enforcing very reactionary ideas which may well be at odds with those of the young generation.

Multiculturalism cannot be an effective way of fighting racism. Culture is a complex issue, often justifying traditional attitudes which are constantly being challenged. Capitalism destroys cultures and tries to create uniformity. As Darcus Howe said on the subject - "we all shop at TESCOs now". Is this what we have in common?

It may be one of the activities, which for better or worse shapes our lives. But what we have in common is that we live and work here in this country. There is no other definition of a "British culture". Attempts to define a British culture have been ludicrous and reactionary.

In the 1970s and 1980s the labour movement was a key factor in life in the UK. It was through the labour movement that workers of ethnic minorities have been integrated. Maybe not easily. But in the year of the 30th anniversary of the Grunwick strike we can say that it has been done.

The recent Gate Gourmet strike showed that tradition is alive and well. Only the labour movement, fighting on the class issues which can unite workers of all backgrounds, will defeat the divide and rule tactics of our enemies. In this struggle, neither Trevor Phillips nor Ken Livingstone represent a real working class policy. That is something socialists still have to fight for in the labour movement and wider society. ■

## George Bush's Middle East Adventure: The chickens come home to roost

by Alan Woods

*"As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly."*  
(Proverbs, 26:11)

FOLLOWING THE publication of my article on Iraq, War Drums in Washington or Bush's Last stand, I received a letter from Dr. Carlos Alzugaray Treto (Head of Department, Coordinator of International and Strategic Studies, Higher Institute of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in Havana, who made the following observations:

"It seemed to me to be all very correct. I agree with 99% of it. Just one clarification concerning the motivations behind the war in Iraq:

"I have arrived at the hypothesis that the ruling class of the USA as a whole considers the demonstrative use of irresistible military force to be a highly effective instrument of its world domination. To try to prove to all its adversaries that, as they say, 'all resistance is useless'. Although in each case other motives have existed, time after time (Granada 1983, Panama 1989, The Gulf War of 1991, Somalia, Kosovo 1999, Afghanistan 2001, Iraq 2003) they have always picked weak, easily defeated, adversaries and thus to say to these same adversaries, and to others and to the whole world: the United States is invincible (just as in Rambo and other Hollywood movies). That is why the haemorrhaging of the armed forces Iraq, which you describe very well, is so serious for the system of domination. It undermines the credibility of the demonstrative effect of an overwhelming military victory, the key element for power, according to the ruling class as a whole.

"Greetings from Cuba,  
Carlos"

The comments of Dr. Carlos Alzugaray Treto are very welcome and can help us to deepen our analysis of the general world situation and the role of the USA.

It is absolutely correct to say that US imperialism, especially since the fall of the USSR has set itself the aim of dominating the whole world and to crush any country that attempts to resist it. Washington's motto is: "Do as we say, or we will bomb you." "Do as we say, or we will invade you." It is also true that the question of oil (which is obviously very important) was not the most important consideration in Washington's decision to invade Iraq, but rather its broader strategic considerations in the Middle East.

However, the purpose of my article was precisely to show that the USA had burnt its fingers in Iraq. Far from realising their strategic, political and economic objectives, they have suffered a great setback, as Dr. Carlos Alzugaray Treto says. Far from demonstrating their power, they have demonstrated the limits of their power. The results of this will be far-reaching.

However, the main point of my article was to point out that, from

the standpoint of US imperialism, it is evident that the invasion of Iraq was a very grave error. The idea (which I have sometimes come across) that all the actions of the imperialists are carefully calculated and conform to an intelligent plan, is incorrect. In any war the importance of leadership is a key factor. In politics as in war, the quality of individual leaders can have a considerable effect.

Of course, such factors enter into the category of historical accident. They cannot affect the outcome of broad historical processes. But they can certainly affect particular phenomena, producing complicated cross-currents, and delaying or accelerating a certain line of development. If it were not for this, history would be a very simple affair, and very easy to predict.

Marxism does not deny the role of the individual in history, but explains that the actions of individual men and women are not merely the result of free will but are determined by the existing material conditions that have been shaped independently of their will and consciousness. The actions of a leader are necessarily

limited by the given context. In a favourable objective situation, the mistakes of a leader do not necessarily have serious and lasting effects. In such a period, even a mediocre leader can achieve brilliant results in spite of his limitations. But in an unfavourable historical conjuncture, even a capable leader finds his options reduced and the likelihood of failure correspondingly





increases.

The present historical period is the period of capitalism's senile decay. US imperialism, the gendarme of world capitalism, finds itself besieged on all sides. Wars break out continually and terrorism spreads like an uncontrollable epidemic. The USA, it is true, has enormous economic and military resources. But even these resources are not without limit. The constant wars and vast expenditure they entail are sapping the wealth and strength of the USA. In such circumstances, an intelligent leader would use the threat of military intervention to impose the will of the USA on other countries. But it is an elementary proposition of diplomacy that the actual use of military strength must always be the final resort, not the first option. The slogan of the Marine Corps conveys this idea very well: "Speak softly and carry a big stick."

The conduct of Bush and the neo-conservative clique headed by Dick Cheney is not that of wise statesmen but of gangsters, bullies and vulgar adventurers. They imagine that the power of the USA gives it the right to throw its weight around and intervene in the affairs of other countries like a bully in a school playground. But the power of US imperialism is limited. By charging into Iraq and waging a war on false pretences they set in motion a chain of events they did not foresee and over which they have no control.

In the same way that the revolutionary movement depends at critical moments on the quality of the leadership, so the outcome of a war, such as the war in Iraq, can be decisively influenced by the political and military leadership of the bourgeoisie. Bush plunged the US into a military adventure in Iraq. Now it is not a question of if, but rather when they will leave. It is true that even a far-sighted and intelligent leader would be in difficulties. But the present administration in Washington is the most stupid, ignorant and myopic for decades. They understood nothing, foresaw nothing and consequently have ended in a mess. The imperialists will pay a heavy price for the poor quality of their leading men and women!

## US overstretched

The US is undoubtedly the greatest superpower in history but it is now severely overstretched by its world role. As I pointed out in my article, the USA



has inherited the role of world policeman from Britain. But in 19th Century Britain made a lot of money out of plundering its colonies. But that was in a different historical period - the period of the rise of capitalism, when the bourgeoisie, despite its monstrous exploitative and oppressive nature, was still capable of playing a relatively progressive role in developing the productive forces.

The period in which we are living is entirely different. It is the period of imperialist decay. The inability of capitalism to develop the productive forces as it did in the past is the result of the central contradiction between the colossal productive potential of industry, science and technology and the narrow limits imposed by private property and the nation state. This expresses itself in the phenomenon of globalisation, that is, the attempt to exploit to the maximum the world market, which was already predicted by Marx and Engels in the pages of the *Communist Manifesto*.

However, the advent of globalisation does not signify the elimination of the contradictions of capitalism, only their reproduction on a far bigger scale than the past. Lenin explained that capitalism means war, and his book, *Imperialism, the Highest Phase of Capitalism*, is still the most modern text one can read on the present world situation.

Despite globalisation - or rather because of it - the tensions between nations are not decreasing but increasing to an unprecedented degree. Everywhere one looks one sees new conflicts and wars. This imposes a severe strain on the USA, despite its vast resources. Let us examine for a moment the deployment of US troops on a world scale. The breakdown at the

moment is approximately as follows:

- Almost 150,000 troops in Iraq (with more on the way)
- 18,000 in Afghanistan (and this is not enough to control the situation)
- 20,000 in Japan
- 19,000 in South Korea
- 53,000 in Europe (the Russians are asking what for?)
- 2,000 in Bosnia and Kosovo (where nothing has been solved)
- 1800 in the Horn of Africa.

And let us not forget the 700 or so marines still occupying a slice of Cuban territory in Guantanamo.

The war in Afghanistan is even more unwinnable than the war in Iraq. Years after proclaiming victory, the US only exercises a shaky control over Kabul, where its puppet Karzai is only kept alive by his American bodyguards. The US and British forces are bogged down in fighting in the south, where the Taliban and others are waging an implacable struggle against the occupying forces.

The Americans and British have not been able to pacify Afghanistan. The parliament (loya jirga) is made up of warlords, drug barons, asserted gangsters and Taliban sympathisers. The imperialists shake their heads and complain that they did not expect the Taliban to put up such a determined resistance. We do not know why they did not expect it, since the whole history of the country shows that the people of Afghanistan do not take kindly to foreign invaders. They defeated the British army in the 19th century, and the Soviet Union, with all its might, was eventually compelled to withdraw. In desperation, the USA invites its NATO "allies" to participate in the war in the South. The latter politely reply: "after you, gentlemen!" As a result of the intervention in Afghanistan, the whole of Central Asia has been destabilized and the Musharraf regime in Pakistan is hanging by a thread.

In addition to the publicly declared military engagements, the USA is also involved in other military activities that are not declared. It was recently revealed that the USA has approximately 1,800 troops in the Horn of Africa, where presumably they have not gone to admire the scenery. The Islamic rebels in Somalia were winning a civil war against a reactionary and corrupt government of warlords, backed by

# Iraq war

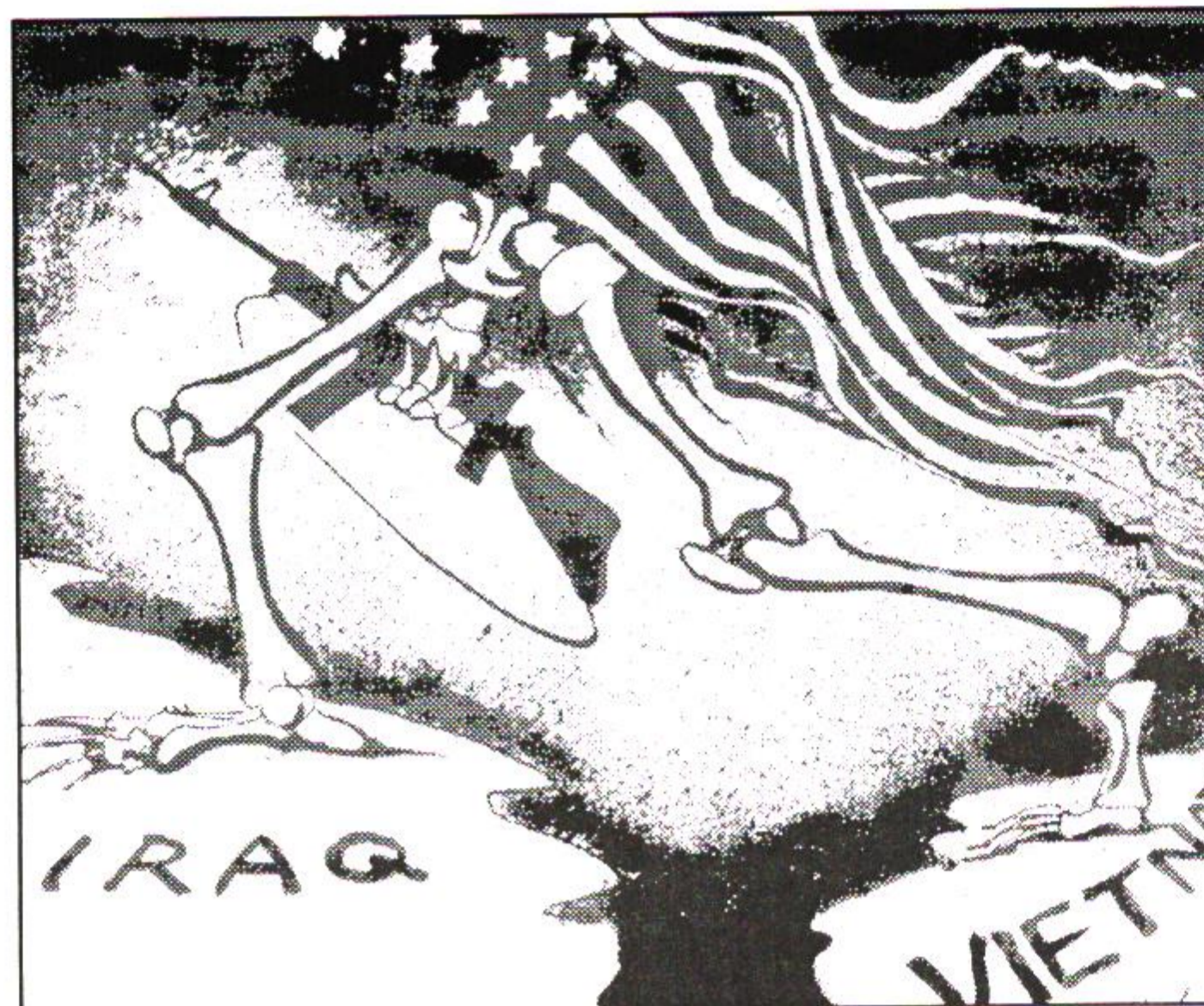
Washington. The USA was clearly behind the intervention of the Ethiopian army, which has temporarily succeeded in defeating the rebels and re-imposing the pro-US warlords in Mogadishu. But since the Somalis will not tolerate the presence of Ethiopian soldiers on their soil for long, the US will have to increase its military involvement in order to prevent the victory of the rebels. Whoever controls the Horn of Africa controls the entry to the Persian Gulf. US has built a big military base in Djibouti, and it is quite likely that Washington will find itself dragged into a new war in the Horn of Africa.

## Defeat in Iraq

Four years after the invasion of Iraq, all Bush's plans are in ruins. With almost 150,000 troops he cannot defeat the insurgents. The mood of the population is overwhelmingly hostile to the occupying forces. This was recently confirmed by a poll conducted by the BBC and ABC. This shows a collapse of confidence in the future, a burning hatred of the Coalition forces and a complete lack of trust in the Maliki government. On the fourth anniversary of the invasion, it makes grim reading for the White House. According to the opinion poll most Iraqis now say they were better off under Saddam Hussein. Even the man who appeared on television destroying the statue of Saddam now says he is sorry and wishes the statue - and Saddam - were back!

The US is now desperately trying to create an Iraqi army. They want to establish a firm base that would permit the US army to withdraw, leaving behind a puppet government and an army and police force capable of keeping the situation under control. But how can they? They have split Iraqi society along religious and sectarian lines. They originally made concessions to Shiites, angering the Sunnis. Now, under pressure from the Saudis and fearful of the growing influence of Iran, they are trying to shift the balance towards the Sunnis, bribing some tribal leaders. This has angered the Shiites.

Before the invasion of Iraq, in 2003, Bush, following the advice of the neo-conservative gang, hit upon the brilliant idea that, since Iraq's Shiite majority had been oppressed under Saddam



Hussein, the Shiites would provide a solid base of support for the Americans. More thinking elements in the intelligence community warned them about the ties between Iraqi Shiite leaders and Iran. But these warnings went unheeded. Now, suddenly, the White House has woken up to the fact that it is Iran, and not the US, which has established a solid base inside Iraq and has growing influence over the Shiite population.

The Administration is putting heavy pressure on Prime Minister Maliki to force him to co-operate with the United States army in suppressing radical Shiite militias, such as Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. But if Maliki obliges them, he will merely succeed in signing his own death warrant - politically and perhaps physically. Given the present bloody chaos in Iraq, which is entirely the responsibility of the Americans, the mass of Iraqis, whether Sunni or Shiite, see no alternative but to back the militias that provide them with at least some kind of protection and often are the only source of supply for the basic necessities of life. The Americans are hated; the government is increasingly unpopular and seen as collaborators. If they attack the militias they will rapidly lose even the narrow base of support that it still possesses.

Iraq is not on the brink of a civil war. There is a civil war in Iraq. How else does one describe the daily massacres, the constant ethnic and sectarian cleansing? The displacement of large numbers of people which is taking place in Iraq can lead to the partition of Iraq. It can end in the division of the country into three parts, with Sunni areas, Shiite areas, and Kurdish

areas. Even Baghdad might be divided into Sunni and Shiite areas. This would be a nightmare scenario, like the partition of India in 1947. It could only be brought about by the most frightful massacres and bloodshed.

By their actions the US imperialists have destabilized the entire Middle East. Jordan was relatively stable, but no more. If Bush has his way, the same chaos and internal strife we now see in Iraq will spread to Lebanon and Syria, with conflicts between Sunnis,

Alawis, Maronite Christians, Druzes and Shiites. The same sectarian madness, once unleashed, would not be easy to contain. It can spread, not only to Jordan but also to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the countries of North Africa. It would mean new instability and wars.

## Bush blunders again

Flexibility is necessary in all wars. Tactics must change with changing circumstances. A general who is inflexible, who works out a battle plan and rigidly sticks to it will certainly lead his army to defeat. Bush has done just that in Iraq. There is an old saying that the people get the leaders they deserve. Without further qualification, this statement is not correct. But it is correct to say that the ruling class in the USA has certainly got the leaders that it deserves. The American bourgeois were originally enthusiastic about Bush, but now all that has changed. They have lost all confidence in the man in the Oval Office. Above all, they have lost all confidence in his ability to win the war in Iraq. That is why they set up the Iraq Study Group, in a desperate attempt to pressurize him to change course. To no avail! He just ignored it.

Bush decided to send a further 21,000 soldiers. But this is not "irresistible military force" but a joke in very bad taste. It will do nothing to change the military situation, but will lead to more US casualties. Whatever they do now will be wrong.

*The Economist* (13th March, 2007) commented acidly:

"Mr. Bush's new foreign policy is probably best explained as a reaction to events. What he tried before in Iraq

did not work, so he is trying something new. He also has to deal with a Democratic Congress that, if ignored, may tie his hands. Some Democrats want to cut off funds for the war. Others favour standing back and letting Mr. Bush take all the blame. John Murtha, a close ally of Nancy Pelosi, the House speaker, foolishly revealed a plan gradually to place so many restrictions on how troops can be deployed that the war would become unwinnable. His party distanced itself from such tactics, which would incense patriotic voters, but has yet to agree on an alternative. Meanwhile, the (wafer-thin) Democratic majority in the Senate is still thinking about rescinding the authorization for the Iraq war it voted on in 2002. Chatting with the Iranians might be intended as a painless way of mollifying Congress - but don't bet on it working."

It goes on: "Michael Rubin, an analyst at the American Enterprise Institute, a hawkish think-tank, thinks the shift is small in substance but symbolically important. He sees two dangers. First, Iranian diplomats might make a promise that another part of the Iranian regime might break, which would render further bilateral diplomacy impossible. Second, he thinks Iran is "dangerously overconfident". Leaders in Tehran, few of whom have a feel for American politics, might misread the current anti-war rhetoric in Congress as a sign that America is now too weak politically to frustrate Iran's regional ambitions. That could prompt them to miscalculate and provoke a military clash. "The risk of a conflict with Iran has never been higher," he says."

## Splits in the ruling class

The Bush Administration is hell bent on intensifying its military adventure in Iraq and on spreading the chaos and instability to the whole of the Middle East. According to recent reports, it is engaged in clandestine operations, together with Saudi Arabia and Israel, to undermine Iran and Syria. These activities are conducted in secret and are not reported to Congress.

The actions of Bush and Cheney closely resemble those of another adventurer, Richard Nixon, who waged a secret war in Cambodia behind the backs of Congress and the American people. Their dealings with dubious intermediaries - including Sunni

extremists in Lebanon with links to al Qaeda also resemble a more recent scandal. Two decades ago the Reagan Administration sold arms to Iran in order, illegally, to fund the Nicaraguan Contras in what became known as the Iran-Contra scandal. Even though the programme was eventually exposed, it was carried out quite successfully behind the backs of Congress. Saudi money was involved in this scandal, and it is entirely possible that history is now repeating itself. According to some sources, Negroponte resigned as director of the CIA in part because he did not want a repeat of his experience in the Reagan Administration.

A recent article in *The New Yorker* (5th March) quotes a Pentagon consultant as saying that there was some difficulty accounting for covert funds: "There are many, many pots of black money, scattered in many places and used all over the world on a variety of missions," he said. The budgetary chaos in Iraq, where billions of dollars are unaccounted for, has made it a vehicle for such transactions, according to these sources.

The CIA is engaged in covert activities all over the world, not just the Middle East. They systematically work to undermine and overthrow governments that they consider inimical to the interests of the United States - that is, to US imperialism and the big monopolies that are behind it. This includes covert operations to assassinate Hugo Chavez, the democratically elected President of Venezuela, and to overthrow the Cuban Revolution under the false flag of "democracy".

In general, the American ruling class is quite content to turn a blind eye to these goings-on. But occasionally, when a particular Administration goes too far and places the interests of US imperialism in danger through foreign adventures, the US Establishment intervenes to clip its wings, or, as with Nixon, remove it from office altogether. There are some signs that the Establishment is becoming concerned about the Bush Administration and is taking steps to limit the damage it is causing.

Apart from the effect on the psychology of the troops in Iraq and the people in the US, it also represents a serious strain on America's resources, which are huge but not unlimited. The original cost of the Iraq war was supposed to be \$60 billion. But the bill so far amounts to \$350 billions. The war is

costing America \$2 billion every week, and nobody knows what the final bill will be. One estimate puts it as high as \$2 trillion. This will have serious consequences for the US economy, which is already slowing down and threatened with recession. At the same time Bush is spending ever greater quantities on arms and internal security, the President is demanding deep cuts in social spending on medical care and pensions. This variant on Goehring's policy of "guns before butter" threatens the Republicans with annihilation in the next election.

Things are therefore beginning to stir on Capitol Hill. The Senate Intelligence Committee, headed by Senator Jay Rockefeller, has scheduled a hearing for March 8th on Defense Department intelligence activities. Senator Ron Wyden, of Oregon, a Democrat who is a member of the Intelligence Committee, told Hersh: "The Bush Administration has frequently failed to meet its legal obligation to keep the Intelligence Committee fully and currently informed. Time and again, the answer has been 'Trust us'." Wyden said, "It is hard for me to trust the Administration."

These words faithfully reflect the attitude of a growing section of the US ruling class. There is now a clear division opening up within the ruling class. But Lenin explained long ago that splits at the top are a symptom of a developing revolutionary crisis. It is true that the USA is still far from such a situation. But in general outline we can already discern the processes that are tending in the direction of a profound social and political crisis. The ruling class is already split and in crisis over the war in Iraq and this is affecting the general mood of society.

The war, the collapse of the house price bubble, the perspective of a recession, the threat to pensions and health care for the elderly - all this is creating a mood of uncertainty about the future, in the middle class as well as the working class, which has no real precedent in the history of the United States since the Second World War. The coming period will be a period of storm and stress on a world scale, which will shake the USA to its foundations. One shock will follow another. In the process the psychology of the masses will be transformed. Explosive events are on the order of the day. ■

# World stock markets in turmoil

by Michael Roberts

IT ALL appeared to start in China. The Beijing government hinted that speculation on the Shanghai stock exchange was getting out of hand and the government may have to introduce a special tax on capital gains.

That produced a 10% fall in prices, the biggest daily drop in ten years. It was ironic that the Chinese government should make this call. Only six months before they had declared open day for stock market speculators, easing restrictions and announcing big sales of shares in state companies. The stock market jumped 100% in just half a year!

Now the pain is following the gain. It also shows how the turn towards capitalism driven by the so-called "Communist" leaders has exposed China's economy to the gyrations of capitalist volatility. But the stock market plunge did not just affect China. It soon spread to the stock markets of Japan, Europe and the US. They fell by 3-4% in a day, not a huge fall but significant after the huge steady rise that these markets have seen since last summer.

That a hiccup in China should ripple throughout the world's stock markets shows how globalised capitalism, particularly its finance sector, has become. Truly, chaos theory applies in the anarchy of world capitalism: when the Beijing butterfly flaps its wings, the snow falls on New York.

The problem was compounded by two other events. US economic data were released that suggested that the US economy may be slowing down much faster than markets expected. It appeared that real GDP growth in the US in the last quarter of 2006 was only just above 2% rather than 3.5% previously estimated. Also, the for-

mer chairman of the US central bank, Alan Greenspan, made a video speech to investors in Hong Kong (for \$150,000 by the way!) in which he said that there was a possibility of economic recession in the US in 2007. All this was enough to spook investors into selling their stocks.

## Optimists v Pessimists

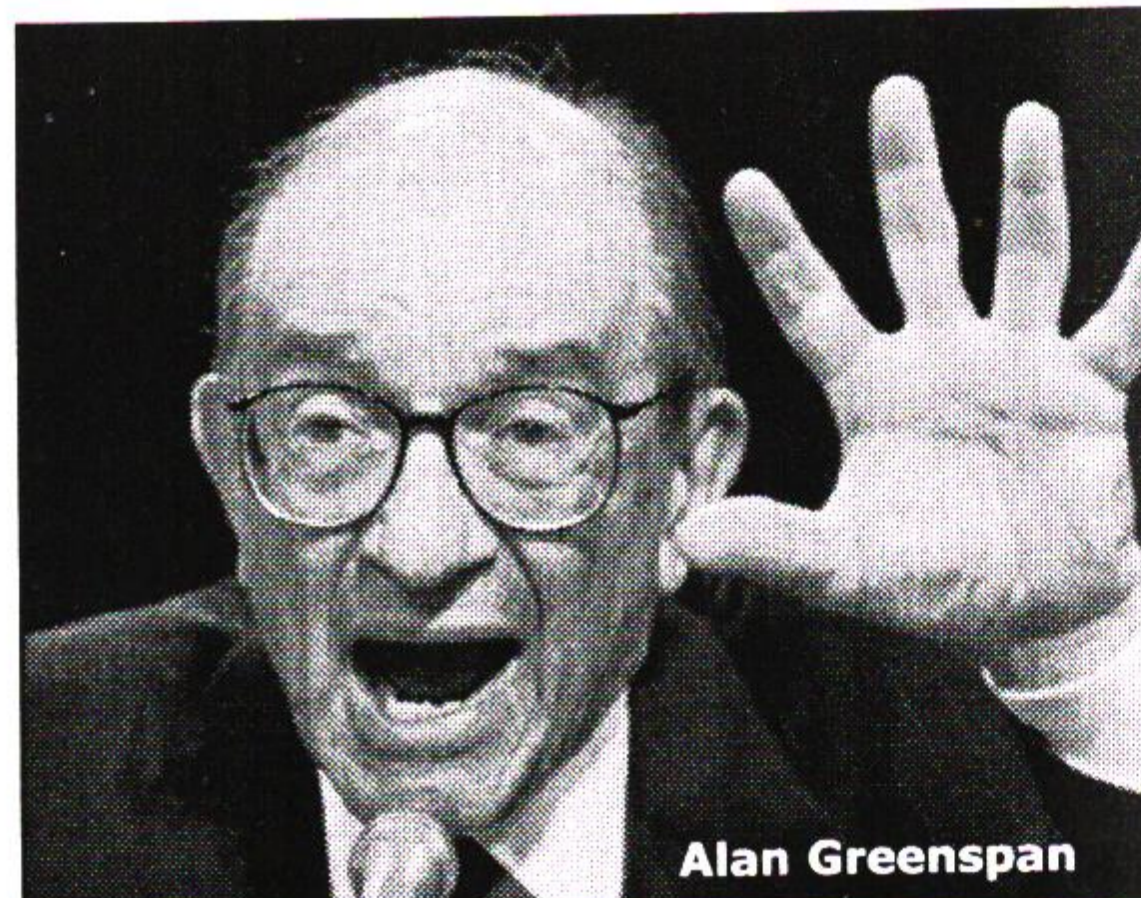
How far can this go? It depends on how you analyse the causes of the fall-back. The capitalist optimists argue that there is nothing wrong with the fundamentals of capitalist growth: employment is good, profits are good, interest rates are lowish, inflation is under control. So this stock market fall is just a healthy "correction" that will end soon, before the market starts going up again - just as it did last summer after a "correction". This is the view of the majority and the current Federal Reserve Chairman who succeeded, Greenspan, Ben Bernanke. Speaking to Congress, Bernanke was at pains to tell the senators that all was well. The US market stabilised (briefly) on his words.

However, there are others who argue that the US financial markets have become way overpriced because of 'excessive' credit in the economy. Huge money piles are being ploughed into buying up companies through so-called 'pri-

vate equity' deals and into lending money for property and share deals. Money is not going into productive investment (indeed investment into new plant and machinery is hardly growing in the US), so it is being squandered. Such is the excess that any sign that the great manufacturing powerhouses of Asia, particularly China, could be slowing down and thus driving up inflation and slowing world growth could easily set off a collapse in stock prices and drive the world into recession.

My view is a little different. The key to understanding the health of capitalism is profitability. US and global profits have rocketed up since the recession 2001. However, much of these profits are not real (they are really the profits of finance capital siphoned off the productive sectors of the economy). Moreover, although profitability has risen in the last five years, supporting higher stock prices, it is still below the levels achieved in 1997.

Most important, profitability is set to fall from here. US productivity growth is slowing and costs of production are rising compared to growth in sales. Sales are dropping off as the US housing market slumps. Also, the cost of borrowing has risen as the Federal Reserve has hiked up interest rates. The profits squeeze will steadily grow over the next few years. That will weaken enthusiasm for the stock market. Eventually profitability will fall to levels that will provoke an economic slump and a sustained fall in the stock market. This current stock market fall probably won't lead to any crash and an immediate economic recession. But it is an indicator of the deterioration of the health of global capitalism that will unfold over the next few years. □



## US housing market fears

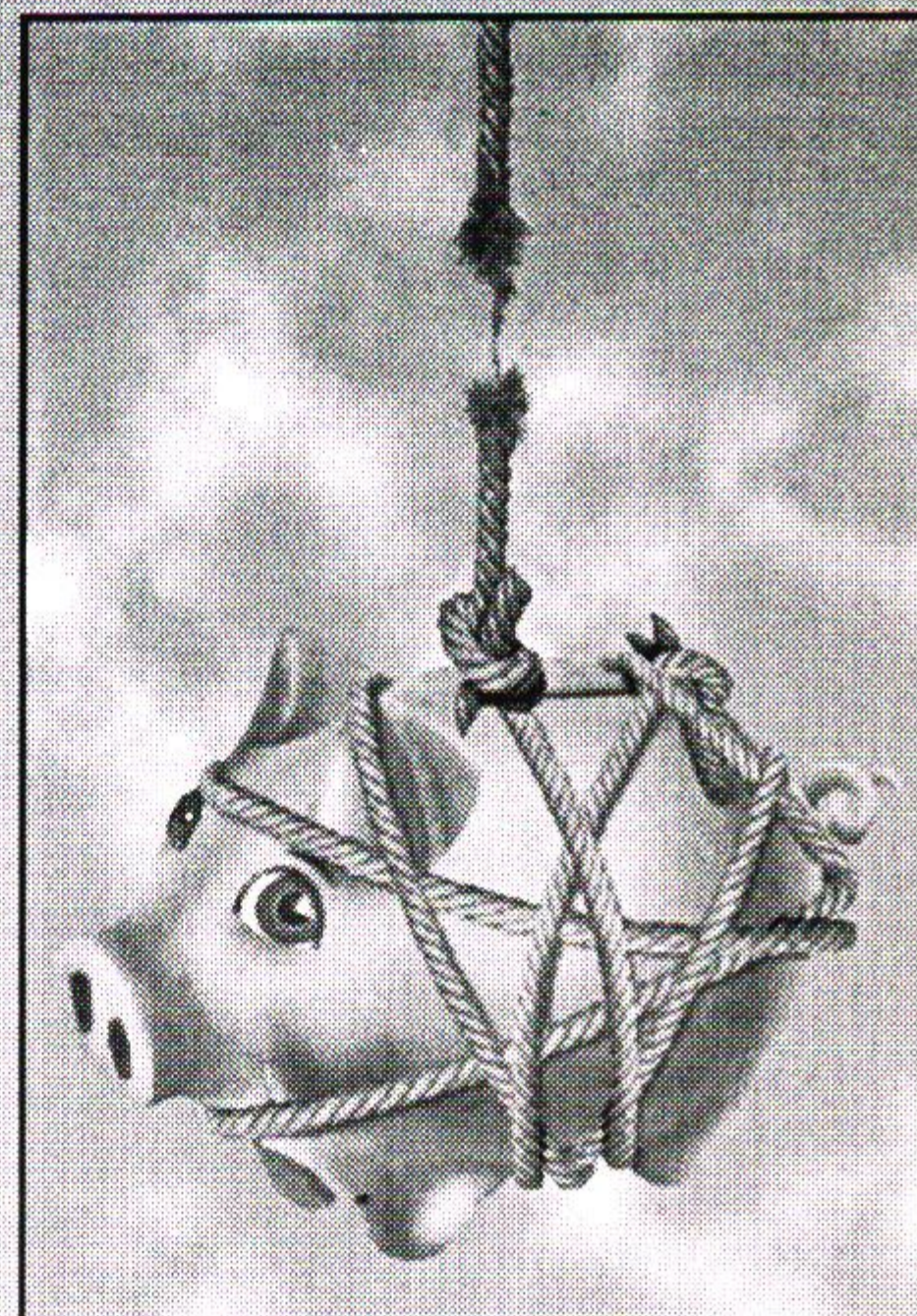
THE LATEST concern of speculators is not just a possible slowdown in the US economy hitting economic growth in the rest of the world. It is also the collateral damage from the falling US real estate market. In the great bubble that was US housing in the five years up to summer 2005, many Americans started to speculate in house purchases, while others were desperate to get on the housing ladder. So they looked for mortgage loans that they could ill afford.

The banks and finance houses of Wall Street were happy to lend these dubious borrowers the money, given the boom on the homes market. These 'sub-prime' loans, as they were called, were hugely risky for the borrowers and would be a disaster for the banks if the housing market collapsed. And it did. House prices have dropped from rising 15% a year in 2005 to an absolute fall now. As a result, many sub-prime borrowers have gone bust and cannot pay their mortgage pay-

ments. The latest figures showing nearly 14% of such borrowers in default sparked off a fall in stock markets.

Of course, most mortgage borrowers and homeowners are not sub-prime. These high interest-rate loans are just 10% of the total mortgage market. But the worry is that many banks have packaged up their loans in the sub-prime market and 'sold' them on to other banks. This diversification of risk means that sizeable sections of the mortgage industry are 'exposed' to the sub-prime market.

Now the second-largest sub-prime lender, New Century, has said that it cannot pay back its creditors and lots of small sub-prime lenders have gone to the wall. The risk of a general financial sector default has risen. Some bourgeois investors are worried that a further collapse will weaken the US economy further and cause a 'domino' effect across the world. Stock markets were now down by about 6%



after the scares began, still less than the sell-off in May 2005. But even if markets recover again as they did last year, this ripple is yet another confirmation that it is only a matter of a relatively short time (six months to three years) before a major downturn in the financial sector (and with it, the rest of economy) takes place. □

## 'Sub-prime loans'- the view from below

by Mick Brooks

AS MICHAEL Roberts' article records, the latest outbreak of jitters on the share markets was caused by the fact that house prices in the US have been stagnant or falling for the past eighteen months. Michael's regular monthly reports have shown that the world economy is riven by imbalances. For every dollar of goods the US exports, it imports almost two dollars' worth. How can any country live beyond its means in that way?

The driving force of the gravity-defying American consumer boom that has sustained the world economy has been the house price bubble. US consumers have been spending money they haven't got on the basis of borrowing against the ever-rising prices of their homes. Now house prices have gone into reverse. No wonder stock

markets have got the willies! Commentators use the word 'contagion'. What they mean is fear - fear for the future of the world capitalist economy.

The house price bubble has spawned a layer of aggressive financial players, determined to make as much money out of the gold rush as possible before things go pear shaped. Thrusting 'sub-prime loans' at the punters is part of the process. This story is based on an article in the Guardian on Friday 16th March. Simon Ferguson is 85. He has dementia. Global Financial signed him up for a new 30-year mortgage he thought he could afford. His daughter went through the paperwork.

"The document runs to five pages of small type and is full of technical terms such as 'Multistate 12 MAT

adjustable rate rider'. The teaser rate it offered him produced a monthly payment of \$1,482, more than he was paying under the old mortgage and greater than his entire income of \$1,100 a month.

Even at that rate, the borrower is not paying off the interest on the capital and the size of the loan grows until after three years his monthly payments will suddenly shoot up to as much as \$4,200 - almost three times his income." (Ed Pilkington) Global Financial made no checks on his income or the state of the property before signing Mr. Ferguson up.

The authorities don't care if dodgy financiers rob him of his home. But, as Michael Roberts shows, they do care if a substantial part of the banking system slips into the chasm. □

## The Significance of Lenin's April Theses 1917

by Darrall Cozens, Coventry Labour Party and UCU (Personal capacity)

REVOLUTIONS ARE the supreme test for revolutionary ideas, programmes and the individuals who support these ideas. Comrades who have studied revolutions in order to understand the processes taking place will be disappointed if they expect a new revolutionary situation to develop exactly like a previous one. The task is to apply the method of analysis to the concrete situation that is unfolding. Theories on how to change society are not abstract schemas or dogmas that are applied at any given moment despite the nature of the concrete situation. Unfortunately however there are so-called revolutionaries who will try to fit the situation to the schema. They fail to recognise that an analysis that was relevant at one time and place is no longer valid because the objective situation has changed.

Revolutions throw up fundamental questions. What is the nature of the revolution? Is it a revolution to establish a bourgeois capitalist democracy or a workers' democracy? What is the balance of forces between the classes? What forces are to lead the revolution? Is it the working class supported by other socially oppressed or marginalised layers? Is it the working class in alliance with "progressive" elements of the bourgeoisie? In the modern epoch the answers seem clear cut. Capitalism has outlived its usefulness and socialism is on the agenda. For many revolutionary leaders in February 1917 the answers were not so clear cut, even for many Bolsheviks.

The February 1917 revo-

lution in Russia was the "dress rehearsal" for the October Revolution. In the space of a few weeks the whole of Russian society was turned upside down. The 300-year-old Romanov dynasty came to an end with the abdication of Tsar Nicholas Second on March 3rd. Strikes, demonstrations and mutinies in the armed forces had brought down the government. In this revolutionary situation there arose two organs of power. On the one hand there was the Temporary Committee of the fourth Duma, a self-appointed grouping of centre-right politicians supported by the middle and upper classes. This became the Provisional Government (PG) headed by Prince Lvov. The only socialist in the PG was Alexander Kerensky who was Minister of Justice. At the same time, on February 26th and 27th, elections were held to the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies.

On March 1st the PG began to implement some overdue political and legal reforms to pre-

pare for elections to a Constituent Assembly (CA). The reforms, which any Marxist would have supported, included civil rights such as freedom of the press, of speech, of assembly and of religion, along with the right to strike (strikes had been brutally suppressed under the Tsarist regime), as well as amnesty for political and religious prisoners, an extension of the franchise and the introduction of a secret ballot in elections for the CA. It was also agreed, jointly with the Petrograd Soviet, that a militia would be established to replace the Tsarist police and that the 250,000-strong Petrograd Garrison, the armed power behind the revolution, would not be moved out of the capital.

On the same day however that the PG was issuing these orders, the Soviet published Army Order Number 1 which stated that soldiers and sailors were to obey the orders of the PG only if the Soviet gave its approval. In addition the Order stated that soldiers and sailors were to set up their own committees to take control over weapons out of the hands of the officers. A few days later the Soviet issued Army Order Number 2 which called on soldiers and sailors to sack their commanders and elect others in their place. In addition to this power, the Soviet also had control, through its elected trade union and worker delegates, over the railways, the postal and telegraph services. The Soviet had also set up food supply committees and was publishing its own newspaper - *Izvestia* (The News).

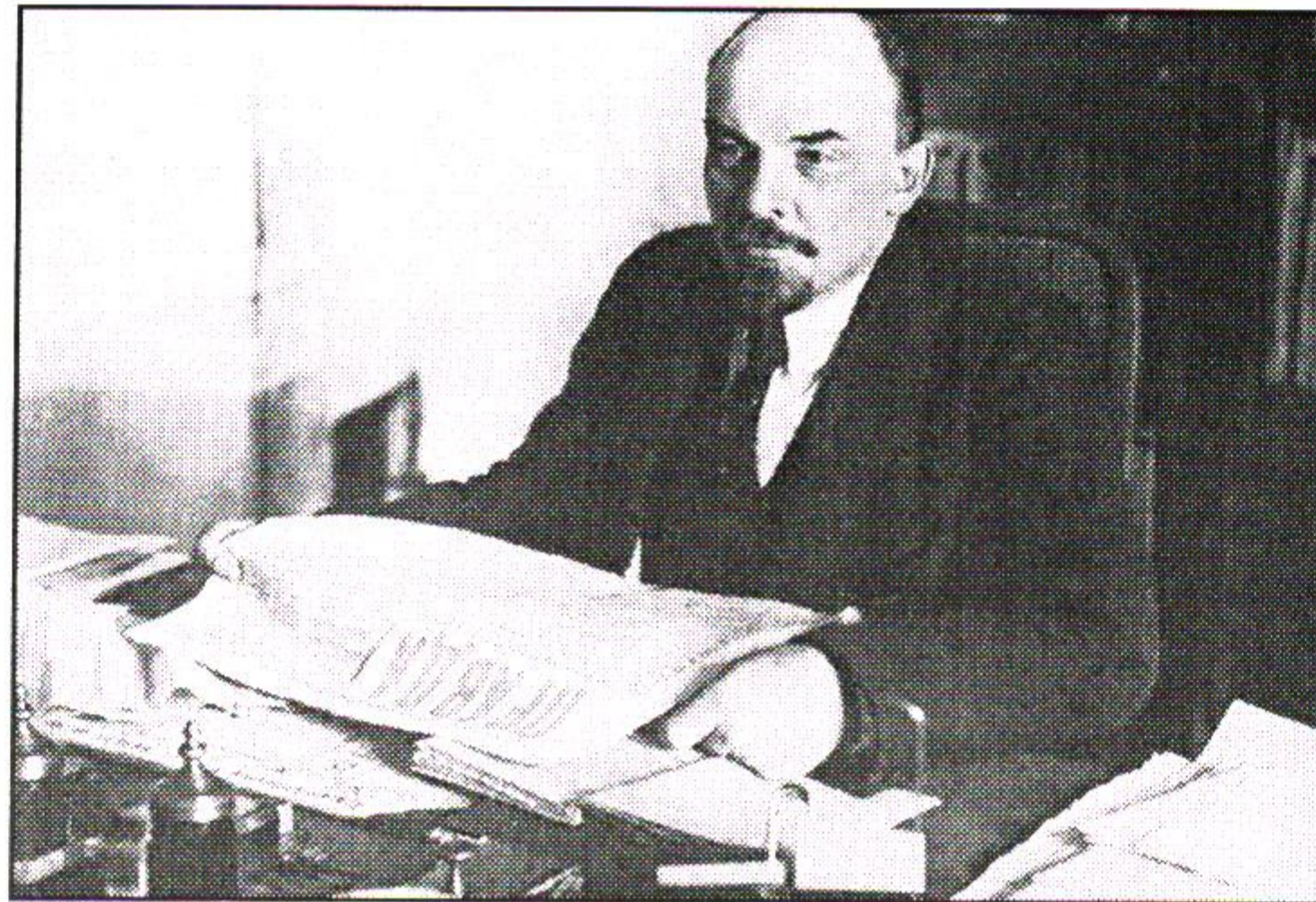


Similar soviets were springing up all over the country (by autumn 1917 there were more than 900)

Frederick Engels once said that in the last analysis the State consists of a body of armed men. In March 1917 there was the PG with nominal political power and the Soviet with real political power in that nothing happened without its approval and it controlled the bodies of armed men. This was a classic situation of dual power where both organs of power even met in the same place - the Tauride Palace! Why then did the Soviet not sweep aside the PG which was a remnant of the fourth Duma that had been elected on a limited franchise and had limited support? The Soviet was an elected body of about 600 delegates that had huge support amongst the working class and the armed forces.

## Contradiction

Real power was in the hands of the Soviet, yet it was not taken. To understand this contradiction it is necessary to understand the nature of many of the leaders of the Soviet. This leadership had spent years preparing for a revolutionary overthrow of society and now when power was in their grasp most of them completely failed to recognise the balance of forces and the inability of capitalism to resolve any of the fundamental issues that affect the workers, soldiers and peasants. The issue of food, an end to the war and the land question could not be resolved on the basis of capitalism - and the PG was in fact a capitalist government and as such could not and should not be relied upon. The reforms it had passed were as a result of the mass pressure of the movement of workers, soldiers and peas-



ants. If the pressure were to fade the reforms could just as easily be taken away.

The leadership of the Soviet consisted of Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries (SRs) and Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks believed in the two-stage theory of the revolution. Firstly, the Tsarist regime would fall and a capitalist liberal democracy would be established. Then the capitalist economy would develop and so would the working class. When the working class was strong enough, it could take power in its own name. The Social Revolutionaries (SRs) drew their support from the peasantry and were divided into a right wing that supported the PG and a left wing that was drawing closer to the Bolsheviks. Many in the Bolshevik leadership were in exile or abroad, but Kamenev and Stalin had returned in March from exile in Siberia and were supporting the Soviet's position of critical support for the PG and were also involved in talks to try and achieve reconciliation between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. This position seemed natural as Russia, in Lenin's words, was now the freest of all the belligerent countries in the world after the reforms of the PG, so why not support the PG?

It was against this background that Lenin returned

from exile on April 3rd, arriving at the Finland Station. He descended from the famous "sealed train" that had brought him from Switzerland to Russia passing through Germany, jumped onto an armoured car and to the surprise of many in the Bolshevik leadership declared no collaboration with the bourgeois PG, no deal with the Mensheviks and the immediate withdrawal of Russia from the imperialist war. Lenin went on to a meeting of the Bolshevik Party and he was heard in "stunned silence". It was obvious that he was in a minority and needed to win a majority for his position. He then went on to a meeting of the Mensheviks after having given a copy of his speech to Tsereteli, the Menshevik leader. Here Lenin was met with heckling and booing.

## Not party policy

His speech formed the basis of the April Theses that were published in Pravda, the Bolshevik Party newspaper, on April 7th. The Theses were not party policy but in the following weeks Lenin proved that from afar he had understood better than many of the Bolshevik leaders in Russia the feelings and aspirations of the workers and soldiers. Through a series of meetings, articles and pamphlets he achieved

a majority in the Bolshevik party by the end of April. His position was vindicated as party membership rose from about 10,000 in April to half a million in October, with industrial workers making up 60% of the membership.

The growth of the Bolshevik Party was spectacular. At the beginning of March only about 40 of the 600 delegates to the Petrograd Soviet were Bolsheviks. By October they had a majority. In February the Bolsheviks only had 150 members in the Putilov factory that had 26,000 workers! By the end of March some 242 soviets had been established in Russia but only 27 had a Bolshevik majority. By October they had a majority in the Moscow Soviet and at the All Russia Congress of Soviets. Why did the Bolsheviks gain so much power so quickly and attract so many new members? The entry of Tseretelli and Skobelev from the Mensheviks and Chernov from the SRs into the PG in May certainly helped. They lost members to the Bolsheviks as the PG became increasingly isolated. The most important factor however was that the programme and policies of the Bolsheviks articulated the aspirations of the working class, the soldiers and increasingly the peasantry. This programme however would not have existed without the April Theses of Lenin.

So what did the Theses actually say? In a very short document of a few pages there were 10 important points made.

1. The war being fought is an imperialist war and a peaceful, democratic ending to the war will only be possible if capital is overthrown. With "particular thoroughness, persistence and patience" this has to be explained to the masses.

2. The unfolding revolution is passing from the first stage where power was put into the hands of the bourgeoisie to the second stage where power must be placed into the hands of the proletariat and the poorest section of the peasants.

3. No support for the provisional Government, "a government of capitalists".

4. Recognition that the Bolsheviks were a small minority in the Soviet and therefore it was necessary for a "patient, systematic and persistent explanation" of the errors of the other parties. At the same time to preach of the need to transfer "the entire state power to the Soviets of Workers Deputies."

5. Not a parliamentary republic but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies. No standing army but an armed people. Elected officials subject to recall and paid the

same as a competent worker.

6. Confiscation of all landed estates and nationalisation of all lands in the country.

7. Banks to be amalgamated into a single bank under the control of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

8. Social production and distribution of products under the control of the Soviets.

9. Convocation of a Party Congress. Change Party programme on the imperialist war, the state and the minimum programme. Change of name to Communist Party.

10. A new International.

These ten points laid the basis for the October Revolution which would not have been successful without the leadership of Lenin. They confirmed the inability of capitalism to take society forward and therefore the need to move to the stage of the proletarian revolution. This point

brilliantly confirmed Trotsky's Permanent Revolution. Production of wealth and finance to be in the hands of the working class through its democratic organisations. A break with the Mensheviks and the formation of a new Party to fight for power. A break too with the reformist Second International and the creation of a new (Third) International.

All of these events took place 90 years ago but the lessons have still not been learnt by many so-called revolutionaries. Capitalism can offer no future for humankind. There is only Socialism or Barbarism. There are no "progressive" capitalists. There are no two stages. The only programme is the socialist revolution under the control of the working class. The task is through "patient, persistent and systematic" explanation to prepare the forces that will change society. □

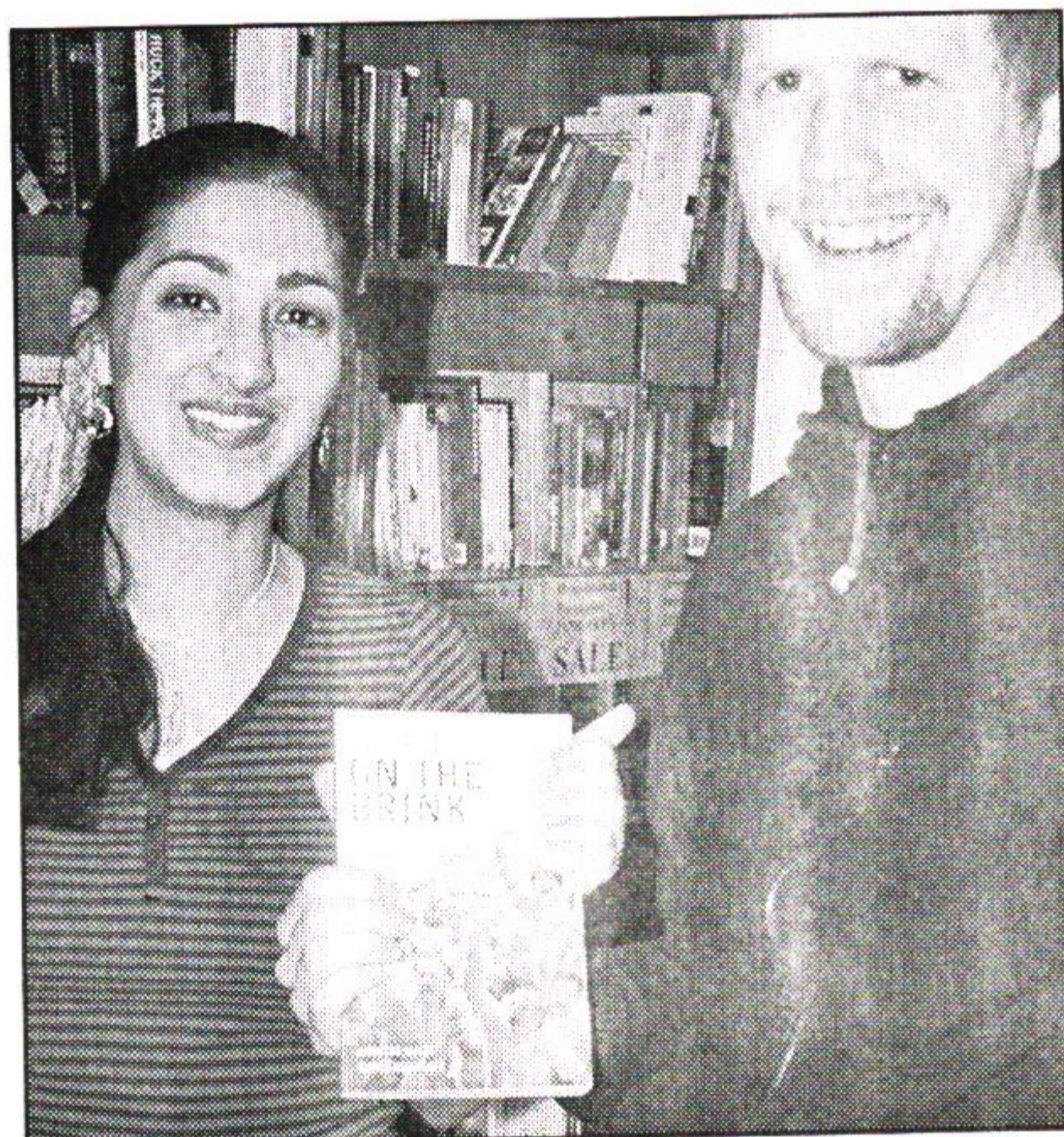
## "Iran On the Brink" Rising Workers and Threats of War

On Tuesday 6 March, the book *Iran On the Brink* was launched at Housmans Bookshop in London. This book, with the subtitle "An insider's account of Iran's people, its politics, and the threat of invasion", explores the changes taking place in Iran from the ground up. From the official press release: "While the world keeps its eyes riveted on Iran's nuclear programme, the Islamic Republic has gone through a crisis of its own. This book shows how soaring unemployment and poverty has given way to social protest. A new labour movement has come to the fore. Although strikes are banned, workers are beginning to organise and underground networks are challenging the rule of the mullahs from within."

The comrades from the Iranian Workers' Solidarity Network had organised this meeting and introduced the two authors. Andreas Malm and Shora Esmailian, who both work for *Arbetaren*, Sweden's major progressive weekly newspaper, presented their book to an eagerly listening audience. Afterwards many questions were asked about the threat of an American invasion or bombing campaign from Israel, about Iran's nuclear weapons and about the way forward for the Iranian workers'

movement after the painful period following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

**Further details about the book are available from the Pluto Press website at [www.plutobooks.com](http://www.plutobooks.com)**





# Debating Spanish Civil War

by Pablo Roldan

ON SATURDAY, March 5, the International Brigades Trust held its annual lecture at the Imperial War Museum. The day event started with the screening of the magnificent documentary "To die in Spain". The film, by Frédéric Rossif, was produced in France in 1963 and is probably the best documentary about the Spanish Civil War ever made.

The attempt to explain such complex events in the reduced space of a documentary film of 82 minutes makes it impossible to touch upon many decisive and interesting events of the Spanish Civil War, like the Barcelona May Days in 1937. However, the film maker, using only original footage from the years 1931-1939, creates an extremely powerful and dramatic work, in which the tragedy of the Spanish workers and peasants is accessible both on an intellectual and emotional level.

## Church

Paul Preston introduced Julian Casanova, professor of History at Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain, and author amongst other titles of *Anarcho-syndicalism in Spain: 1931 - 1939* and most recently *Franco's Church*. They revealed, with the help of solid factual evidence, the material and moral support of the Spanish Catholic Church to the rebel troops and the fascist regime of Franco. From the beginning of the insurrection, they used systematic use of violence to suppress the working class organisations and any trace of progressiveness within Spanish society.

He went on to denounce the myriad of "neo-revisionist" works produced in Spain in the last years by so-called historians and journalists linked to the Spanish Catholic Church and to the Spanish Popular Party (conservatives), in which Franco's military rebellion is glorified anew as the act that saved Spain from the devils of communism, nationalism and atheism.

Later, Paul Preston, to illustrate the degree of participation of the Catholic Church in Franco's fascist regime, commented on the case of a catholic priest who accompanied the troops of

General Yagüe in his march towards Badajoz. This one priest, appalled by the raping, looting and killing of Yagüe's troops denounced these actions to his superiors on several occasions as something unacceptable to the values of the catholic faith. He was later killed in Madrid, during the Battle at Ciudad Universitaria and, as has happened with many priests killed in Spain during the war, a beatification process was started.

## Beatification

This went a long way, through several ecclesiastical committees, until it was finally stopped. The case is that he had been shot at the back by somebody on his own side. Quite likely - though this is only a hypothesis - by somebody fed up with his Christian scruples and denunciations. The beatification petition was thus refused on the grounds that he had been killed by the soldiers of Christ!

Professor Casanova concluded his talk by stressing two issues. He firstly urged the Spanish government to create archives and museums to preserve and make accessible all documental material, since - as he said - without this there is no history. And secondly, he strongly recommended to fully incorporate the study of this period of Spanish history into the educational system, since there are many places

where this is not studied and taught at all or only in a superficial way.

After the lecture, he screened three short clips from the archives of the Filmoteca Española showing different aspects of life on the republican zone, that he had kindly brought from Spain with him. Of especial interest was the recording of Durruti's funeral in Barcelona, in November 1936, where an impressive multitude with clenched fists came out on the streets to offer their farewell to the anarchist leader killed in Ciudad Universitaria, Madrid.

Afterwards there were some questions and contributions about the causes of Franco's victory, the role of the western democracies and the non intervention pact, etc. In this respect it was heartbreaking to hear Mr Preston defending Negrin's government and calling idiots those who opposed his "effort to centralise the war effort in pursuit of a victory for the Republic, which eventually never came", while blaming the defeat on the attitude of France, Britain and the United States, "who could not overcome their class prejudices" to help the Republican government in its military effort against fascism.

It is always kind of shocking to see how respected historians see the Spanish Civil War as only a military confrontation in which the victory would be granted to the best equipped and best staffed army. The social and political issues that, in their view, triggered the confrontation, once this got started, passed on to a second plane, as a decorative background.

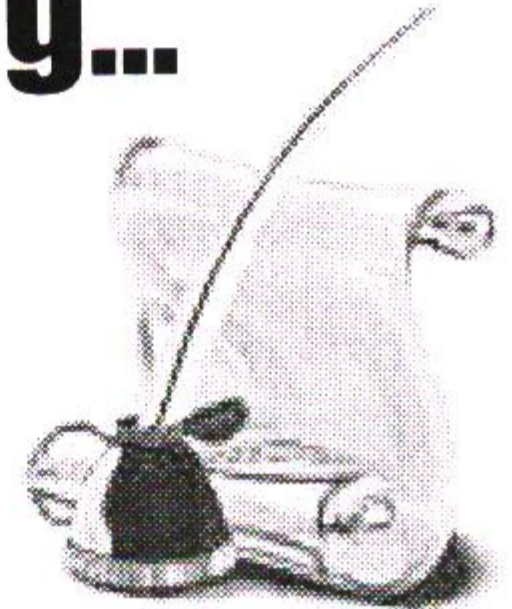
How far away this is from Trotsky's clear understanding of the dynamics of socialist revolution and fascist counter-revolution. "Victory" - he said - "will go either to the socialist revolution or to fascism" and then concluded: "the conditions for victory of the masses in the civil war against the army exploiters are very simple in their essence." In this important work, 'The Lessons of Spain - the Last Warning', Trotsky outlined in a 12 point programme how the civil war must be won by revolution. It was not simply a battle between competing armies but a living struggle of social forces. □



# something different...

## Caledonia Calling...Caledonia Calling...

### Direct from the desk of Elmer Whitefeather



#### Hail! Felicitations! Tag!

Salutations from Ecosse, North Britain. Ah, dear Alba; her hills and glens and steep braes: Hasten the greenery of spring when the rain in Scotia becomes a tad warmer. Good graces and a wee bonny tartan comity to all - especially our new kindred connoiseurs of one of the most useless promontory's you are ever likely to read! High 5!!!

From a wee doakin' doaris point of view it was a great week for Scotch folk everywhere who are celebrating the news that Fred Godwin, Chief Executive of the Royal (Gawd Bless 'Er) Bank of Scotland worked so hard last year that he paid himself £3.9 million in salary. Fred must have put in a lot of overtime.

Your noble labyrinth's generosity in giving of my time is well known and last Wednesday night I sedulously sacrificed a Coronation St bumper double-edition to attend My daughter Estell's new boyfriend's opening night show at Chucklethut Community Service. Bill Pettywillie is his name, but Estell calls him "wee Willie". He is an alternative stage hypnotist (you know, in the same way as there are alternative comedians). It was a night with a difference alright. The chamber was packed. Mrs Whitefeather and all our 13 children joined me as we took our place. Mrs Paisley, my trusted soubrette was present, alas she did not see us. Elmer jnr attempted to catch her attention by skateboarding up the side of the wall; alas she seemed more interested in keeping the strong lights off her by pulling her coat up over her head. As hypnotist Willie took to the stage there was but polite applause, giving us Whitefeathers an opportunity to whoop and whistle like the audience do on Rikki Lake.

Willie is unlike those charlatans who only hypnotise 1 or 2 people in their audience. Willie hypnotises every single person present. The lights dimmed and he produced a pocket watch on a

chain. He explained how the timepiece was irreplaceable and had been in his family for 7 or 8 generations. He instructed everyone to stare at the watch. He began swinging the watch in a pendulum fashion chanting, "Follow the watch...Follow the watch...Follow the watch". The whole room was under his magical spell - including me - but I do have low serotonin levels. Suddenly the watch flew off the chain, smashing into a million pieces. "SHIT !" screamed Willie. The council are still cleaning the community centre.

Last weekend Mrs Whitefeather caught my eye. Not literally of course because I need it myself - It's one of a set! She convinced me to drive her and 9 of the weans into town for the weekly shoplifting. It was a difficult journey.

The younger one's were fighting all the way there and you know how hard it is to concentrate on the road in such circumstances. Anyway, once I parked the Motability shopping scooter, I saw old Chester Drawers approaching.

"I thought it was you," said Chester. I was a bit confused at first - then I remembered leaving the house. So I said, "Oh it's me alright". I could hardly deny it. "It's a small world," Chester remarked. "It is, but I wouldn't like to have to paint it," I replied.

First stop was the butchers, Chop & Change. I perpended the meat counter with some care. "Is that Scotch lamb?" I asked. "Why, you gonnae eat it or talk to it?" replied the butcher. I asked if he had wild duck and he said, "I've got one in the freezer I could annoy for you." We managed to locate lots of bargains. In fact, as we loaded the groceries in, we were delighted to find we hadn't spent any money at all. That meant Mrs Whitefeather could afford a beauty treatment. The results were astonishing. She looked gorgeous. Then the mud pack fell off...

Sunday morning saw Elmer jnr and myself in pellucid mood. He is having some "issues". He's got so many fiddles going his pals call him

Mantovanni.

And lazy! He is so lazy he got himself a girlfriend who's already pregnant. He wanted to know if he had gone on honeymoon with his mother and I. Well.

I told him he had gone with me but came back with his mother. I have every sympathy with the boy. I'm undergoing regression treatment - as opposed to aggression treatment I get here at Whitefeather Cottage. As a result, I've pursued a calculated traverse into my own upbringing. Please don't misunderstand dear ones, I had a very enjoyable childhood. I was 35 when it finished. My parents were so miserly they used to rent my pram out while I was being fed. Later, they became so forlorn with me that they paid someone to push the pram - and I've been pushed for money ever since.

That evening we gathered round the piano and sang "The World's a Circle, But We're So Square" with Mrs Whitefeather accompanying us on the mouthorgan. At least that's what we thought until her face went blue and she collapsed. We managed to retrieve a Tunnock's Caramel Log which had lodged in her throat - horizontally! Her normally pursed mouth was like a skate's arse for a week.

Comrades, friends. Your sprightly sage's sporan is in need of some sponson and so is this missive of utter disjunction. As always beloved, I close by imparting some ineffectual claptrap as a matter of course. Only a mediocre person is at the top of their game all the time.

Slanje,  
Elmer Whitefeather

# New from wellred

## The History of the Russian Revolution

By Leon Trotsky

As part of the Trotsky Project, which aims to make available all of Trotsky's writings available in English in book form, Wellred Publications has decided to republish Trotsky's famous history of the Russian Revolution, which has been out of print for some time. This is a timely republication, and a fitting contribution to the arsenal of Marxism, as this year is the ninetieth anniversary of the Revolution.

Send us your orders together with your home address to SA Publications PO Box 50525 London E14 6WG. Please make cheques payable to Wellred

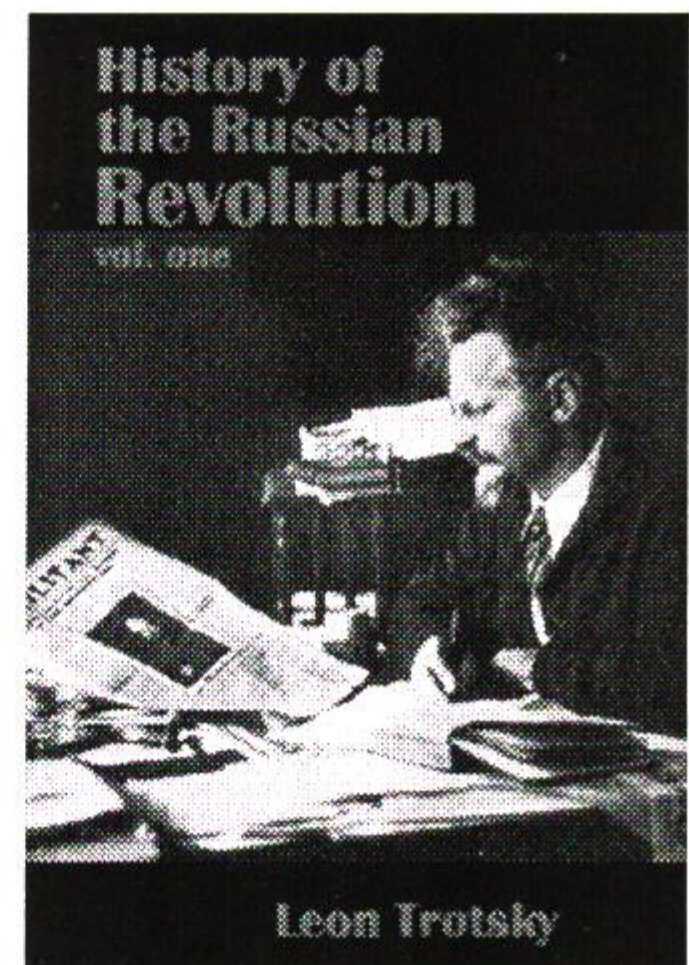
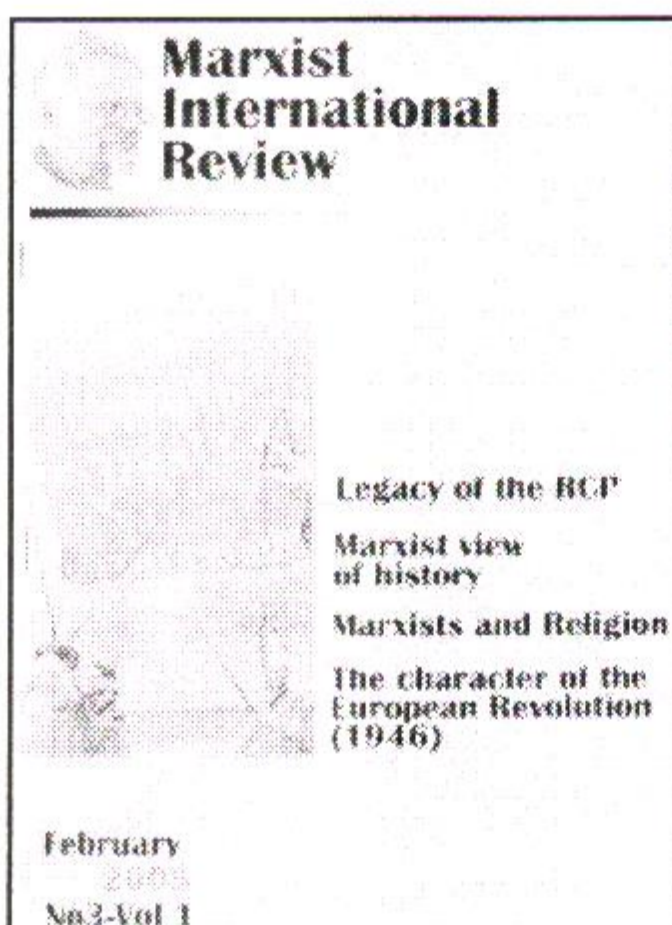
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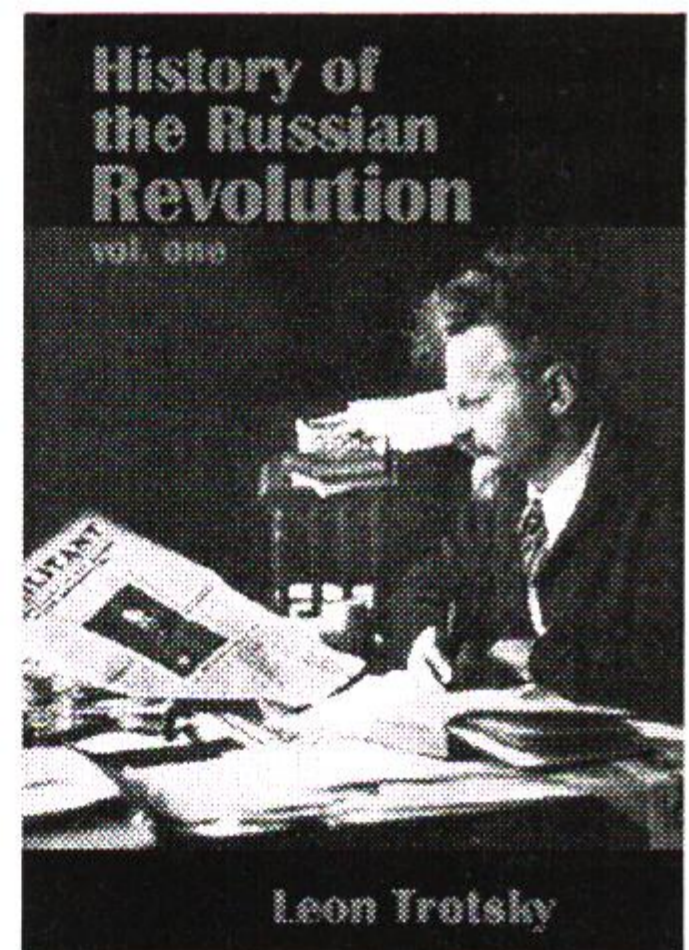
THE CHINESE revolution has often been called the second greatest event of the 20th century after that of Russia in 1917. Yet events in China are often ignored despite that country's growing presence on the world stage. The first issue of volume two of the Marxist International Review seeks to address this problem with an edition devoted entirely to China.

The issue starts with the text of a major document discussed and agreed by Marxists meeting in Europe last year. It looks at the current state and direction of China and asks how far down the capitalist road has it gone? To supplement this document we have included 'The Chinese Revolution' written by Ted Grant in 1949 and 'The Theses of Comrade Stalin' written by Leon Trotsky and submitted for publication in 1927. A chronology is included at the end.

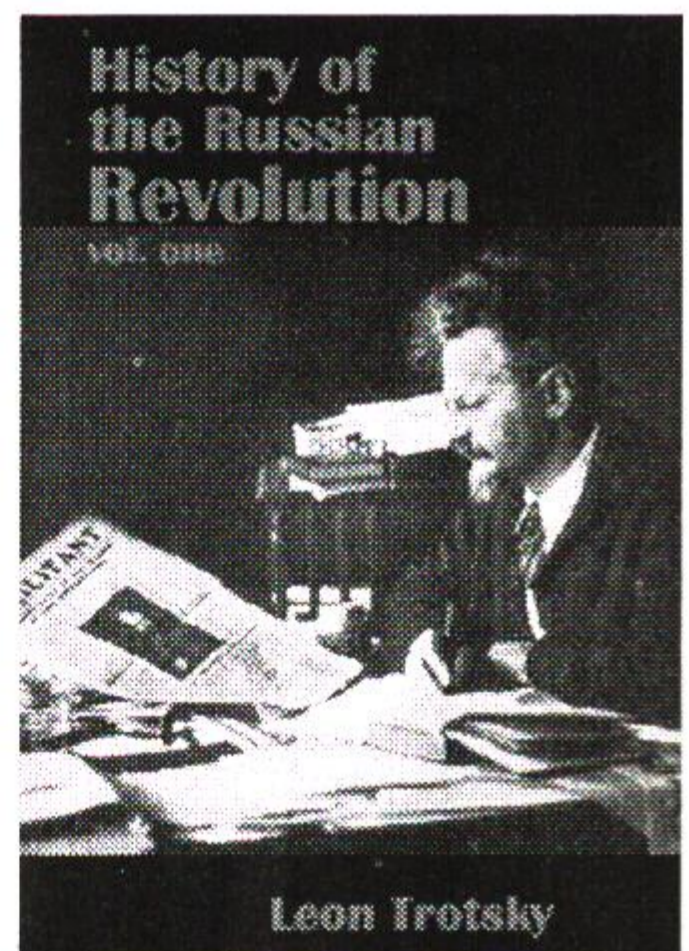
You can obtain MIR Vol 2 No 1 on China by subscribing at a cost of £25 for volume 2 or by sending a cheque for £4 made payable to SASC together with your details to us at PO Box 50525, London E14 6WG



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# Hogarth-a critic of his times

by David Sullivan

FOLLOWING THE recent Holbein, and Valesquez exhibitions in London, the major review of Hogarth at Tate Britain deserves a wider audience beyond the usual 'art appreciating gallery set'.

William Hogarth (1697 - 1764) was a brilliant social critic and satirist of rising capitalist society, and sought to depict contemporary English society in all its ugly glory, employing a theatrical approach particularly suited to his artistic ambition: 'I have endeavoured to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer: my picture is my stage, and men and women are my players.'

He is best known for the famous prints of London street life, revelling in its drunken decadence, and also the series of the Rake's, and Harlot's Progress, but this comprehensive exhibition examines his life's work and interests as a painter, and demonstrates his significant contribution to the development of British art.

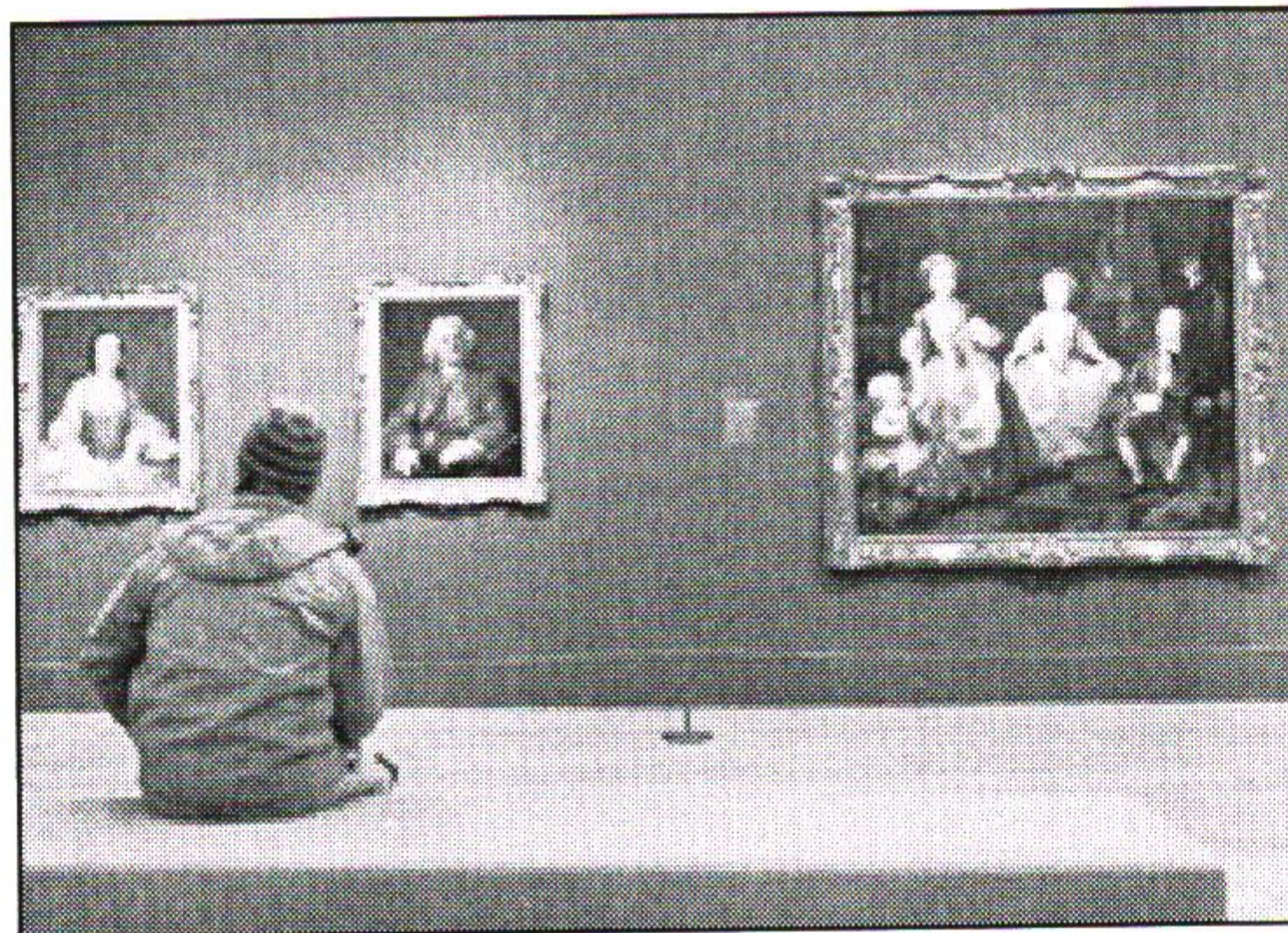
The first half of the eighteenth Century was a period of intense economic development as trade and commerce increasingly took Britain out of the years of civil war and religious strife into a new prosperity. And in this context an inevitable clash was in the making between the old aristocracy and the rising class of merchants, traders, bankers and even a layer of gentlemen farmers. As a result there were also many victims of social change now living in poverty and conditions of hopelessness.

These emerging contradictions were sharp, and it took an artist of consummate skill and satirical genius to encompass it all in

his innovative story-like sets of prints and paintings.

Hogarth certainly joined the class of nascent capitalists as he became famous and wealthy. He married 'well' and demonstrated acute entrepreneurial skills not only in the marketing of his own work, but also playing no small role in establishing what we understand today as the laws surrounding copyright.

The son of a schoolmaster (who spent five years in debtors prison) Hogarth knew early in his life the meaning of poverty, and also the benefits of education, and hard work.



After being apprenticed to an engraver for seven years until setting up on his own in 1720, he had within six years established himself on a career as a painter.

It is always necessary, when judging an artists work, to actually visit the paintings 'in the flesh'. This exhibition is remarkable, demonstrating as it does the quality of Hogarth's skill, and the extensive breadth of his output. He explored the genres of History painting, works drawn from literary

themes (Milton and Shakespeare), as well as being a fashionable London portraitist. Added to these are the 'moral works' mentioned above, the extremely pointed 'Marriage a la Mode' (the marriage of a fashion), as well as the 'Election' series, a sharp satirical indictment of electoral corruption and hypocrisy in the fictional town of 'Guzzledown', shooting at both the Whig and Tory camps. It seems almost spiteful to remark in this connection how the stench of bourgeois corruption still hangs heavy over the political process today, some two

(typically involving horses) and portraits also, but history regards the artists involved as 'competent artisans' only. As an indication of the dearth of 'home-grown talent', the English court generally imported artists from abroad and the most significant works were always by the hand of foreign painters.

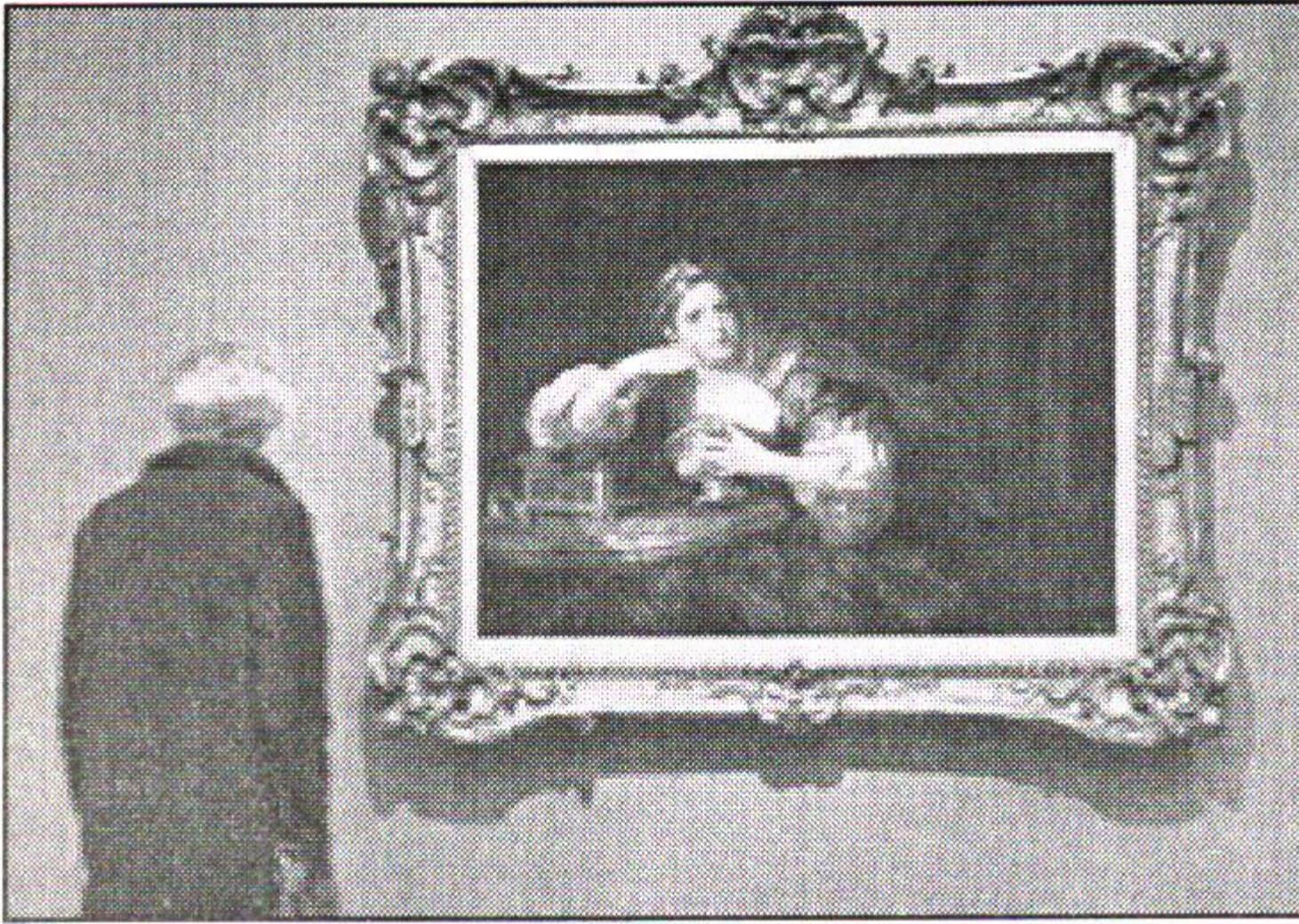
However, the rise of a new wealthy class increased the market for portraiture, and indeed for artwork generally. This 'industry of pictures' thus became increasingly commercialised, moving beyond the churches and aristocratic houses, to more public places like taverns, shops and public buildings. Hogarth encouraged and exploited this rising demand by both translating his paintings into engravings, and making other 'print only' series, his early trade and career paying great dividends.

As a consequence of this success, Hogarth effectively removed himself from the constraints of traditional patronage, and created the necessary space between himself and the ruling class to project his own commentary about his time revealed within the satirical works and 'moral tales'.

Some of the works reveal an inevitable anti-French patriotism of the time, but as a project steeped in the act of describing the experience of 'all English life' he had no favourites to oblige or flatter. The engraving 'The Cockpit', for instance, shows the 'well to do gentlemen' engaging in the same practises of vice as those far lower on the social scale, and the 'Four stages of Cruelty' adequately links the

and a half centuries on.

Previous to Hogarth there was no English tradition in painting to speak of, the Reformation destroying what medieval fine art tradition had existed. There was certainly no equivalent 'Renaissance' which surrounded the development of the Italian city states. As attendant symbols of wealth and social position paintings were commissioned of course, but these were in the main 'Country House' scenes, sporting pictures



cruel treatment of animals to hypocritical attitudes in wider society.

At the very end of his life and career Hogarth perhaps unavoidably had begun to make enemies within public life. Of note was John Wilkes, freethinker and critic of both George III and his appointed Prime Minister -

the incompetent Earl of Bute.

Moments of collision between art, and real social and political history are precious enough, and this exhibition surely reveals a wealth. Hogarth finishes at Tate Britain 29th April.

## Anti-war art?

ALSO AT THE TATE BRITAIN is the Mark Wallinger exhibition 'The State of Britain' - an exact replica of the placards and posters of the anti war protester Bran Haw, who was closed down last year.

Cutting through this barricade of protest is a line on the floor marking the perimeter of the one kilometre exclusion zone around parliament, the pretext on which Haw's right to demonstrate was curtailed by police in a dawn raid (as if Haw might have resisted...).

As a consequence, one half of the artwork is legal, and the other, technically illegal. But even though the custodians of the Tate must know what they are doing, it is unlikely that the police will be swooping again any time soon. For this of course is 'art', and normal rules do not apply!

Though this is more 'overtly' political, it is far more problematic than the Hogarth exhibition. The 'language' of contemporary art practise plays upon different registers than the familiar ones of painting and sculpture (not that these are inevitably easy).

Wallinger himself is an interesting artist, and seemingly less interested in his bank account than others of his generation. But in this instance, what does it mean to take this protest from Parliament Square, and recreate it in one of the nation's most important art institutions? How does the apparatus of art transmute the 'idea' of the democratic right to protest, not to mention the content of this 'display', including slogans etc, but also photographs of dead combatants, dead civilians and children, news-reports, and various other horror filled imagery.

Does it contribute to the anti war protest, does it anaesthetise it? Or does it bring the issues to a wider audience - school trips and the like?

I shall leave you, dear reader, to think about it...

## Iranian workers are not alone

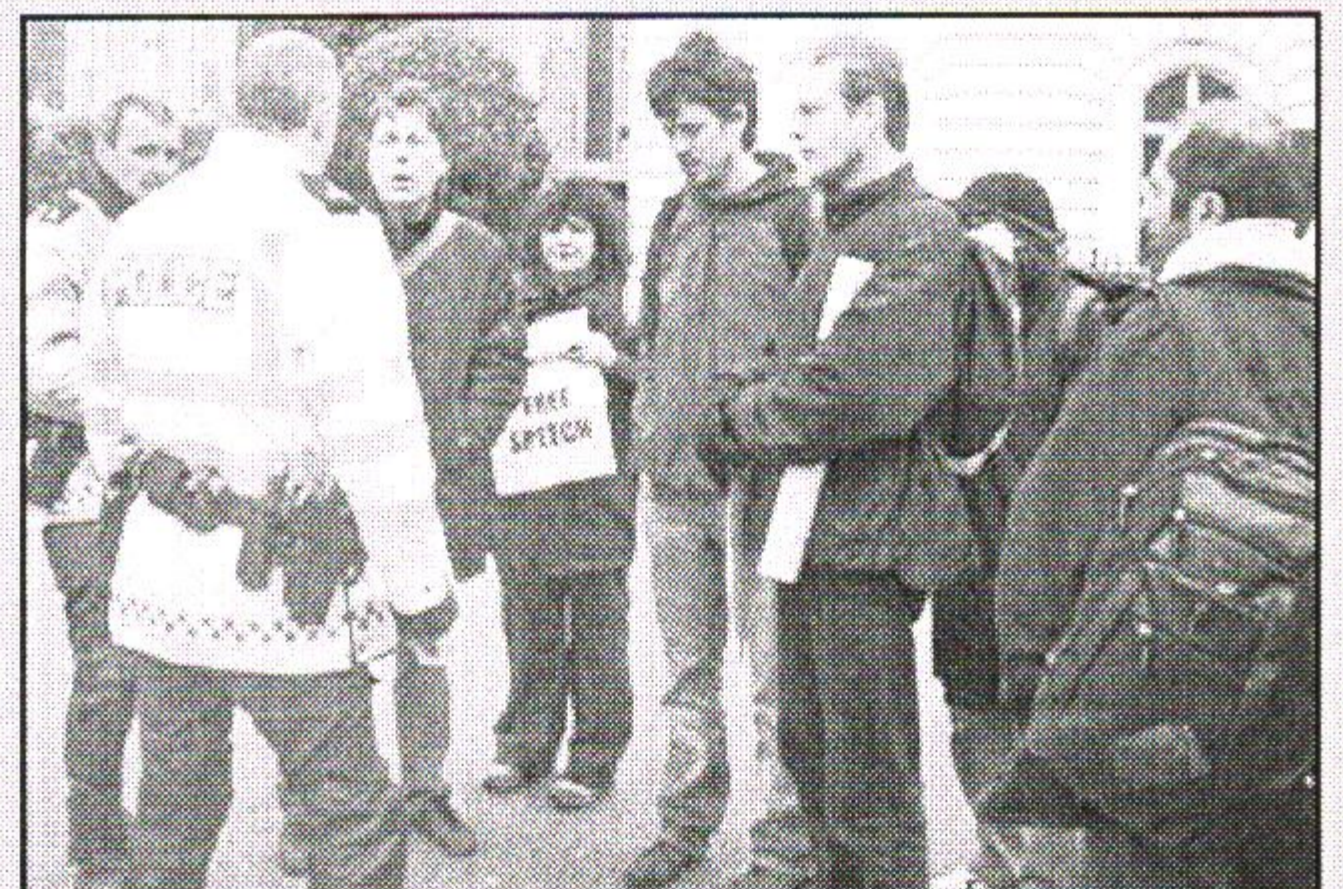
TUESDAY MARCH 20 saw the international day of action in solidarity with Iranian workers. In London a picket was held with over a dozen people present. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to protest in front of the Iranian Embassy and even before all of us had gathered, the police were there already to remove us from the entrance to the embassy, claiming this was "private property" where no demonstrations were allowed! Clearly the repressive methods of the Iranian regime apply to the territory around their embassy in London!

Not falling into provocations, we moved down along the road while the police entered the embassy to tell the Iranian staff that we wanted to hand over a letter protesting against the lack of workers' rights in Iran. Twenty minutes later they came back and said that the embassy was not interested in our letter and that it was better we left immediately.

As we attempted to reach the gate to the embassy to at least post the letter, it soon became clear the two police officers were looking for any excuse to arrest someone. So much for democracy in Britain!

Despite all the talk about "freedom and democracy" by Tony Blair, apparently this does not apply in his own country, where peaceful protesters are not even allowed to post a letter into a letterbox.

We were left with little choice but to send the letter by post. Of course we have no illusions that one letter will change the Iranian regime's attitude to its workers but at least we hope that this picket showed that workers in Britain are following the events in Iran. Pickets like these are an important way of demonstrating this support.



## Nothing Gained Without a Struggle

WELL SINCE this is a column, which tends to deal with financing of political activities (albeit ours!), it is only right that I start by saying something about the Hayden Phillips report. Set up in the wake of the Cash-for-honours scandal it was supposed to bring forward reforms to clean up political funding. What it has produced is nothing of the sort.

First of all it recommends a massive increase in state funding of parties. In other words despite successive governments having carried out wave after wave of privatisations over the years, when it comes to their own backyard quite the reverse is being suggested. Public money is now very welcome where their pockets are concerned.

Of course enough loopholes are being left to allow big business to continue to send in their bungs. The issue of caps on donations are to be left vague enough to allow this to carry on pretty much unmolested (as is the case for example in America) - which kind of defeats the object of the report in the first place. However - surprise surprise - one source of income will be severely affected; money from the trade unions. As usual, every effort is to be made to stop the organised working class from having a say in the political process. To be honest this was the real purpose of the report.

Throughout history we have had to fight to have a voice. The very journal you are holding was not produced without a struggle. Finance is central to this. No big bungs from the state or Lord this and that will be coming our way anytime soon. We rely instead on honest donations from readers and sellers to keep us going. Can you help?

Donations can be made in a number of ways:

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Steve Jones



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# May day greetings

May Day is an important date for the working class throughout the world. It is a time to raise international solidarity. We are, therefore asking our readers and supporters in the Labour and trade union movement to consider sending us greetings and messages of solidarity.

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April 2007

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President Hugo Chavez

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✎ **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

## Support John McDonnell - For a left alternative

AS THE likely date for the election of a new leader of the Labour Party draws nearer, the rival Blair and Brown cabals are evidently becoming alarmed at the way in which John McDonnell's platform of socialist policies has struck a chord with the rank-and-file. They are working like mad, behind the scenes, to keep the John4Leader campaign out of the papers and off the TV, as well as trying to prevent John McDonnell from even getting on the ballot paper. As readers may know, the rules for the leadership ballot stipulate that a candidate must have the nomination of 12.5% of the Parliamentary Labour Party (currently 44 MP's). The new leader will then be elected by an "electoral college" in which one-third of the votes are cast by Labour MPs and MEPs, another third by Party members and the remaining one-third by affiliated Trades Unionists. So about one million people will play some part in the election, but it is enormously skewed in favour of career politicians.

A key task at this stage is therefore to lobby Labour MP to persuade them to nominate John. We should not assume that this or that backbencher simply will not support the campaign - surprises do

**Rob Walsh -  
Labour Representation  
Committee, personal capacity**

sometimes occur and the MP concerned may not be aware of the prevailing mood in the ranks until we tell them. They are made to feel the pressure of the neo-conservative Blair-Brown spin doctors every day; for once let them feel the pressure of the genuine aspirations of genuine people for a better future!

Trade Union leaders should also be put under pressure to back John McDonnell as the only contender who has consistently campaigned for union policies. The CWU Broad Left, the TGWU Broad Left, Amicus Unity Gazette and ASLEF have already declared their support.

**John is campaigning for:**

- The withdrawal of British troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.
- The end to privatisation of public services.
- A Real Living Minimum Wage of at least £7 an hour.
- A green energy policy based on renewable power sources
- An increase in the Basic State Pension from £84.25 to £114 a week.
- Defence of comprehensive education and the abolition of student tuition fees.
- The restoration of trade union rights and civil liberties.

This is a programme worth fighting for; it is what a real Labour government should be about. But to achieve it would inevitably entail a mighty struggle of the workers and youth against the bosses, who would use all their power to sabotage a government that acted against their interests. That is why we also call for nationalisation, under democratic workers control and management, of the commanding heights of the economy. This would put real power in the hands of the majority for the first time!



[www.socialist.net](http://www.socialist.net)