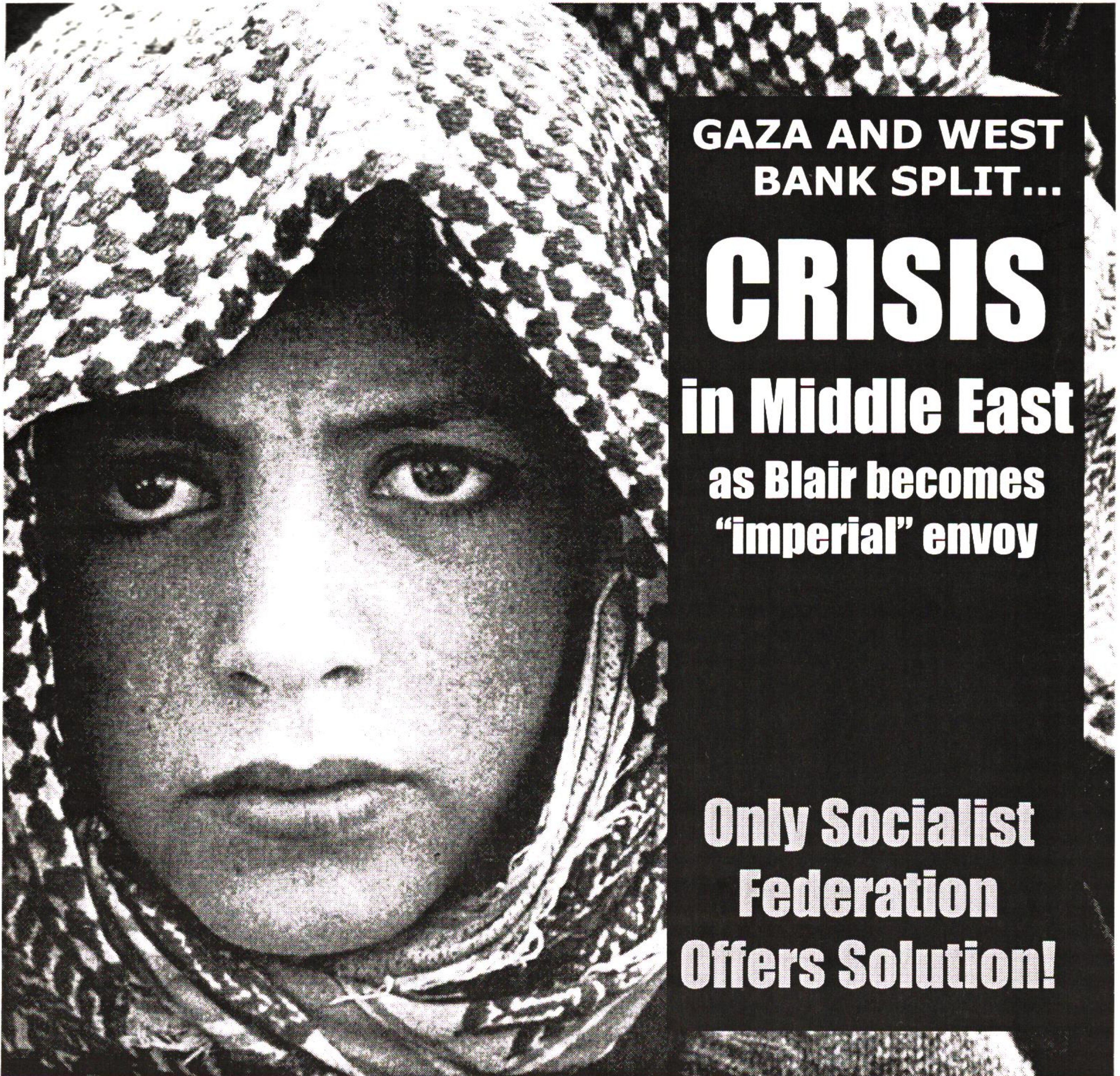


Housing • Venezuela • India • Youth

Socialist Appeal

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**GAZA AND WEST
BANK SPLIT...**

CRISIS
in Middle East
as Blair becomes
“imperial” envoy

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A Vicar to the World

AS THE Middle East descends deeper and deeper into a vicious cycle of death and destruction, the Reverend Tony Blair has stepped once again onto the world stage as international envoy for the Middle East, representing the "Quartet" of the European Union, Russia, United Nations and United States. In this new role, Blair has the strong backing of the US President George W. Bush, who is the key player. In other words, Blair will bend the knee as always to US imperialism and its interests.

The only small problem for Blair's new-found role is that he is one of the most hated figures in the Middle East next to George Bush and Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime Minister. After all, he invaded Iraq, failed to call for a ceasefire during Israel's bombardment of Lebanon last summer, and is regarded as a puppet of US foreign policy. For Blair, the Iraq war was a "blood price" worth paying. But this is not a major obstacle as he is regarded with "awe" by the despotic ruling elites of the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait and other Gulf states, including the US stooge Mahmoud Abbas. The masses are only so much small change in this great game.

But Blair is a man of religious conviction, a true fundamentalist. He plans to foster interfaith dialogue by means of his newly-established global foundation to be run apparently from offices at the £3.5m Connaught Square. This Blair Foundation comes with the papal imprimatur. When the prime minister met Pope Benedict XVI last May, they discussed how interfaith dialogue between moderate religious leaders can help with conflict resolution.

"It is a pity that Mr Blair did not think more deeply about issues of religious strife before he went and bombed Baghdad," said Labour MP Ian Gibson. "Now he wants to be vicar to the world? It is ridiculous."

Gordon Brown, the new prime minister, is also deeply unhappy with the appointment. Despite his Old Testament credentials, he wants to be given the chance of being George Bush's door mat.

Blair, who has blood on his hands after a decade in power, has let it be known of an interest in the Middle

East question, like someone displaying an interest in stamp collecting. He intends to soap the rope for the Palestinian masses by feeding the illusion that their national aspirations can be resolved under capitalism, while dropping a wink to the Israeli ruling class that nothing will be done to threaten their interests.



It was none other than former US president Jimmy Carter, that mealy-mouthed preacher, who hypocritically lambasted Blair for participating in George Bush's Iraq adventure. But Carter's pacifism didn't stretch as far as the US war in Vietnam which he supported to the bitter end. But the Republicans and Democrats alike were supporters of the Iraq war. They all linked their fate to Bush's war chariot. Even today, the Democrats continue to vote millions of dollars for the war in Iraq.

Sinking deeper

They would like to get out from this mess, but they sink deeper into the morass. Even the British ambassador to Afghanistan is saying that British troops will still be there thirty years from now. However, Blair has warned the west not to lose the will to win the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, as he hit back at those who claim the Iraq war has gone wrong because of a lack of planning.

Jay Garner, the former US general appointed two months before the invasion to head reconstruction in Iraq, believes the country is on the brink of a genocidal civil war and its government will fall apart unless the US changes course. But the situation is going from bad to worse.

In desperation, and since the "surge" is not having the desired effect, the US military is now arming and funding Sunni gangs to help them fight other Sunni gangs as well as pitting Sunnis against Shias. This can only fuel the civil war that most observers expect to erupt with full fury as American and British forces pull back. And that's in addition to arming the largely Shia forces of the Iraqi army. One way or another, Americans are giving Iraqis more weapons with which they can kill each other. "Whom the Gods would destroy, they first make mad."

The imperialist intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan had nothing to do with "democracy", which is simply used as a ploy, and everything to do with oil and the west's strategic interests. When Hamas won the elections in January 2006, they refused to recognize it and imposed a blockade. With a million dead and 1.5 million Iraqis fleeing to neighbouring states, mainly in Syria and Jordan, the situation is reaching a point of no return.

There can be no solution on the basis of capitalism and imperialism, only war, destruction and misery. The whole of the Middle East is a cauldron of death and destruction, instigated by the imperialists, eager to grab the oil reserves and spheres of influence. Despite all the "agreements" and "road maps" of the last 40 years, nothing has been resolved. The Palestinian Authority now consists of two artificial statelets. As we predicted, the so-called United Nations has completely failed.

Neither can religious fundamentalism offer a way out. Only the working class of the region can put an end to this nightmare. Only the overthrow of the reactionary Arab ruling cliques, which are subservient to imperialism, as well as the Israeli ruling class, can lead to a solution. Only the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist Federation of the Middle East can answer the national and social aspirations of the Arab masses, including the Palestinians. Within such a Federation will be established a socialist federated state of the Palestinians and the Israelis. Only then can the carnage be ended. It is clear that imperialism's envoy can only prolong the suffering. ■

Mr Davies (and other Tory rats), you are not wanted!

by Ben Peck

GORDON BROWN and senior Labour Party officials have greeted the defection to Labour's parliamentary ranks of Tory MP Quentin Davies with joy. But what sort of person are they actually getting?

Davies, a former Tory front bench spokesperson, is no closet socialist. According to Michael White in the *Guardian* (June 27) Davies is being described by Tory spin doctors as "...a bit too Europhile and posh, an MP whose ungreen and old-fashioned social views sit uneasily with David Cameron's new agenda." To hell with Cameron and his agenda, should this not be "sitting uneasily" with Labour's agenda?

White goes on to note that "...Mr Davies, though an ex-investment banker and pro-hanger, is defecting from the left; he says he stands for a free-market capitalism which offers social justice, Brown-style, for the upwardly mobile." Davies' main complaint, reading through his long and rambling resignation letter, seems to be that Cameron has not read the endless series of papers sent to him by the miffed MP on every issue under the sun. Davies ends his letter with the following sentence which will make every genuine Labour and trade union member vomit: "...I am looking forward to joining another party with which I have found increasingly I am naturally in agreement and which has just acquired a leader I have always greatly admired..."

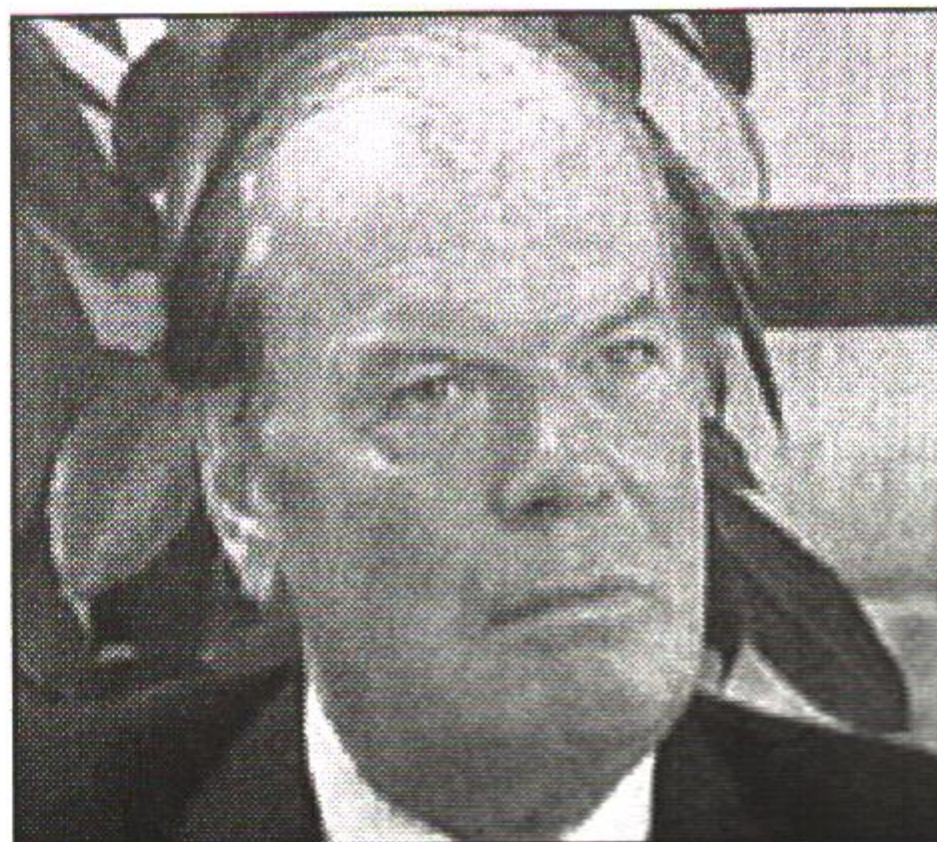
This says a lot about Gordon Brown and New Labour rather than what it says about Quentin Davies. Comrade Quentin will not be turning up anytime soon to sing the Red Flag, defend council housing, and support the struggles of trade unionists or anything like that. He is a Tory through and through. If he thinks that Cameron is a poor second choice after his favoured option of a Ken Clarke Tory party then fine, but why should we have this reactionary buffer in the ranks of the Labour Party. The fact that New Labour and Brown can

find nothing wrong with this man says volumes about the true nature of what they stand for.

Mind you, Brown has already shown his cards with the plot to bring leading Lib-Dems into the government, not because he needs their votes, but because he wants to be "all-inclusive." Like Lloyd George or Ramsay MacDonald, Brown (like Blair) wants to rule for "the nation" and not the party. Lib-Dem leader Ming the Mediocre has rejected the deal not least because of the revolt within the Liberal Party.

But as we go to press, rumours are flying around about various business types being "invited" into the government. The real reason is simple; Brown wants to present himself to capital as leading a government of big business rather than a Labour government. How far he can succeed in this is open to speculation. Blair had similar fantasies about reorganising the face of British politics along American lines, with two identical parties fighting for power, and failed miserably. The third way, radical re-alignments and the rest all came to nought.

Brown wants these people around him to re-enforce his pro-liberalisation (i.e. reactionary) agenda. But this is not what Party members and trade unionists want from a Labour government and action must be taken to challenge this. Brown will soon discover that these characters will provide little protection from the cold blast of class forces. □



Survey reveals shift to the left

by Matt Wells

A RECENT poll of Labour Party members, published in the *Sunday Times* showed why the New Labour clique around Gordon Brown were determined to keep left challenger John McDonnell off the ballot paper.

On a sample taken of Party members and levy paying trade unionists, the survey showed that both are significantly to the left of the leadership. In light of this, it is not surprising that the careerists who ran for Deputy suddenly found their left credentials.

68% of Party members and 75% of levy payers wanted Brown to publicly distance himself from Bush's Middle East policy. On the domestic front, 66% and 75% backed a new higher rate of income tax for those earning over £100,000 a year. The Blairite public services agenda is not popular with 58% and 67%, who wanted a 'drastic rethink/slowdown' of 'reforms' carried out in Health, Education and other services. Nor surprisingly 58% and 66% would back renationalisation of the railways, and there was a clear lack of support for the renewal of Trident, which received only 37% and 38% in the poll.

Of course statistics can be used to prove anything. The Brown camp would point to the poll's finding that their man garnered an impressive 82% and 74% against McDonnell's 18% and 26%. But this does not reveal the full picture. There was a substantial rise in McDonnell's support over the month from 9% and 10%. And this was despite a virtual media blackout. Had the PLP machinery allowed a contest, this would have risen still further. As we know, all sorts of tricks were used, including phoning one MP in the small hours, as the deadline for nominations approached with threats that his career would be over if he didn't nominate Brown immediately!

On the basis of the experience of the new Brown government, support for the Left will inevitably grow. Brown's rule will not be long lasting. □

Brown: Blair Mark Two

by Steve Jones

AS expected Gordon Brown has become leader of the Labour Party - and therefore Prime Minister - following one of the most hotly uncontested elections of recent times. With only one person being allowed to stand, naturally Brown won to become the first Labour leader to be elected by absolutely no one.

Valiant attempts have been made by Labour officials to present the result as 'election by acclaim' but this will not wash - not least because of the strenuous efforts made to keep the only other serious and declared challenger, John McDonnell, off the ballot paper. At one point it was suggested that if Brown was the only candidate on the ballot, a vote of 'affirmation' should go ahead with members being invited to vote their support for Brown. This was quietly dropped when it was realised that this support might not be as overwhelming as some in the Brown camp might have hoped for.

So why did the Brown camp work so hard to keep McDonnell off the ballot even though that meant that there could not be a proper election with a real choice and opportunity for debate? Well after the Fabian debate, held on the Sunday after Blair had announced that he was off, at which Brown, McDonnell and the wrecking candidate Meacher, all debated, it was realised that Brown would not stand up to a month of vigorous challenge and questioning.

McDonnell's support was rising and it was clear that left to having to defend New Labour's dismal record and policies, Brown would soon be in big trouble. Since New Labour was built on the lie that the Left in the party had been politically and organisationally defeated, the last thing they wanted was people to see that there was an alternative and that they could vote for it. So in the few days following the Fabian debate, maximum effort by the Brown camp was put on keeping McDonnell off the ballot, using any means necessary - both threats and promises. Sadly in this, many of the trade union leaders colluded in the mistaken belief that Brown would somehow give them something in return.

Well they have been well rewarded indeed. Brown has made clear that he

will be the continuation of Blairism by other means. The announcement that he wishes to 'reform' i.e. attack union involvement in party decision making, reducing their influence, is very much in the style of the largely abandoned Blair project. This is a huge slap in the face to the union leadership. They need to wake up and stop dreaming about a Warwick Mark Two and, instead, organise a campaign to defend trade union involvement in the Party and link this to the fight for socialist policies which will defend their members' interests.

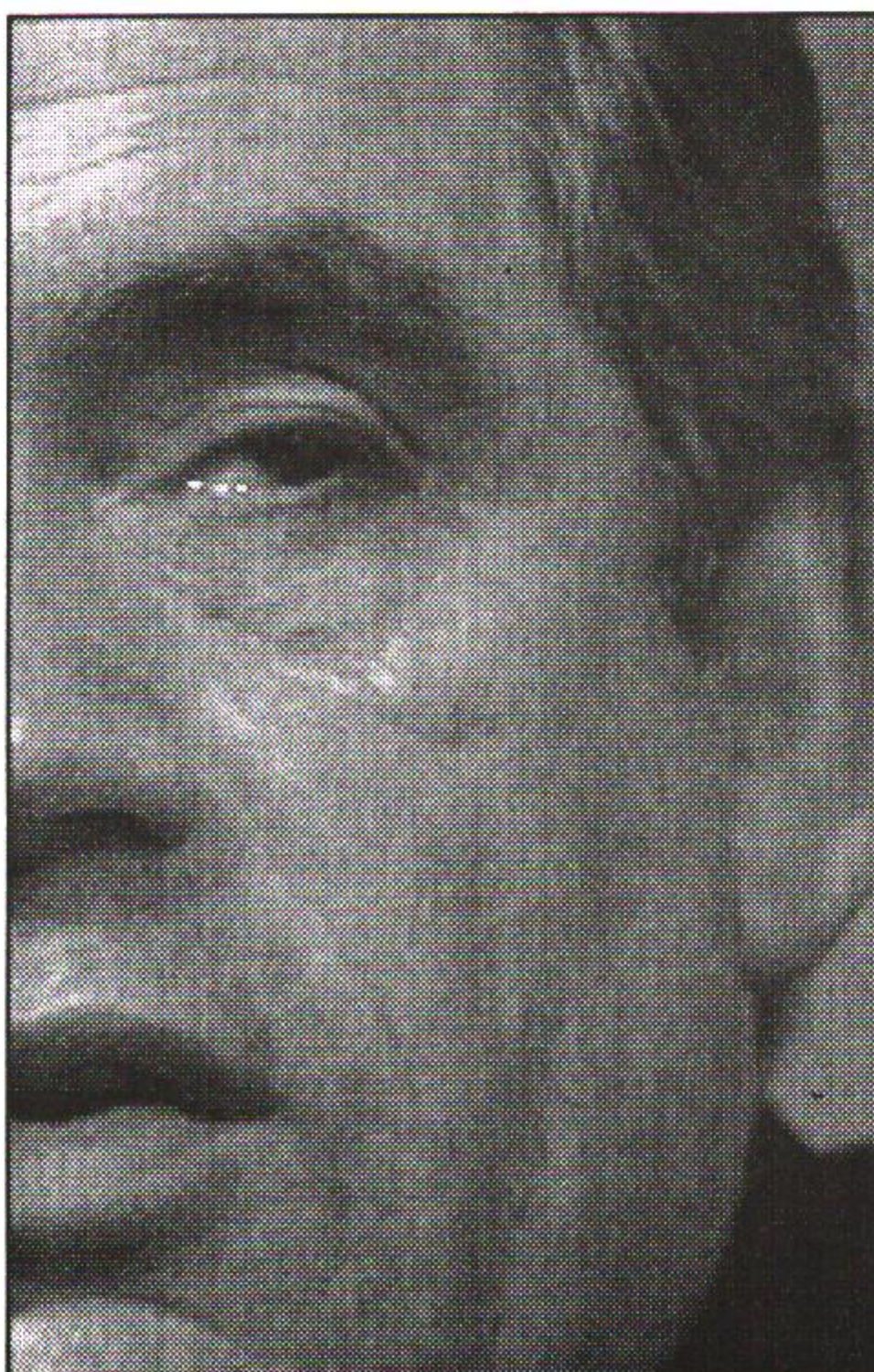
Could the unions have organised a serious campaign around a McDonnell candidature? Well the leaders said no but let's look at the facts, starting with the largely irrelevant election for deputy leader.

All the candidates were broadly similar in their political outlook. The only differences were in nuances, emphasised out of all proportion to give an impression that there was a real choice - which most people quickly saw through. In the end only 8% of trade unionists able to vote did so and nearly half of all individual party members did not vote either. However in the first round - where no candidate got less than 10% or more than 20% of the vote - Jon Cruddas, who was presented

as being a bit Left (a very small bit we might add) and who was the favoured candidate of the trade union leaders, got 19.4% of the first choice votes, mainly based in the union and party member sections. He came top in the first round and survived until the fourth round whereas more favoured names (including arch-Blairite and media darling Blears who was the first to go) did not do as well.

The point is that if a deservedly unknown candidate like Cruddas could do this well as a result of a very nominal campaign by some unions, what could have been achieved with a McDonnell challenge for leader had the unions put their whole weight behind such a drive? In passing we should note that Harman won the deputy job by the narrowest of margins primarily because Cruddas called on people who had voted for him to give her their second preference vote enabling her to push past the other Blairite fanatic left on the ballot, Johnson. Naturally having been a bit daring in attacking the government during the election, she has quickly reasserted her loyalist credentials with Brown now that the job, such as it is, is hers. Despite all the rhetoric coming from the candidates during the election, no one should expect anything to come from the winner anytime soon.

As we have seen over the early announcements on the plan to replace the block vote with decision making by One Member One Vote (this from a man who has achieved his position through One Member No Vote) and the idea of bringing in so-called outside "talents" into the government, Brown will continue Blair's pro-big business direction, even if it costs the next election. No doubt some of the Blairites are secretly hoping that this will happen, so that Brown can then take the blame, be removed with one of the exalted ones taking his place ready to fight the election after. But we cannot afford the prospect of a Tory victory and the coming to power of a Cameron government - presuming the Tory old guard do not get rid of him as well - which will herald a vicious attack on the working class. The fight must be joined for Socialist policies which can defeat the Tories and ensure a better future for all. □



Nearly Six Million Trade Unionists Support HOV Campaign

by Rob Sewell, National Steering Committee

EVER SINCE the founding of Hands Off Venezuela the campaign has sought to take the message of the Venezuelan Revolution to as many trade unionists as possible. As a result of our work, resolutions supporting the revolution have been passed at a large number of trade union national conferences, such as GMB, CWU, USDAW, NUJ, ASLEF, AMICUS, NATFHE, PCS, FBU, RMT and UNISON, the bulk of which have affiliated to the national campaign. Other unions, such as the TGWU, have also affiliated to the campaign, especially at local and regional level. Many Trades Councils have also done likewise.

A growing number of unions have directly praised the work of Hands Off Venezuela, such as BECTU, COMMUNITY, and the 1.3 million-strong public sector union UNISON.

At last year's UNISON conference, for example, a HOV-sponsored motion was passed in which "conference pledges its support for the initiatives of the labour movement backed campaigns that further the above aims", and specifically mentioned the Hands Off Venezuela campaign, working "positively on a range of initiatives" and "continuing to build solidarity and raise the profile of Venezuela in a range of areas."

All in all, this means that trade unions numbering nearly six million members have shown support in one form or other for HOV.

At this year's annual conference of the National Union of Journalists, delegates passed a HOV-sponsored motion, moved by Hélène Mulholland, applauding "the advances made by the Venezuelan people and government in redistributing the country's wealth and, especially, in democratising the media in spite of a concerted and virulent campaign of hostility from the owners of the private media." NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear commented: "Our union has, once again, expressed support for the enormous social progress in Venezuela and the need for good reporting on the subject."

At the Fire Fighters' union conference, HOV was able to bring over

Ruben Linares from the Venezuelan Transport Union and one of the founding members of the UNT (the Venezuelan TUC). He was invited to address conference in order to give delegates a real flavour of the revolution and what it has achieved for the people.

He finished his speech by thanking the FBU and the labour movement in general for its solidarity with the Venezuelan people and encouraged us to work for our own revolution in Britain. The union was so delighted that it donated £1,600 to the campaign funds.

This year's train drivers' union national conference (ASLEF) reaffirmed its support for the Venezuelan Revolution submitted by HOV supporters. The EC was also instructed to affiliate the union to the solidarity campaigns, including HOV. The union was one of their first to support HOV and has maintained a link to the campaign from its website. A similar motion is being debated at this year's rail union (RMT) conference.

In June HOV attended the postal workers' union conference (CWU), where the union hosted a successful 'Latin America' fringe meeting. The meeting was chaired by Jane Loftus, the newly-elected President of the CWU. Jorge Martin from HOV, together

with speakers from Nicaragua, Cuba, and Columbia solidarity campaigns, spoke on the progress of the revolution.

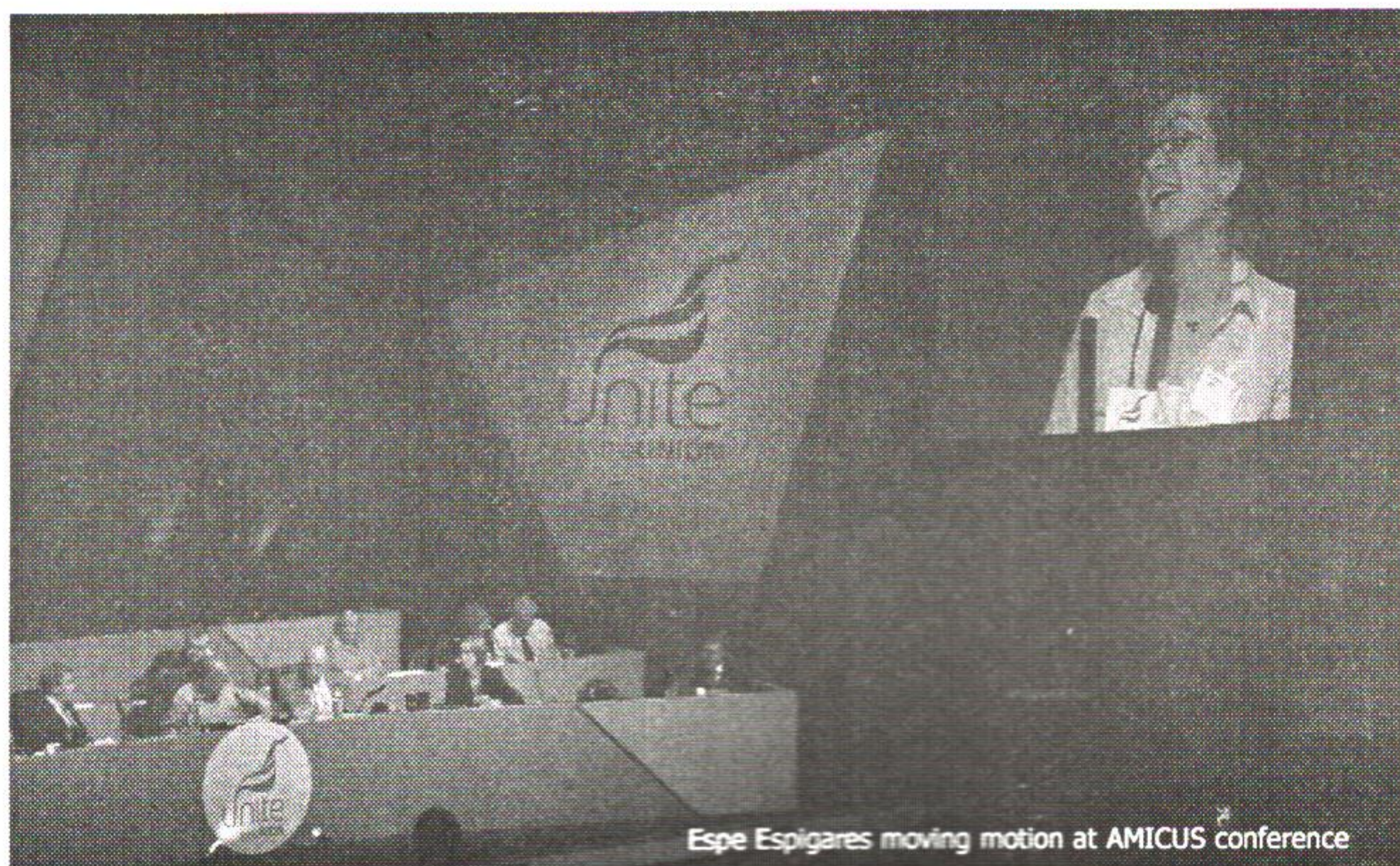
The 700,000-strong GMB passed a motion unanimously at its June conference supporting "the marvellous struggle of the Venezuelan working class to create a socialist society which can act as a bulwark to US imperialism in Latin America." It gave support to the solidarity movement, including HOV.

The latest national affiliation came from the 1,300,000 AMICUS trade union, which also passed two resolutions supporting the Venezuelan Revolution.

We urge all trade unionists to help affiliate their unions at national, regional and branch level to the Hands Off Venezuela Campaign. For more assistance, contact Britain@handsoff-venezuela.org

The Campaign continues to make a splash in the trade union movement. Finally, it was directly due to the work of HOV that the six-million strong TUC passed a resolution supporting Venezuelan government in 2005. Hopefully, with our help, it will do so again this year. □

To join Hands Off Venezuela contact us at britain@handsoffvenezuela.org



Amicus/Unite affiliates to Hands Off Venezuela

by Ben Peck and Pat MacDonald

JUNE WAS a red letter month for the Hands Off Venezuela campaign. Amicus/Unite, the second biggest union in Britain, voted practically unanimously to affiliate to the HOV campaign. This represents a great step forward for the campaign in the trade union field.

The resolution (173) was moved by Sherell Martin, from the North West region of the union. Sherell spoke about the great achievements of the Venezuelan revolution and praised the work of Hands Off Venezuela, especially its solidarity with the workers of Sanitarios Maracay. Sherell concluded her speech by calling on delegates to support both resolutions (173 and 174) welcoming the Venezuelan Revolution and urging the union to affiliate to HOV.

Espe Espigares seconded the motion and also moved resolution 174. Espe also urged support for both resolutions and explained that the Venezuelan Revolution is being moved forward by the Venezuelan people taking destiny into their own hands and reconstructing society along socialist lines. She also explained that the Venezuelan people have stood up to the USA, telling them "we won't be your back yard any longer, you won't bleed our natural resources any more".

Espe explained that since our 2005 conference, when 97% of delegates voted in favour of supporting Hands Off Venezuela, several branches of Amicus have invited campaign speakers and have affiliated to HOV, including the North West region, the biggest region of the union. Conference warmly applauded this solidarity work.

For reasons best known to the NEC, they recommended opposition to resolution 173. This was linked to the idea that the union was now affiliated to the Venezuelan Information Centre and therefore affiliation to HOV would "confuse" things. This argument did not hold water as other unions were affiliated to both unions and this did not interfere with their solidarity work.

Following this, Sherell was asked to reply. She explained briefly that there was no contradiction in supporting both motions, 173 and 174, and thanked conference for its warm support.

The vote was then taken on both resolutions, and both were passed almost unanimously, with only two votes against.

The decision to affiliate to HOV is a massive step forward for the campaign. After last week's decision of the GMB to affiliate to the campaign, together with support from Unison and the T&G, means that the Hands Off Venezuela campaign now has the support from the four largest trade unions in Britain, comprising some four million workers. □

Civil servants support revolution

by a HOV member

IN MAY, Hands Off Venezuela attended the annual PCS conference, the 300,000-strong union of civil servants. HOV is an affiliate of PCS and so was granted a free stall within the conference centre.

At conference, HOV held its lunchtime fringe meeting, attended by more than 40 trade union activists. The meeting was sponsored by PCS and was chaired by Rachael Heemskerk, DWP Regional Chair for the East of England. It began with a short film of the HOV delegation visit to Sanitarios Maracay, a factory under workers' control. The film produced a remarkable response from those watching, some of whom mentioned later that they were nearly in tears at seeing the solidarity between the workers and the pride on their faces.

Afterwards Rob Sewell from the national steering committee spoke about the background of events that led to Chavez being elected in 1998, starting with the Caracazo massacre in 1989. He spoke of the Chavez government's initial endorsement of the 'third way', an attempt to find a path between capitalism and socialism, and the frustration this caused both for those honest elements of the Bolivarian movement who were trying to implement reform, and the local stooges of US imperialism who recoiled at these modest measures.

He went on to talk about the development of the revolutionary process since the April 2002 coup, and especially the recent acceleration over the last six months since Chavez was re-elected for the 10th time in 9 years, including the nationalisation of parts of the oil industry which were still in the hands of the multinationals.

On the following evening, HOV was invited to a PCS-sponsored Latin America fringe meeting, sharing the platform with the Venezuelan Information Centre (UK), Justice for Colombia and the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. After well-received contributions from our sister campaigns, Pablo Roldan from HOV spoke about the significance of the most recent developments since Chavez was re-elected in December.

Pablo recalled Chavez's address to the people on election night, when he said that the vote had not been for Chavez nor for the Venezuelan government. It had been a vote for socialism. Since then Chavez has campaigned for the formation of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the formation of local community councils, run on a democratic basis, as one of his five motors for revolutionary change. Chavez had recently publicly praised the writings of Leon Trotsky and defended their relevance to the Venezuelan Revolution. As the meeting finished, trade unionists left with a clear understanding that what was taking place in Venezuela was nothing short of revolutionary change. □

Brown courts big business

GORDON BROWN'S first exciting, brand new initiatives has been well trailed - it's the exciting brand new BCB.

No, it's not a Consignia style rebranding of the BBC (don't mention the Post Office), it's the Business Council for Britain - or maybe Brown Courts Business.

The big news is that a major Tesco Britain sponsorship may be just around the corner. Tesco chief executive, Sir Terry Leahy and Mervyn Davies, who is a board member of Tesco, as well as chairman of Standard Chartered bank, will be leading members.

Other well known socialists like old Thatcher fan Sir Alan Sugar, Arun Sarin, the chief executive of Vodafone, Sir John Rose, chief executive of the aircraft engine-maker Rolls-Royce, and Stephen Green, chairman of HSBC, Damon Buffini of private equity fund Parmira, Stuart Rose of Marks & Sparks are also expected to join this board advising the government.

From 1979 Maggie Thatcher put a stop to tea and sandwiches at Number 10 for trade union leaders as she launched her assault on so-called trade union power. A power, it must be said, which was never mobilised by those leaders to deliver the "fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working

people and their families", that the 1974 Labour manifesto promised. Talk of corporatism and social contract evaporated.

As the balance of political forces shifted against the working class our leaders had to adapt a prone position to get entrée to the rich and powerful. In the 1990s Labour leader John Smith and late sainted Mo Mowlem were reduced to their 'prawn cocktail offensive' - wooing City support - when in opposition. Ever since, Labour has been trailing after big business.

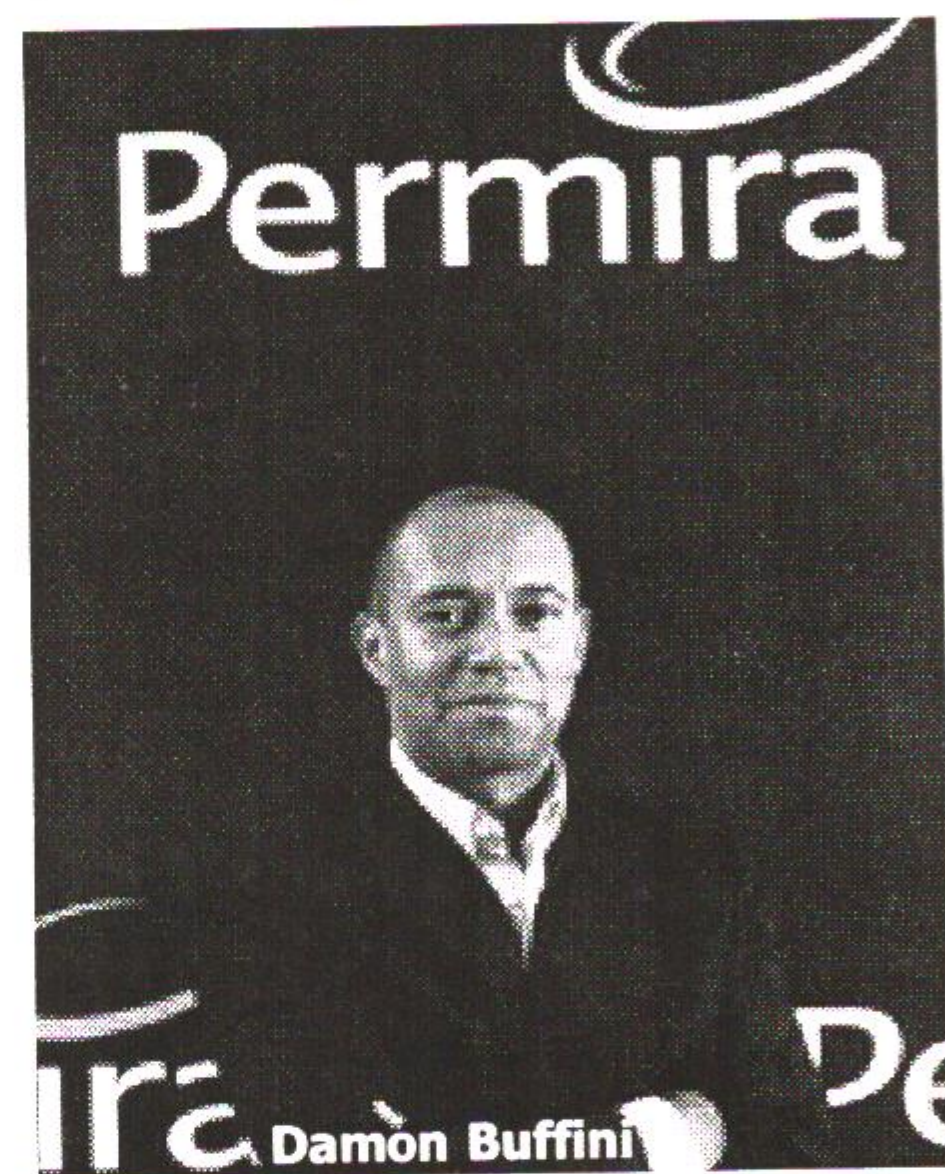
Blair's obsession with the trappings of wealth led to unashamed pursuit of the rich and powerful. It gradually gave rise to a smell of sleaze and now to police questioning about the alleged sale of honours (nothing new of course as students of the Liberal Party and its leader Lloyd George will prefer to forget).

The personal failings or greed of individuals (don't mention Mandy) are generally used to excuse what is actually a built in tendency to corruption within capitalism. The upright son of the manse who has just taken over at Number 10 no doubt considers himself well above such things. There's not much likelihood of catching him jetting off to get a Florida suntan, even for a stay with the entire (well what's left)

Bee Gees, let alone Capo Berlusconi.

But he is still planning to bring big business even further into the heart of the Labour government - in a completely open, transparent and fresh new fashion of course.

The fact that people like Damon Buffini, who organised the private equity buy-out of the AA three years ago which led to 3,000 workers losing their jobs, get the ear of the prime minister over the tens of thousands of postal workers whose jobs are currently under threat at Royal Mail, shows the whole system is rotten to the core. □



Army gets its marching orders

by Kenny McGuigan

AT THE conference of the Education Institute of Scotland (EIS), representing Scottish teachers, delegates passed a motion calling for the banning of army recruitment units in Scottish schools. This matter must now be placed firmly on the political agenda at the Scottish Parliament, the Executive having responsibility for education.

The British Armed Forces are understandably experiencing a humiliating disinterest from their target audience, despite the army spending almost £90 million on recruitment campaigns in the year 2005/6. At the same time more soldiers are resigning than are joining. Historically, the army have seduced a large layer of recruits from the poorest and most deprived districts, with promises of "seeing the world" and opportunities for training. Economic conscripts in other words.

Members of the EIS are to be warmly congratulated on their excellent intervention at an important time. It is paramount that all attempts to recruit school students to kill other human beings is kept out of our schools where goodie

bags are handed out and nonsense about adventure and a great life is portrayed to impressionable youngsters. However, the lack of opportunities for decent jobs and training for our youth must be addressed. Faced with a lifetime of benefits and/or so-called "McJobs" there will be some young men and women who might be tempted to take their chances fighting for capitalists in their imperialist wars.

So far, the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq has cost us over £5 billion with no end in sight. Hundreds of our young men and women are dead. Nearly a million people in total have now lost their lives in this murderous war in which Gordon Brown is every bit as culpable as the madmen Bush and Blair. The toll of human misery, as these servicemen finish their tours and try to reintegrate into civilian life will, as usual, never be properly addressed or even adequately reported. The only war worth fighting is the class war; standing shoulder to shoulder with our fellow workers of all lands, backgrounds, traditions and colours striving together for a better world for everyone. □

The strike at Grunwicks 1976-1978 - 30 years on

by Barbara Humphries

THE GRUNWICK strike was the first dispute where a majority of strikers who were from ethnic minorities received widespread support from the labour movement. Earlier disputes in Leicester and Southall had remained marginalised, but in the 1970s the labour movement was regaining its militancy and also taking up the anti-racist cause. The trades union movement stood at 11.5 million members.

A pamphlet and DVD on offer from Brent Trades Council give an impressive outline of the extent of solidarity that existed within the trades union movement at the time with thousands prepared to attend mass picketing. It also shows the length that employers such as George Ward at Grunwicks would go to in order to combat trades unionism. In this he had the support of the courts, the Conservative Party, the National Association for Freedom and the police.

Also it shows that the trades union leadership although giving vocal support to the strikers were not prepared to support their members until the bitter end, preferring to put their hopes in court action coming down on the side of the strikers.

Grunwicks was a photograph processing factory in Brent, North London, run by an anti-union employer George Ward. Previous attempts to gain union recognition had been rejected and in August 1976 Jayaben Desai led 137 workers out on strike. They were soon all sacked. None of the workers had ever taken strike action before.

They approached the local Citizens Advice Bureau and APEX - their trades union which gave the strike official recognition. These workers had never even been involved in a trades union before but they were thrust into the front line of a nationally acclaimed battle between the trades union movement and sections of the ruling class. They were to learn the political lessons very quickly.

Solidarity action spread throughout the trades union movement as the

strike ran and ran and Grunwick became a household name. Chemists were picketed and asked not to send photos for processing at Grunwicks. George Ward tried to get this picketing outlawed but was unsuccessful. Local postal workers, members of the Union of Postal Workers refused to cross picket lines and deliver post. Calls however to cut off all supplies of water and electricity to the plant were not supported by the leaders of APEX or the TUC

The postal workers also had to abandon their secondary action at the instruction of their union. However Len Murray, general secretary of the TUC attended a packed meeting in Brent.

Mass picketing began in June 1977. There were 3,000 pickets. The police and Special Patrol Group also turned up in force and there were 84 arrests. Scenes to become familiar in the Miners' Strike 1984/85 began to be seen on the streets of North London in what was almost a civil war atmosphere.

On the 11th July 12,000 pickets blockaded the factory for six hours including branches of the National Union of Miners from Kent and Yorkshire. All this can be seen vividly on the DVD. In a controversial move the pickets were called off at midday and marched around the town centre in Brent allowing the strike breakers buses to go in.

The author of the pamphlet blames a compromise between the strike committee and the leadership of APEX for this strategy. However mass picketing would not have won the strike - secondary action like cutting off power supplies to the factory could have done.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) recommended union recognition following a ballot in March 1977 and the TUC favoured a Court of Inquiry. The catch was - who was to be balloted - the strikers or the whole workforce? George Ward refused to allow those inside the factory to be balloted - they benefited from the

industrial action by receiving pay rises which would not otherwise be forthcoming. This catch allowed the Law Lords to overrule the ACAS recommendation that the union should be recognised.

By the end of 1977 the strikers were getting desperate. The TUC had backed down from a call for essential services to the factory to be blocked and APEX wanted an end to mass picketing. This had become more bitter. On one day 8,000 pickets gathered outside the factory and in the battles that took place over 243 were injured. The Tory press turned against the strikers.

The strike carried on into 1978 and was eventually lost. But it was not due to lack of solidarity or determination on behalf of the strikers. They were let down by the right wingers in the leadership of the trades union movement.

This pamphlet and DVD should be seen particularly by those who did not live through the 1970s. It would be an eye-opener. For those of us who did it brought back memories - both good and bad. The strike also gives a different twist to the current debate about multiculturalism - there was no doubt in those days that the strikers at Grunwick belonged in the trades union movement, regardless of their ethnic background or culture. Workers from all different cultures were united at Grunwicks. ■

"Grunwick - bravery and betrayal:
a Brent Trades Union Council
pamphlet"

DVD - The Grunwick
Strike 1976-1978

Stand together 52 minutes

Look back at Grunwick 26 minutes
Available from Brent Trades Union
Council, 375 High Street, London
NW10 2JR



A socialist programme for housing

by Mick Brooks

The problem

NEW LABOUR'S record on housing policy is a disgrace. Here's the indictment drawn up by the National Housing Federation, the outfit that represents housing associations. They say we face a 'housing time bomb,' an 'explosion of housing need.' There are 1.6 million on council house waiting lists. Their numbers are growing by 7.6% a year. Repossessions were up by 65% last year to 17,000 losing their homes, and official homelessness went up by 14.4% between 2000 and 2005.

All this is happening because we are not building enough houses. Last year we built less than any year since the 1920s. And because so few new homes are being built, prices go up so as to be completely unaffordable for the poorer in our society. New Labour has left housing provision to the market, and the market has failed to provide enough. We need a crash house-building programme, and that requires government action.

A history of house provision

HOUSING PROVISION has always been a political issue. The working class has always had to involve itself in struggle for decent affordable housing for all. It still must.

At the beginning of the last century, nearly all workers lived in private rented accommodation. Many of these were slums. Local councils did have the power to build houses, but before the First World War many working men (and all women) lacked the vote. So there were relatively few Labour controlled councils with the mind to build houses.

The War caused a rush of workers into industrial areas such as Clydeside to work in the munitions factories. This gave the slum landlords the chance they needed to jack up rents. In 1915 working women in Glasgow, backed by the trade unions, went on rent strike. Munitions workers had a strong bargaining position, and the government was forced to decree a rent freeze.

Therefore what capitalist would build new houses to rent, if they couldn't make money out of them? But between the Wars four million houses were built. Many were built in the suburbs for sale. Great numbers of middle class people and the upper sections of the working class were now able to own their own houses for the first time.

At the same time Labour's vote was rising steadily at the expense of the Liberals, and more and more councils went Labour. And those councils built more than a million council houses interwar, good quality homes available at rents working class families could afford.

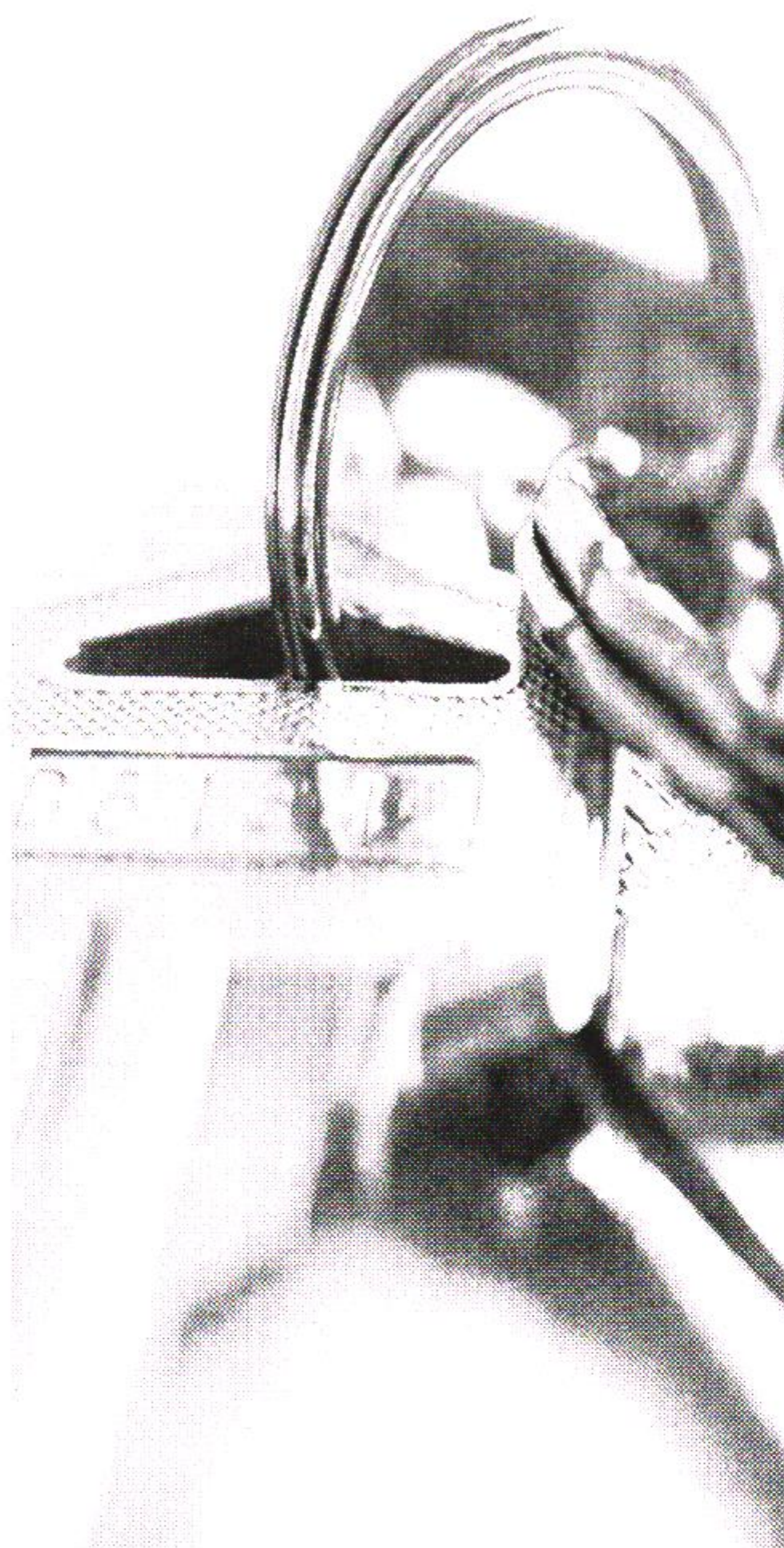
Council house blues

COUNCILS WERE not hamstrung for cash in the interwar period, even though the Tories were in power nationally for most of the time. For instance, the London County Council fell to Labour and its leader Herbert Morrison had Hackney marshes drained and the reclaimed land used for housing the working class, in part using government grants.

The blitz in the Second World War devastated the housing stock. The situation was made worse by the conscription of virtually all potential building workers. The end of War saw a terrible shortage of homes, with working class families forced to squat in disused aerodromes and army and prisoner of war camps. Aneurin Bevan was Minister for Housing as well as Health in the post-War Labour government. In addition to setting up the National Health Service, he insisted on building world-class council houses (I was brought up in one). The quality of these homes with huge gardens front and back meant that nobody living in one need regard themselves as second class citizen. No council tenant need aspire to owning their own house as long as their tenancy was secure and their rent modest.

But for years after the War, the housing situation was dominated by chronic shortage. Tens of thousands lived in prefabs and other temporary accommodation. The inner city slums still had to be cleared. The temptation was on councils to cut corners. As the proportion of the population in council housing went up to 40% in the 1960s, some councils were flinging up bleak blocks of flats on soulless estates that soon became a new generation of slums.

In 1979 Margaret Thatcher changed the nature of housing provision forever, as she hoped. She allowed council tenants to buy their own council houses at discounts of up to 75%. Longstanding tenants found they could pay less on a mortgage to buy their house than to pay the rent the council charged. Of course if they continued as tenants



Fightback

they would be paying till the end of their days, while if they bought they would be sitting on a nice little appreciating asset. For some it was a no-brainer.

For others the options were different. Thatcher didn't just introduce the 'right to buy.' Her government presided over mass unemployment, which quickly went over three million. The unemployed and those on benefits couldn't buy their place, and for those stuck on the estates of flats thrown up in the 1960s, nobody would really want to buy their flat on the open market. Many council properties quickly became sink estates occupied overwhelmingly by people on benefits. Despite the best efforts of the tenants to keep up standards, some became no-go areas after dark.

That seemed to spell doom for council house building. What was the point of spending £45,000 to build a house, if a twenty-year council tenant moved in and could buy it for half that sum? A year later the local Labour councillor would see the property on the market tarted up and going for £80,000. (This is anecdotal evidence from an Ealing councillor in the 1980s.)

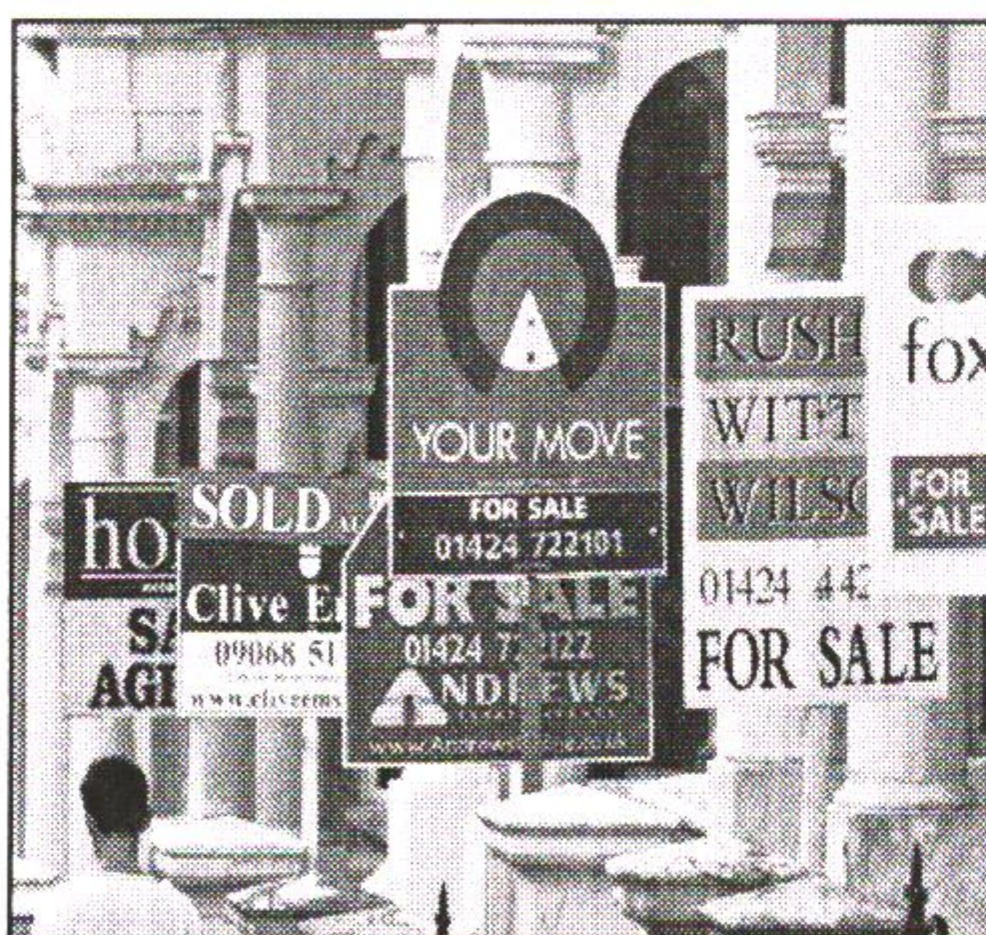
How had council housing usually paid for itself? The council had to pay up front for the house. After about four or five years of getting in rents, the council would have broken even. So new house building was subsidised by existing tenants. But hundreds of thousands of former council tenants weren't paying rent any more. In effect those who exercised the right to buy were running off with public funds, and they were also shrinking the pool of available social housing.

Thatcher didn't make it any easier for Labour councils. She launched a series of cuts in state subsidies to local authorities. Then she just banned them from spending money on things the Tories didn't approve of. Nobody is building council houses any more, and we have lost 3.5 million houses since 1979, most because of the 'right to buy.'

GOVERNMENT POLICY has been a continuation of Thatcher's, and it's a disaster for the poor. Instead of letting local councils borrow on the same terms as housing associations, they have kept the restrictions imposed by Thatcher on what local authorities can do. Councils can still not borrow to build houses. Instead of letting them keep rent receipts to maintain the existing stock and build new houses, the Treasury has grabbed £2 billion a year from local councils, three quarters of the money. In May 2007 Yvette Cooper announced that councils could now keep the receipts from council house sales - ten years too late!

Council house provision here continues to decay, partly as a result of government policy. The government is offering a poisoned choice of options to council tenants. They are encouraging housing associations to take over the estates. Housing associations do not build houses, they just manage the estates as landlords. Or tenants can come under the control of an Arms' Length Management Organisation (ALMO), or have a Private Finance Initiative consortium to do up the housing stock. This may sound like an alphabet soup of organisations. These hybrids all have one thing in common. They are in business to make money out of social housing. One way they do this is by gentrifying the properties so the people most in need can no longer afford to live there. Where are these people supposed to go? The PFI brigade will be given away swathes of land, some of which they will use to build profitable (non-affordable) housing.

Labour Party conference has opposed this attempted destruction of council housing. They want an end to the rigged ballots, where tenants are in effect blackmailed to either vote for improvements by going private or continuing to decay as a council-run estate. Along with the Defend Council Housing campaign, tenants want a fourth option - for council housing to be kept and be given a level playing field - the same resources as New Labour would throw away on an ALMO or the PFI crooks. Incredibly in 224 out of 360 ballots, tenants have rejected privatisation and affirmed their belief in the principle of council housing. They are right. Our council housing stock is a £400 billion asset for the nation built up over generations that should be conserved and improved, not something to be stolen.



Private housing out of reach

SO MORE and more people are forced on to the private housing market to get a roof over their head. But the 1.6 million on council house waiting lists show this is not an option for everyone. Home ownership is often presented as a natural result of increasing prosperity or an exercise of 'choice.' It is nothing of the sort. Statistics show that the countries with the highest proportion of homeowners are India and Thailand. But their homes are, in many cases, hovels. In Germany and Sweden the quality of the housing stock is on average higher than in Britain. There, so long as they have security of tenure, more workers have the option to rent than in Britain, and they are happy to do that.

Now a big majority of households go for owning their own house, not because we've become a 'property owning democracy,' but because they

housing

have no choice. Soon four in five will own their own house, or rather the mortgage on it. At present the average price of a house is £180,000, six times average earnings. In the past banks have gone by a rule of thumb that the maximum repayments anyone could afford was five times earnings. Now they just throw money at borrowers, blowing up the house price bubble. And repayments are edging up as the Bank of England pushes up interest rates. Hence the rise in repossessions and homelessness.

For workers on less than average earnings, it is proving impossible to get a foot on the bottom rung of the property ladder. Many people are completely dependent on family financial support to get a roof over their head Yvette Cooper has warned that 70% of young couples will be unable to afford a

home. So what is she doing about it?

House prices are often described as a ladder. We've all met people who've done very well out of rising house prices. But really the whole thing is more like a roundabout. You only benefit if you can get off at the right time. Property prices have tripled in the past ten years. But how does that benefit you if you're sitting in the same bricks and mortar? If you need to move house, it's probably going to cost you three times as much to move as it would have ten years ago. Overall it's a zero sum game, with as many losers as winners.

There is no doubt that the present rise in house prices is a bubble. The definition of a bubble is when prices go up because people are buying, and people are buying because prices are going up. Nobody can predict when the

bubble will burst, but that is what bubbles usually do. Then you get a situation where prices are going down because people are selling, and people are selling because prices are going down. The last time the house price bubble burst was in the 1990s. Millions were left with 'negative equity'. They were stuck in a house that was worth less than when they took out the mortgage, so they couldn't move and couldn't really afford to stay.

Conventional economic theory, always an apologist for capitalism, says this shouldn't happen. When rising demand causes the price of a commodity to rise, capitalists will up the supply and all will be well. But builders are not building more houses. Clearly, in relation to housing need, capitalism is not delivering the goods.

The way forward

WHAT IS the government doing about all this? Mainly they are supinely waiting on the market, though it is clear we could wait forever. What we need is massively more affordable social housing. It is clear that housing must be built in a planned manner on the order of the public sector. It must be publicly owned and affordable, and there can be no question of tenants being allowed to walk away with a public resource.

Ask the building companies what the problem is and they say it is planning restrictions. They are slaving to carve up the green belt. Rubbish. Most of them are sitting on portfolios of development land as a speculative investment. What we want is houses near our jobs. There are not many jobs on the green belt. Our main immediate strategy must be to build to regenerate the inner cities and end urban blight, by building first on brownfield sites.

We want council's powers to be restored for the sake of local democracy. What's the point in voting for councillors if they can't decide anything? But we face a national housing crisis. That needs national action.

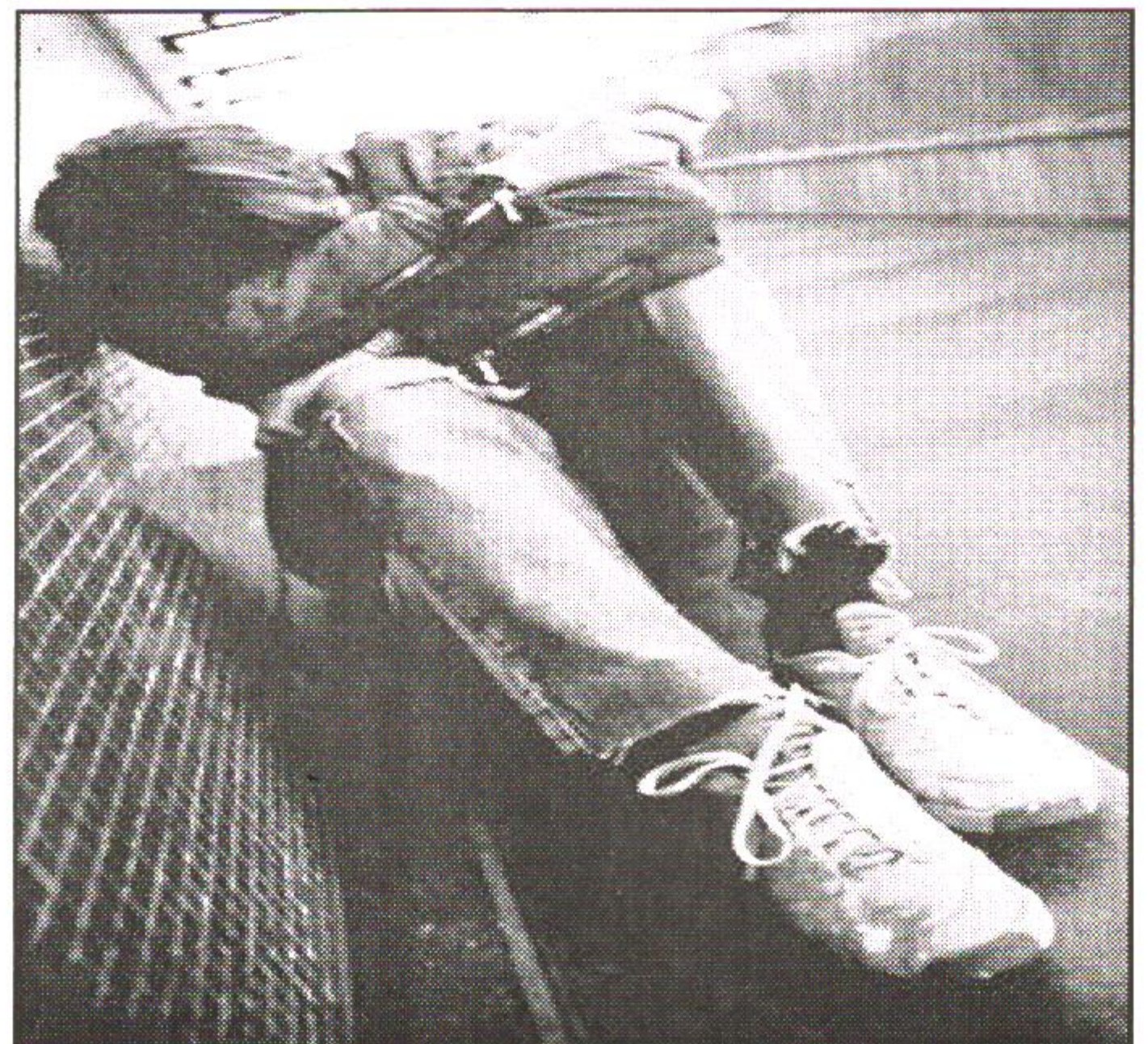
We have over 200,000 homeless (and how do you count rough sleepers?). Meanwhile the rich have a quarter of a million second homes, most only used at weekends. These are often located in picturesque but low paying parts of the country. The rush for second homes creates ghost villages and drives property prices completely beyond the reach of the locals. We can and should tax second homes more than the ones people actually live in. But the problem will only really be dealt with by creating a more equal society where everybody can afford a roof over their head and nobody can flaunt their wealth at the rest of us.

The big building companies have failed. They must be taken over. The construction industry is a jungle. Half a dozen big firms dominate the industry - Wimpey, Balfour Beatty, Bovis, Persimmon and the rest of them. They dictate what to do to a cat's cradle of sub-contractors. At the bot-

tom of the pile are thousands of little firms consisting of little more than two men and a ladder, and so-called self-employed workers on the lump. As a result of this chaos, construction has one of the worst safety records of any industry. Take over the big boys and we can plan and run the whole show.

We need to own the land as well. What we need is a National Housing Corporation to make an inventory of the land and materials at our disposal and draw up a strategy for a mass programme of house building.

One of the problems of Prescott's plan for housing in the Thames gateway is that there is little provision for affordable housing. Secondly it is basically a matter of dumping a load of private housing estates down without planning for jobs or social amenities to go with them, and in some cases with inadequate infrastructure. Housing provision must be part of an overall socialist plan. ■



The smoking ban – more state interference or good for our health?

by Caron Walker

AT 6AM on Sunday 1 July 2007 virtually all enclosed public places and workplaces in England will become smoke free by law. I already have a list of all the pubs I want to visit on the first day - perhaps I might even go nightclubbing to 'bring in' the ban!

But, as socialists, should we be applauding such state interference in our lives? John Reid famously said, "I just do not think the worst problem on our sink estates by any means is smoking, but it is an obsession of the learned middle class... what enjoyment does a 21-year-old single mother of three living in a council sink estate get? The only enjoyment sometimes they have is to have a cigarette." By supporting a smoking ban are we no better than the New Labour leadership who constantly patronise and blame working class people for the ills of capitalist society? Or should we go further and follow the lead of Bhutan, where the sale and use of tobacco is completely outlawed?

In the UK, smoking kills around 114,000 people each year - including about 42,800 from smoking-related cancers, 30,600 from cardiovascular disease and 29,100 who die slowly from emphysema and other chronic lung diseases. Of these 300 people who die every day from smoking, many are comparatively young smokers. Staggeringly, the number of people under the age of 70 who die from smoking-related diseases exceeds the figure for deaths caused by breast cancer, AIDS, traffic accidents and drug addiction put together.

Research has shown that each cigarette shortens a smoker's life by around 11 minutes. Add this to the fact that although life expectancy in the UK has increased, working class people on average die younger. For example, if you live in Glasgow you can expect to live 10 years less than if you lived in Kensington and Chelsea. Shouldn't we be at the forefront of ensuring that working people live long and healthy lives?

One argument against a smoking ban is that it goes against an individ-

ual's personal freedom because everyone should have the right to do what they like with their life. However, there are two problems with this. Firstly, we live in a capitalist society where big business dictates what we as individuals can and cannot do. So, in reality, we have only limited personal freedoms. Does this mean, therefore, that under a socialist society everyone would be free to smoke whatever they want, wherever they want? Perhaps not. This takes me to the second point - under both capitalism and socialism we don't live alone. Most of us live and work amongst other people; friends, family, fellow workers and fellow students. Our lives are inextricably intertwined with the lives of others.

Smoking in public places exposes us to poisonous fumes. Cigarettes contain more than 4000 chemical compounds and at least 400 toxic substances. The USA Environmental Protection Agency has classified environmental tobacco smoke as a class A carcinogen along with asbestos, arsenic, benzene and radon gas.

It is now considered that the passive smoke ('side-stream') that comes off a cigarette between puffs carries a higher risk than directly inhaled smoke. Passive smokers suffer an increased risk of a range of smoking-related diseases. At work, exposure to second



hand smoke is estimated to cause the death of more than 600 workers a year, including 54 deaths a year in the hospitality industry. This equates to about 1/5 of all deaths from second hand smoke in the general population and up to 1/2 of all deaths in the hospitality trades.

Domestic exposure to second hand smoke in the UK causes around 10,700 deaths a year. Non-smokers who are exposed to passive smoking in the home have a 25% increased risk of heart disease and lung cancer. Children who grow up in a home where one or both parents smoke have twice the risk of getting asthma, asthmatic bronchitis and allergies. More than 17,000 children under the age of five are admitted to hospital every year because of the effects of passive smoking. Surely we should be protecting workers and children from these damaging effects? □

How to profit from children? Or Where Blair left off...

IN THE education field Brown is continuing where Blair left off. In his endorsement of city academies, Brown has called on Britain's big business to form partnerships with every primary and secondary school in order to get the kind of education capitalism needs.

He has even appointed a host of leading capitalists, including Damon Buffini, managing partner of Permira, the get-rich-quick private equity group, to encourage more businesses to get involved. Brown has supported Blair's drive to give greater autonomy to schools, including the programme to establish 400 city academies.

One such capitalist interested in getting his hands on children's minds is Lord Harris, the carpet magnate. He had a revealing conversation with Lord Adonis, the minister responsible for the programme.

"I have a very good relationship with Andrew [Adonis]. He rings me up and says: 'Do you want this school?' and I ask what it's like and, if it sounds like the sort of place we are interested in, I say yes." (*The Financial Times*, 20th June)

Our filthy-rich Lords could not have revealed capitalist education so clearly! □

From July to September: Revolution and Counter revolution

by Terry McPartlan

ON JUNE the 29th Kerensky, the leader of the Provisional Government, issued a proclamation to the army and navy to begin a new offensive. The Bolsheviks had explained to the Congress of the Soviets, in a declaration written by Trotsky, as early as the 4th June that "the offensive was an adventure that threatened the very existence of the army". As Trotsky explains in "My life" no amount of speechifying could solve the problems faced by the soldiers.

When the inevitable defeat came to pass, the Bolsheviks were blamed and ruthlessly hounded. But at the same time the masses' confidence in the provisional Government was fatally undermined.

At this stage the political consciousness of the soldiers and workers in Petrograd was considerably more advanced than in the rest of Russia, a bit too far ahead even. Lenin and Trotsky were acutely aware of this and were seeking to develop the strength of the radical tendencies among the workers, soldiers and sailors, while calling for "All Power to the Soviets," within which this radicalisation would be expressed.

On June 21st a strike had broken out amongst the skilled workers at the giant Putilov factory. This arose from the struggle for wages against a background of shortages and inflation. Against the general political background, a small scale economic struggle was unlikely to succeed and the leaders of Bolsheviks and the factory committees advised restraint. But within a few days it was clear that there was a generalised ferment across the city. The anger was directed towards the govern-

ment. As a report from the trade union of the Locomotive Brigade explained to the Government, "For the last time we announce: patience has its limit; we simply cannot live in such conditions..."

Vyborg district

At the same time reports reached the capital of whole regiments being disbanded for disobedience. There was ferment among the soldiers in the capital. The regiments in the Vyborg district were continually under the influence of the working class, especially the women. As Lenin's wife Krupskaya points out "The first to carry out Bolshevik propaganda among the soldier's were the sellers of sunflower seeds, kvas (a Russian soft drink), etc many were soldier's wives". Trotsky called this process being "continually washed by the hot springs of the proletarian suburb."

The pressure among the soldiers was greater, their problems more immediate and their understanding of the political situation less developed. Also, as Trotsky explains in the "History of the Russian Revolution", they tended to overestimate the independent power of the rifle.

Meeting after meeting of the regiments called for final action against the government, delegations came from the factories urging the soldiers onto the streets and the Machine Gun Regiment, who faced the threat of sending 500 machine gun crews to the front, sent delegates to the other regiments calling for them to rise against the continuation of the war.

Under these conditions the Bolshevik Central Committee were more and more frequently forced to send delegates to the workers and soldiers calling for

restraint, for fear of a premature rising which could be defeated at a huge cost. Sections of the army and the workers began to develop new informal structures, underneath the soviets, demonstrating their impatience, but also representing a warning to the Bolsheviks that there were limits to their political authority even among the most advanced layers.

The Vyborg Bolsheviks complained that they had to "play the role of a fire hose". Eventually the Bolsheviks couldn't hold back the tide of anger and on July 3rd thousands of workers, soldiers and sailors flooded into the streets, under arms, sections of the workers with civilian cars bristling with machine guns and rifles, courtesy of the soldiers.

By seven o'clock the industrial life of the capital was at a complete standstill. Factory after factory came out, lined up and armed its detachment of the Red Guard. "Amid an innumerable mass of workers," relates the Vyborg Worker, Metelev, "hundreds of young Red Guards were working away loading their rifles. Others were piling cartridges into the cartridge-chambers, tightening up their belts, tying on their knapsacks or cartridge boxes, adjusting their bayonets. And the workers without arms were helping the Red Guards get ready ..." Sampsonovsky Prospect, the chief artery of the Vyborg Side, was packed full of people. To the right and left of it stood solid columns of workers. In the middle of the Prospect marched the Machine Gun regiment, the spinal column of the procession. At the head of each company went an automobile truck with its Maxims. After the Machine Gun

Russian revolution 1917

regiment came the workers. Covering the manifestation as a rear guard, came detachments of the Moscow regiment. Over every detachment streamed a banner: "All Power to the Soviets!"

(Trotsky The History of the Russian Revolution Vol 2 Chapter 1)

The movement was spontaneous, driven by the conditions that the soldiers and workers faced, but with no clear aims or strategy. Taking the mood of the class into account, the Bolshevik Central Committee, the Petrograd Committee of the Party and the Bolshevik dominated Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet eventually agreed to take part in the demonstration, to "give it an organised expression". They aimed effectively to prevent the movement from being smashed as it inevitably ebbed, given its lack of a clear focus. At the same time it was necessary to take the lead in a situation, shoulder to shoulder with the workers. To stand aside would have destroyed the political authority of the Bolsheviks among the most advanced layers.

Movement from Below

The demonstration thronged around the Tauride Palace, where the Central Executive of the Soviet was based. Why? The workers and troops were tired of the vacillation of the leaders of the reformist parties, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries. Like the movement in February that overthrew the Tsar, the movement came from below, arising out of the impasse that Provisional Government and the reformist leaders had arrived at. The reformist leaders were aghast, and yet the Bolsheviks did their best to restrain the masses. As one incident reveals graphically.

In front of the palace, a suspicious-looking group of men who had kept aloof from the crowd seized the minister of agriculture, Chernov, and put

him in an automobile. The crowd watched indifferently; at any rate, their sympathy was not with him. The news of Chernov's seizure and of the danger that threatened him reached the palace. The Populists (SRS) decided to use machine-gun armoured cars to rescue their leader. The decline of their popularity was making them nervous; they wanted to show a firm hand. I decided to try to go with Chernov in the automobile away from the crowd, in order that I might release him afterward. But a Bolshevik, Raskolnikov, a lieutenant in the Baltic navy, who had brought the Kronstadt sailors to the demonstration, excitedly insisted on releasing Chernov at once, to prevent people from saying that he had been arrested by the Kronstadt men. I decided to try to carry out Raskolnikov's wish. I will let him speak for himself.

"It is difficult to say how long the turbulence of the masses would have continued," the impulsive lieutenant says in his memoirs, "but for the intervention of Comrade Trotsky. He jumped on the front of the automobile, and with an energetic wave of his hand, like a man who was tired of waiting, gave the signal for silence. Instantly, everything calmed down, and there was dead quiet. In a loud, clear and ringing voice, Lev Davydovich made a short speech, ending with 'those in favour of violence to Chernov raise their hands!' Nobody even opened his mouth," continues Raskolnikov; "no one uttered a word of protest. 'Citizen Chernov, you are free,' Trotsky said, as he turned around solemnly to the minister of agriculture and with a wave of his hand, invited him to leave the automobile. Chernov was half-dead and half-alive. I helped him to get out of the automobile, and with an exhausted, expressionless look and a hesitating, unsteady walk, he went up the steps and disappeared into the vestibule of the palace. Satisfied with his victory, Lev Davydovich walked away with him."



If one discounts the unnecessarily pathetic tone, the scene is described correctly. It did not keep the hostile press from asserting that I had Chernov seized to have him lynched. Chernov shyly kept silent; how could a "People's" minister confess his indebtedness not to his own popularity, but to the intervention of a Bolshevik for the safety of his head?

(Trotsky "My Life" Chapter 26.)

At seven P.M. a group of armed and angry Putilov workers burst in on the terrified leaders of the soviet. A worker jumped on the platform and shouted at the deputies:

"Comrades! How long must we workers put up with treachery? You're all here debating and making deals with the bourgeoisie and the landlords... You're busy betraying the working class. Well, just understand that the working class won't put up with it! There are 30,000 of us all told here from Putilov. We're going to have our way. All power to the Soviets! We have a firm grip on our rifles! Your Kerenskys and Tseretelis are not going to fool us!"

(The Essential Trotsky)

Compelled to negotiate, the Soviet leaders bought time for Kerensky to identify loyal troops.

Russian revolution 1917

But as soon as the troops appeared the reformist leaders dropped their democratic face. The Bolsheviks were declared to be a "counter revolutionary Party" that had sought armed rebellion. The Cossacks and police fired on demonstrators, killing hundreds and causing panic to ensue.

The middle class reaction showed its face as the rebel units were disarmed. Workers were beaten and murdered by respectably dressed hooligans. Pravda, the Bolshevik paper, was suppressed, the presses wrecked and the rebel units were marched up the line as canon fodder.

The events of the first week of July revealed the weakness of the reformist leaders in Petrograd, but it also indicated just how far Petrograd was ahead of the provinces. The reformist leaders still had a large support in the country as a whole, exactly as the Bolshevik leaders had perceived. It also revealed the differing mood among layers of the soldiers in Petrograd. Many units had stood to one side of the movement, but significantly none had come to the defence of Kerensky or the reformist Soviet leaders.

Reaction

The reaction developed apace, the Cadet ministers walked out of the Coalition government and the Bourgeois called on the reformist ministers to break their links with the Soviet. The right wing papers bayed for Bolshevik blood, promoted anti Semitic propaganda, and denounced Lenin as a German spy. Even the Menshevik and SR leaders joined in, calling for Lenin to give himself up. Even though they knew very well that the accusations against him were false.

Lenin went into hiding after having been persuaded by the other Bolshevik Leaders not to give himself up, which would have been suicide. Even then he agreed that he would give himself up if the order was signed by the Central Executive of the Soviets. Needless to say that was a step too far even for the reformists.

The pendulum hadn't swung far enough to the right for the

bourgeoisie. At a meeting of the provisional committee of the Duma the reaction ran wild; Maslennikov called for an end to Dual Power, to the role of the soviets and even:

"if a thousand, two thousand, perhaps five thousand scoundrels at the front and several dozen in the rear had been done away with, we would not have suffered such an unprecedented disgrace".

(*"The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd"* By Alexander Rabinowitch)

In attempting to restore order, the reaction called insistently for the restoration of the death penalty. They did this to restore order in society, but fundamentally to restore order within the armed forces, those "armed bodies of men" on which the government and the whole state apparatus ultimately rested. Only on this basis could the reaction destroy the dual power and settle affairs with the working class.

Every step that the movement took backwards was mirrored by a step forward on behalf of the reaction. As the reaction grew more vocal the workers in Petrograd felt more isolated and weak.

Lenin's perspective

With arrest warrants out for Lenin, Kamenev and Zinoviev and the movement thrown back Lenin initially considered that the reaction had triumphed all along the line. He even considered at one stage that the Bolsheviks should go underground "for a long time". Trotsky, who was in the process of trying to bring his organisation, the Mezhrayontsi (Inter District Organisation) into the Bolsheviks, made a very public written display of solidarity with the Bolsheviks and was promptly arrested.

Several weeks passed before the situation changed. Lenin felt that the opportunity for a peaceful transformation of society had passed and that the Bolsheviks needed to prepare for the likelihood of civil war. He considered for a while that the Soviets had



lost their value as organs of struggle, since the leadership had passed over to the counter revolution. He even argued for the demand of "All power to the Soviets" should be dropped in favour of the slogan "All power to the factory committees," and that the party should prepare for insurrection on this basis.

Even in this situation Lenin was looking forward and preparing an insurrection, based on the understanding that there was no basis for the reaction to consolidate power in the conditions that existed. But the reaction after the July days had dramatically affected the balance of forces within the working class. The reformist leaders sat very uneasily on top of the soviets while at the same time actively supporting the counter revolution and preparing the conditions for civil war.

The Bolsheviks began to recover. The counter revolution proved much weaker than Lenin had originally thought. Kerensky's policies were just as unpopular and particularly at the front, where the soldiers just wanted to come home. The attempt to reintroduce the tsarist discipline into the army rebounded on the officers, who had been forced to keep quiet for months after February.

The Menshevik and SR leaders



began to lose their hold on sections of the workers and the left tendencies, the Menshevik Internationalists, the Mezhrayontsi and the Bolsheviks, began to make up ground in the Soviets. After all, where else could the workers go other than their own mass organisations?

As the Bolsheviks regrouped it became clear that the repression hadn't destroyed the party. On the contrary it began to grow once more. At the Sixth Congress Trotsky brought the Mezhrayontsi into the Bolsheviks and was elected with Lenin's full support onto the Central Committee. Times were still hard, premises and records had been destroyed resulting in a temporary disorganisation. It wasn't till early August that Pravda restarted publication.

Lenin tried to prepare the Central Committee for the new political conditions that he felt existed and the need to prepare for an armed uprising. Out of the 15 present 10 voted against his prognosis. Alarmed by the CC's prevarication he argued the next day "The people must know the truth—they

must know who actually wields state power"... "power is in the hands of a military clique of Cavaignacs (Kerensky, certain general, officers, etc), who are supported by the bourgeois class headed by the Cadet party, and by all the monarchists, acting through the Black Hundred papers".

Kornilov

Cavaignac, the French War Minister in the provisional government after the February revolution of 1848 had led the bloody suppression of the Paris workers in June. As Lenin had prophesied, the counter revolution now sought its own solution, through the person of General Kornilov.

Kornilov, who was noted as having the heart of a lion but the brain of a sheep, reflected the extent to which the pendulum had swung to the right. Insisting on the death penalty and the shooting of deserters, he also dictated to Kerensky a ban on meetings at the front. This, together with disbanding revolutionary units, and an end to the power of soldiers com-

mittees was a recipe for once again restoring bourgeois "order" at the front. Taken with the death penalty for civilians, martial law and the banning of strikes on pain of death, it was the programme of counter revolution.

Although Kerensky was happy with this, he was also conscious of his own position and was wary of Kornilov's longer term plans. The Cadets, sections of the officers and the bourgeois were actively preparing a coup d'état that would finish off the Provisional Government.

Kornilov's attitude became ambiguous towards Kerensky, then provocative, and on the 24th August he formally declared war on the Provisional Government. Ordering his troops to march on Petrograd he boasted about how he would deal with the revolution. Kerensky and the Mensheviks realised they couldn't defeat the reaction without the Bolsheviks, in the same way that in the July days they couldn't defeat the Bolsheviks without the Generals.

The government issued guns to the Red Guards and eventually even approached the Kronstadt sailors. These sent a delegation to visit Trotsky in his cell to ask his advice. Should they support Kerensky against Kornilov, or fight both? Trotsky advised them to postpone their reckoning with Kerensky. At the same time Lenin was arguing that the Bolsheviks should use Kerensky as a "gun rest" against Kornilov.

United Front

This was a united front, a movement where different political tendencies could march separately but strike together against a common enemy. The Bolsheviks offered the Menshevik and SR workers a united front. They maintained an independent

position, against Kornilov, but gave no support to the Provisional Government. In the process they revealed the weakness of the leaders of the reformists and of the government. But also, side by side with the Menshevik and SR workers they demonstrated that only the Bolsheviks could effectively fight the counter revolution.

The Bolsheviks mobilised the workers against Kornilov using revolutionary methods. The reaction soon ground to a halt. The railway workers sabotaged the trains, the troops were engaged by agitators and even the "Savage Division", the General's shock troops made up of warlike tribesmen were addressed in their own language by Caucasian Muslims. The rebel officers were isolated and defeated, the Kornilov rebellion collapsed under the pressure of the revolution. Many officers were arrested by their own men and the most unpopular shot.

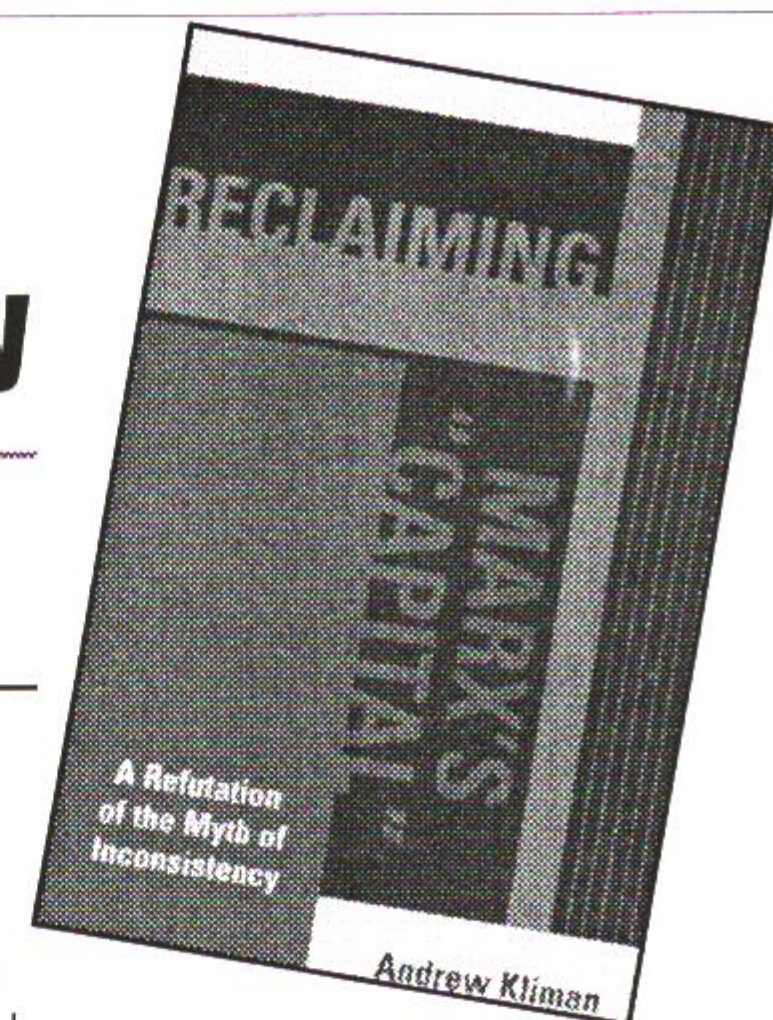
July and August demonstrate that revolution is a complex thing, the interplay of living forces, of men and women. It illustrated the combativity of the working class and the soldiers, but it also demonstrated the necessity of revolutionary strategy and tactics, above all the role of the Bolshevik party. Without the Party the July days could have been even more of a serious defeat. The reaction could have gained more ground. In reality the events after the July days illustrated the weakness of the reaction and the role of the reformists.

The Kornilov revolt gave a mighty impetus to the revolution and clarified the political situation in the minds of many of the workers. The struggle for the decisive majority of the working class in preparation for the taking of state power now took centre stage. ■

Reclaiming Marx's Capital: A Refutation of the Myth of Inconsistency

by **Andrew Kliman**, published by Lexington Books

Reviewed by **Michael Roberts**



THIS IS an important book. In a nutshell, what Andrew Kliman shows is that Marx's laws of motion of capitalism (how capitalism works and does not work) are logically consistent and theoretically valid.

Kliman's book is a compilation and summary of all the efforts of a few Marxist economists over the last 30 years to defend Marxist economic theory from critics (both bourgeois and those claiming to be Marxist).

Over the last 100 years, various bourgeois economists have all claimed that Marx's labour theory of value and its application to understanding how profitability under capitalism would move was logically inconsistent and/or just plain wrong.

So overwhelming were these arguments that most economists, including most Marxist economists, accepted them. The eminent Marxist economist Paul Sweezy swallowed the criticisms hook line and sinker in 1949 when he republished both Böhm-Bawerk and Bortkiewicz's papers. Later in the 1970s, most Marxist academics accepted the arguments of Sraffa and the Japanese Marxist economist, Okishio, that Marx's errors meant that his law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall under capitalism was wrong theoretically. They included Michael Kidron and Andrew Glyn in the UK, among many others.

For them, Marx could not explain the nature of capitalist exploitation consistently and could not provide a logical explanation of capitalist crisis either. Thus, Marx's economic theories were shelved except by a few, who were quickly dubbed 'fundamentalists' unable to accept reality.

What were main criticisms of the bourgeois and Marxist critics of Marx? The first deals with Marx's transformation of values of each commodity (as measured by the labour time going into producing them) into prices of production (as measured by cost of production and the average profit).

Marx knew that his labour theory of

value did not mean that each commodity sold in the capitalist market would be priced according to the labour time needed to produce them. Competition under capitalism meant that profitability would tend to be equalised or averaged out across the economy. If a company or industry had a higher rate of profit, capital investment would move towards that sector and away from another in order to reap that extra profit. This would lead to an averaging out of the profit generated from the labour employed in all sectors. The labour value embodied in each commodity would be transformed into a price of production that was based on the average profit across all sectors. That would differ from the labour value in the commodity, which was based on the labour time involved. Some of the surplus value generated from workers in one sector would have been transferred to another sector.

Prices of production

But, Marx argued, this did not mean that the labour theory of value no longer provided an explanation of capitalist production because, in aggregate across the whole economy, the total value of all commodities would still equal the total prices of production; total surplus-value would equal total average profit and the rate of profit in value terms would equal the rate of profit in price terms for the whole economy. Thus, indirectly but decisively, the labour time appropriated by the capitalist into the value of production of commodities explained the prices of all commodities.

Bortkiewicz argued that Marx had made a crucial error in his analysis. If the value of a commodity is transformed into a price of production by an average profit, then Marx should also transform the values of the original investment in capital equipment (constant capital) and labour force (variable capital) into prices of production too. But if Marx had done that, then his for-

mula would not lead to total values

equalling total prices of production and/or total surplus-value equalling total profit. Thus Marx's theory of value falls to the ground.

Kliman shows conclusively in his book that Bortkiewicz's 'correction' of Marx's 'error' is wrong. There is no need to transform the values of the inputs into the production process based on prices of the outputs. That is logically and temporally wrong. If you make a pair of trousers and price them according to the cost of the textiles and something for the wear and tear of the machinery and for the labour time involved, you don't then reprice the labour time or the machines you used according to the price of trousers you have just made. That's because you have already spent the money on the machines, textiles and labour. To do so is not only logically incorrect; it makes no sense of what happens in the real world. Thus Bortkiewicz's correction is wrong and Marx's solution to the transformation problem is perfectly valid.

The other main criticism of Marx was on his law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. For Marx, this was the most important law of the motion of capitalism, because it showed that capitalism had an inherent tendency towards crisis and collapse. Capitalist production is production for profit and if profit should fall, capitalists may well stop production.

Marx argued that the capitalist economy reproduces by increasingly using technology and equipment in place of the labour force in order to drive down costs and raise the productivity of labour. But, as the cost of machinery rises relative to the cost of employing labour (what Marx called a rising organic composition of capital), the rate of profit will tend to fall because if it takes less labour time to make a commodity, its value (or price)

would fall and thus tend to squeeze profitability.

This law has been criticised and mauled by a succession of bourgeois economists. They argued that Marx's conclusion was inconsistent with his assumption: because the rate of profit could not fall if the organic composition of capital rose. This was not an empirical question; it was logically impossible.

Marx had said that no capitalist would willingly introduce a new method of production unless it is increased his profitability. In other words, investment in new equipment must raise profitability for the capitalist, not lower it. That seemed to contradict Marx's law that increased investment in technology relative to the labour force would tend to drive down profitability.

Marx resolved this contradiction by explaining that, while the first capitalist would increase profitability by introducing a new technique before others, once all the rest had done so, profitability would fall back and to an even lower level than before.

Okishio denied this. His mathematical formula showed that, assuming there was no increase in real wages for the workers, any increase in the use of new technology would raise profitability and would never cause it to fall. After all, if the workers produced more in the same number of hours, productivity would rise and thus profitability: QED!

Okishio's theorem was soon accepted as a devastating demolition of Marx's position. If you wanted a cause for the rate of profit to fall, you would have to look elsewhere, probably to a rise in the share of wages relative to profit (as argued by Ricardo back in 1819 and Sraffa in 1960 - and later empirically by Andrew Glyn in the 1970s.). It meant that any explanation of crisis under capitalism could not rely on Marx's own theory.

In his book, based on previous works and the work of others, Kliman provides a convincing refutation of Okishio's theorem. Okishio's theorem, ostensibly a correction of Marx, made a similar mistake to Bortkiewicz. If a new technology increases the productivity of the labour force, it lowers the value of labour time in the production of commodity. According to Marx, that will lower the value or price of production and tend to

lower profitability, other things being equal.

But, according to Okishio, a rising organic composition of capital will not squeeze profitability because a higher productivity of labour will immediately (simultaneously) lower the costs of production involved in the new equipment and the wages of the labour force used in production and thus their prices.

But again this is illogical, as Kliman explains. You cannot reduce the cost of production using the new prices achieved with the new technology because you have already spent it at the old prices. The new prices only apply to the next round of production. The process of production is not simultaneous, but temporal. You can do anything with mathematics, but if your assumptions are unrealistic, you will come up with unrealistic outcomes.

Distortion

Moreover, Kliman shows that Okishio is not really correcting Marx, but completely distorting Marx's theory. Marx assumed from the start that the prices of inputs to production would differ from the prices of the output.

Thus, the work of Kliman and others has been to reclaim Marx's economic theories through what they call a temporal single-system interpretation (TSSI). It is temporal because Marx's theory is dynamic. The prices of the inputs going into production do not change simultaneously in line with the prices of the outputs after production.

And it is in the single-system that Marx's labour theory of value is not

divorced from the prices of capitalist production, but is integrally connected to them. You cannot have profits without surplus-value and you cannot have surplus-value without the appropriation of labour time by capitalists from workers. Thus Marx's economic theory of exploitation is logically consistent with the process of capitalist production. The creation of profit depends on the creation of surplus-value.

There is one very important point in the book that Kliman emphasises. Kliman is not saying that Marx is empirically correct. It may not be that the rate of profit under capitalism does fall as the organic composition of capital rises, or the organic composition of capital may not rise under capitalism. Marx's law of motion of capitalism may not fit the facts to explain economic crisis. That is the job of others to show or not.

I can remember the debates in the mid-1970s that some of us had with Andrew Glyn and others over whether Marx's 'orthodox' theory of the rising organic composition of capital and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall was valid both theoretically and empirically. We knew instinctively that Marx had not got it wrong and his iterative solution to the introduction of new technology and the rate of profit made sense.

What Kliman has done is summarise the arguments of the defenders of Marx's economic theory. He shows that a proper reading of Marx's *Capital* reveals a coherent theory of capitalist production from the labour theory of value and a logically consistent explanation of the movement of profit.

He has stripped away the obfuscations of the neo-Ricardians. Marx did not make theoretical errors (at least in the areas that the critics have claimed and others have accepted for over one hundred years since Volume 3 of *Capital* came out). And for that, Kliman must be thanked.

Kliman makes every effort to make his book simple and easy to follow. But even so, many of the arguments are complex and those who do not have some knowledge of Marxist economics may find it difficult. But it is worth persevering, because those who digest the arguments in the book will come away with formidable weapons to defend Marxist economic ideas. ■



Furore over RCTV: US imperialists join the attack

by Rob Sewell

CONDOLIEZZA RICE, the US Secretary of State launched another frontal attack against the Venezuelan Revolution at the start of the general assembly of the Organization of American States in Panama City.

Hypocritically, Ms Rice hit out at the closure of Radio Caracas Television, whose demise drew opposition protests, calling it Hugo Chávez's "sharpest and most acute" move against democracy.

Together with the rest of the howling pack, she pounced upon the Venezuelan government's decision not to renew the broadcast license of RCTV, a television channel that was involved up to its neck in the Washington-backed coup against President Chavez in April 2002.

"Freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of conscience are not a thorn in the side of government", she declared. "Disagreeing with your government is not unpatriotic and most certainly should not be a crime in any country, especially a democracy."

After this lecture in "democracy", the Secretary of State then called upon the OAS to send Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza to Venezuela to investigate the station's closure.

This attack was followed up by the Big Boss himself, President George W. Bush. While in Prague, Bush declared: "In Venezuela, elected leaders have resorted to shallow populism to dismantle democratic institutions and tighten their grip on power."

Furthermore, Rice also warned Russia against selling arms to Venezuela, but Moscow immediately rebuffed her criticism, saying a \$120 million deal it has signed with Caracas violates no laws or treaties.

This concerted hue and cry by the arch representatives of imperialism against Venezuela was joined by America's Senate, which passed a motion in support of RCTV. This motion drew the support from the two Democratic presidential front-runners, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, keen to prove their "democratic" credentials.

These broadsides were answered by Nicolas Maduro, Venezuela's foreign minister, who attacked the Bush Administration for meddling in his country's affairs and dismissed Condoleezza Rice

for daring to lecture Venezuela about democracy. "The OAS should form a special commission to study the daily violation of human rights on the southern border of the United States," he said. "How many prisoners do they have in Guantanamo? Where did they kidnap them?" He compared the US detention centre at Guantanamo Bay and secret prisons elsewhere to something not seen since "the time of Hitler."

"Human rights"

Maduro also said RCTV's closure was "democratic, legal and fair" and accused the United States of repeated human rights violations, including at the US-Mexico border where immigrants "are chased and hunted like animals"

Not surprisingly, a number of stooge "human rights" organizations also participated in the witch-hunt against the Chavez government. This included the notorious "Reporters Without Borders", which is financed by the National Endowment for Democracy, a CIA front-agency established to promote Washington's agenda.

These attacks by the White House reek of hypocrisy. While attacking the Venezuelan Revolution for legitimately protecting itself, it is deathly silent over the actions of its partner in crime, General Musharraf of Pakistan, who has been engaged in attacking its opposition media. Musharraf has introduced laws which grant him blanket powers to close down media networks daring to broadcast the growing opposition over the removal of Pakistan's chief justice. The opposition said freedom was being curtailed through such devices as denying "state advertising to non-conformist newspapers, threats to journalists and the latest tactic of blocking broadcasts of private television channels as seen during the prevailing judicial crisis". For the US, Pakistan is a reliable ally in its "war against terror", and is to be defended at all costs.

In contrast, the American imperialists have demanded that Chavez "reopen" RCTV and have given open encouragement to the opposition demonstrations inside Venezuela. They close their eyes to the fact that the withdrawal of the licence from RCTV is within the law. RCTV has not been shut



down. Its licence expired and was not renewed. A new channel has been granted its space: Venezuela Social Television.

The key reason why the Chavez government refused to renew RCTV's license was the counter-revolutionary role played by the channel during the April 2002 coup against Chavez. This was clearly portrayed in the independent documentary, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. At the time, while Chavez was under arrest and taken from Turiamo to the offshore island of La Orchila, the private TV channels were full of news that Chavez had resigned. In his place, Carmona, the head of Venezuelan big business, was declared President.

In the Miraflores Palace, Carmona called a meeting of media owners to express his gratitude. "Gustavo Cisneros of Venevision arrived at his office, followed by Alberto Ravell of Globovision, Marcel Granier of Radio Caracas TV, and Omar Camero and Andres Mata of El Nacional", explains Richard Gott.

"Cisneros suggested smoothly that the communications strategy of the new government should be left in their hands, a suggestion to which Carmona agreed.

"This should have been a moment of triumph for the media moguls, since this was the outcome they had so strenuously worked for. Yet as they arrived at Miraflores for the meeting, the palace was already surrounded by a huge crowd of Chavez supporters..." Within 48 hours, the coup had collapsed.

Gott continues: "Chavez, once returned to power, described the four privately owned television channels as 'the four horsemen of the Apocalypse' - with some justification. Their owners were among the wealthiest individuals in the country, and

they wielded their power with an awesome lack of social responsibility. Venevision, the station with the highest ratings, was owned by Gustavo Cisneros,

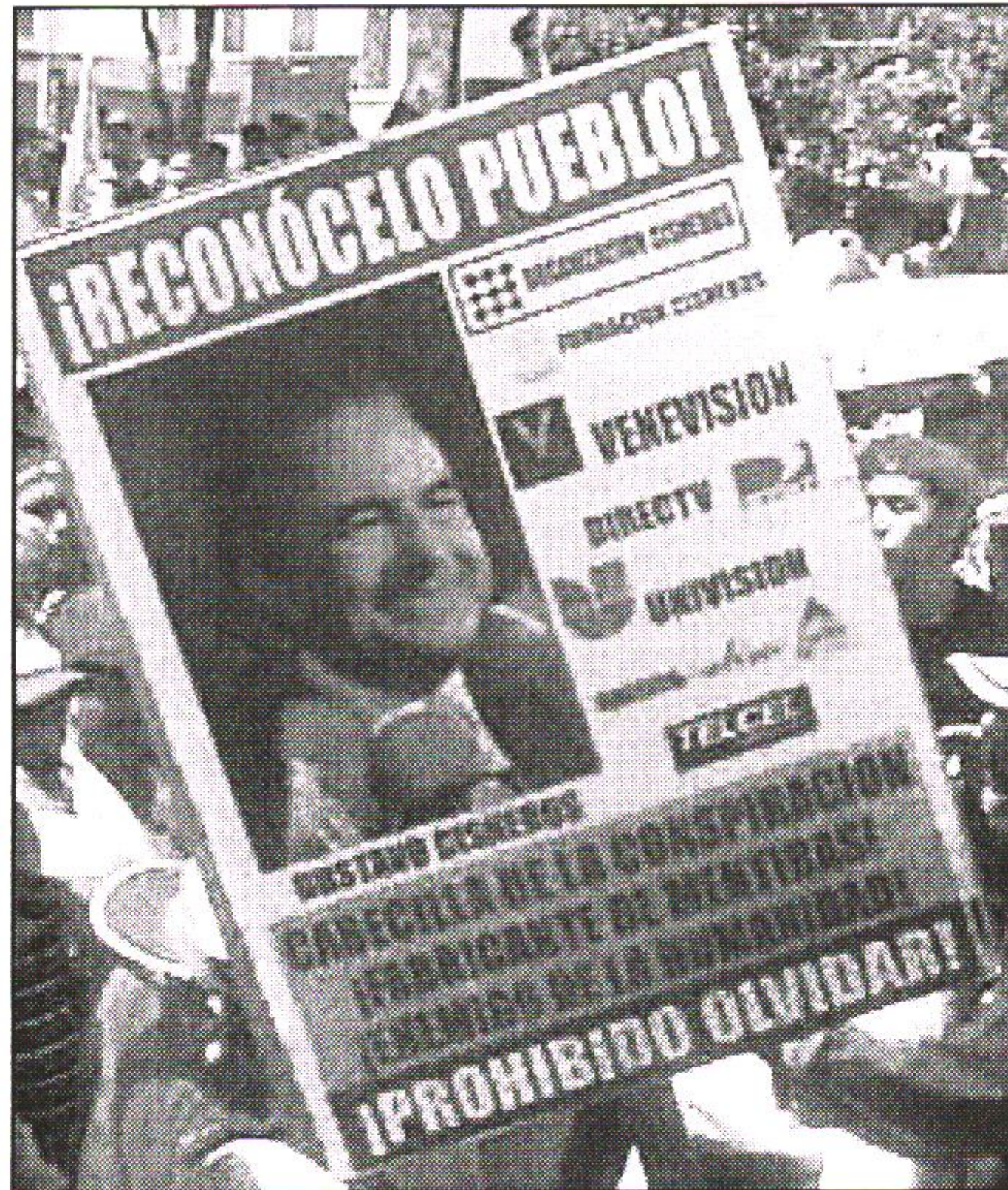
while its ordinary channel carried a series of discussion programmes similar to the commentary-propaganda of the newspapers. A fourth private channel, Televen,

RCTV.

The owners of RCTV openly supported the sabotage of the Venezuelan economy and promoted the bosses' lockout in late 2002 and early 2003. The press has even supported the idea of assassinating Chavez! They, together with the bulk of the private media companies, act as a fifth column in Venezuela, seeking to prepare the ground of a new counter-revolution against Chavez and the Venezuelan Revolution. They should have been arrested and closed down long ago.

The Venezuelan oligarchy has seized upon this issue of "press freedom" in order to resurrect the opposition movement, so badly beaten and demoralized after the historic victory of Chavez in December 2006. They are busy fanning street protests and demonstrations which have repeatedly ended in violence.

Ownership of the capitalist press and media is a key weapon in the hands of the capitalist oligarchy. Its fundamental aim is the defence of the capitalist order and its ruling position within society. We should recall that the private media was similarly used in Chile to undermine the Allende government and prepare the ground for the dictatorship of General Pinochet. The extraordinary daily barrage of lies and distortions had the desired effect of intensifying the opposition to Allende and magnifying the alarm of the middle classes. It is no accident that the Christian Democrats demanded that Allende sign a Statute of Guarantee in return for their "support", which included a clause that "the press and the media should be free from state intervention". A continual barrage was established from the first day of the Popular Unity government denouncing transgres-



Placard reads: People be aware! Gustavo Cisneros. Head of conspirators, lie fabricator, enemy of humanity. Don't forget!

sometimes described as 'king of the joint ventures'. An immensely rich man, intimately linked to political and commercial groups in the United States, Cisneros had built his empire through alliances with US-based multinationals, starting with Coca-Cola and Pizza Hut and ending up with AOL Warner. "Radio Caracas Television (RCTV), a station famous for its soap operas, was run by Marcel Granier, a multimillionaire with a penchant for collecting Ferrari cars. A third channel, Globovision, was run by supporters of Accion Democratica. Globovision's 24-hour news channel was unrelentingly hostile to the government,

was owned by Omar Camero."

These media owners were behind the preparations and coordination of the coup plot and were supported fully by the Bush Administration. The Americans were delighted the military had overthrown Chavez and established a dictatorship, where National Assembly, the Constitution, and all support for the democratically-elected government, were forcibly shut down. They immediately closed down Vive TV and Catia TV. So much for freedom of the press! Of course, there was no protest from the Americans or those protesting today about

Venezuela

sions of the Constitution supposedly undertaken by Allende. Huge campaigns were conducted in the media about the government's so-called attacks on "freedom of expression", "defence of democracy", etc. "The means of mass communication controlled by the opposition attacked the government systematically, continually and savagely", states Roxborough, O'Brien and Roddick (*Chile: The state and Revolution*). "By publishing alarmist headlines, they contributed directly to maintaining social unrest, and even played their part in the general economic sabotage by artificially creating shortages of consumer goods." Is this not the same role of the opposition media in Venezuela today?

Press suppressed

Of course, after the coup by Pinochet, the Constitution was abolished and the leftwing press suppressed. The only newspapers allowed were those which supported the junta. 30,000 people were then murdered by the regime. The apologist bourgeois press outside Chile which supported and justified the military coup, such as *The Times* of London, *The Economist*, *The Observer*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Financial Times*, were forced to disassociate itself from the bloodshed. But the deed was done and the Popular Unity was crushed. Capitalism had been saved.

As for the newspapers and journals which had supported the Popular Unity, their premises were raided, their journalists arrested or killed and the papers closed down. So much for the opposition's campaign about press freedom. Let us be warned!

The Chavez government's removal of RCTV's licence is a correct step. But why stop at this? The media barons are collectively culpable for their crimes in supporting counter-revolution. They try to hide behind the slogan of "freedom of the press", which has nothing to do with freedom of speech and everything to do with the freedom of millionaire press barons to publish what they want. The mass of people have no access to the media. "The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of the ruling class", explained Marx. The private media attempts to control, manipulate and manufacture "public opinion". The bulk of the private media in Venezuela is daily pumping out lies and filth about the Bolivarian

Revolution. They are essential propaganda weapons in the hands of the Venezuelan oligarchy and foreign imperialists. In effect, given their huge resources, they have a monopoly, despite the heroic efforts of the small alternative media.

"For the bourgeoisie", stated Lenin, "freedom of the press meant freedom for the rich to publish and for the capitalists to control the newspapers, a practice which in all countries, including even the freest, produced a corrupt press."

The Venezuelan Revolution should not stop at revoking TV licences but proceed with the nationalisation of RCTV, Globovision, Venevision and Televen, under democratic workers' control and management. The newspaper printing presses and paper mills should be brought into public ownership, as part of the programme to take over the "commanding heights" of the Venezuela economy.

Leon Trotsky once explained what should happen in a socialist America, which applies to Venezuela today: "While Soviet America would nationalise all printing plants, paper mills, and means of distribution, this would be a purely negative measure. It would simply mean that private capital will no longer be allowed to decide what publications should be established, whether they should be progressive or reactionary, 'wet' or 'dry', puritanical or pornographic. Soviet America will have to find a new solution for the question of how the power of the press is to

function in a socialist regime. It might be done on the basis of proportional representation for the votes' in each soviet election.

"Thus the right of each group of citizens to use the power of the press would depend on their numerical strength - the same principle being applied to the use of meeting halls, allotment of time on the air, and so forth.

"Thus the management and policy of publications would be decided not by individual cheque books but by group ideas." (*If America Should Go Communist* by Leon Trotsky)

Ownership and control

In other words, the ownership and control of the newspapers and media will be taken out of the hands of the privileged oligarchy and placed under control of society and accessible to all on the basis of their support. A new democratic system of running the nationalised media would come into being, allocating the editorial control of newspapers and media to workers' and peasants' organisations and other political parties in accordance with their actual support in the population. This would guarantee the genuine freedom of expression to all parties and groups, including the opposition, provided they did not take up arms or promote open rebellion against the revolution. This will mean the extension of real democracy, where the mass of people hold real power in their hands.

While Chavez has the overwhelming support of the masses, this campaign over RCTV represents a serious challenge to the Revolution. Behind the oligarchy stands imperialism. While the media, banks, big industries and the land still remains within the hands of the oligarchy, they will use this power to constantly undermine the government. They will never stop until the Revolution is destroyed or they are overthrown. There is no middle course.

The imperialists have joined in the fray on an international scale. They are determined to defeat the Revolution in Venezuela, which poses a direct threat to their continuing domination of the Latin American continent. With the huge socialist mandate given to Chavez in December, it is time to complete the Venezuelan Revolution and eliminate the power of the oligarchy once and for all. □



In Memory of Ted Grant 1913 - 2006

ON 20TH July 2006, the Marxist theoretician Ted Grant died after more than seventy years of political activity. His death marked the end of an era, but not the end of the struggle for the ideas he always defended.

His lifetime struggle to defend Marxist principles, resulted in Ted bequeathing us a precious legacy, a wealth of material in the form of articles, speeches and notes spread over the last 70 years. These works constitute an "unbroken thread" in the defence of Marxism and deal with a host of theoretical, political as well as organisational questions thrown up by the workers' movement in Britain and internationally.

This does not mean to say that Ted was infallible. He made mistakes, as did all the great Marxist teachers. But they were fewer than most and the main thing was that he learned from them. From our point of view, it is the method that is important, the dialectical method that permeates all his writings.

Under the influence of Ralph Lee, an expelled member of the Communist Party, Ted joined the Trotskyist movement in the late 1920s.

Both Ralph (22 years old) and Ted (only 16) were engaged in pioneering work helping to set up a small Trotskyist group in Johannesburg. Through this means they attempted to establish contact with the black South African workers. They had a certain success under the circumstances but suffered from the general harsh climate of the South African regime.

The earliest piece (in our possession) written by Ted Grant is from April 1935 - a

Socialist Appeal Editorial Board

letter to Leon Sedov, the secretary of the International Communist League. At this time, Ted was a member of the Marxist Group inside the ILP but had come into conflict with the opportunist stance of the group's leadership. Through this letter, it was Ted and a few other comrades who alerted Leon Sedov, and through him Trotsky, about the more favourable opportunities for Marxism inside the Labour League of Youth. Within a matter of months, Trotsky had drawn similar conclusions and called for a new orientation towards the Labour Party. "The British section will recruit its first cadres from the thirty thousand young workers in the Labour League of Youth", wrote Trotsky.

Main theoretician

From the Second World War onwards, Ted Grant became the main theoretician of the Trotskyist movement and wrote important works on the evolution and character of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and China. He defended the real methods and traditions of Trotskyism and applied them to the new situation that emerged after the war. As a result, these theoretical works served to reorientate the movement in Britain, a task the leaders of the International after Trotsky's death were incapable of performing. Ted went on to explain the post-war upswing and the importance of the mass organisations in the evolution of the working class, which laid the theoretical basis for the launching of the "Militant Tendency", the most successful Trotskyist movement

in British history.

For Ted Grant - and ourselves - theory is not a secondary question. It is of fundamental importance and constitutes an accumulation of generalised historical experience over generations. Theory is the distilled essence of experience which serves to guide us in the ebbs and flows of the class struggle. Ted's ability to develop Marxist theory was extremely valuable in this epoch of sharp and sudden changes. His unique contribution needs to be preserved and made available to the new generation.

While a number of Ted's writings have been published, many remain unpublished or out of print, and therefore inaccessible to many. A volume of his selected works entitled "The Unbroken Thread" was issued in 1989, three years before his bureaucratic expulsion from "Militant" and the loss of his archives, but this book has been out of print for some years. A valuable website - tedgrant.org - serves to publish much of the old documents, but it is not complete and is no substitute for the printed copy.

That is why we are appealing to all our readers and supporters to help raise the necessary resources for the publication of the collected works of Ted Grant, the only Marxist theoretician



who genuinely developed and built on the ideas of Leon Trotsky after the Second World War.

Over the last year we have added many valuable documents written by Ted during the Second World War on the Ted Grant Internet Archive (see www.tedgrant.org) which, together with other material, we intend to reprint in a book. Comrades have been working on this project for the last 12 months, searching archives, scanning and retyping material, in preparation for this book. We hope, after all the necessary notes and references are finished, that it will be published in early 2008.

We - those who knew and worked with him - have a responsibility to preserve Ted Grant's priceless legacy: his ideas.

We therefore call upon all comrades and friends to give generously to this appeal. This project will be a fitting memorial to Ted's life and work for the cause of the working class. □

How to make donations

You can support this project by sending cheques, payable to "Socialist Appeal" and marked "for Memorial Appeal", to: Socialist Appeal, PO Box 50525, London, E14 6WG
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Role of the Communist Party of India during Partition

by Jamil Iqbal

JAMIL HAS shown that, so far from standing for a unified secular democratic India, the bourgeois leaders of the independence movement based themselves on communalist appeals to the Muslims (Muslim League) and Hindus (Congress). This led directly to the catastrophe of partition.

Could the Communist Party of India (CPI) have made a decisive difference? Here Jamil shows they had their own organisational weaknesses. Above all they were prisoners of the policies imposed by Stalin on the international communist movement. In backward and colonial countries, Stalin decreed, the movement had to go through two stages - democracy, then socialism. In Russia this had actually been the policy of the Mensheviks, successfully overcome by the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution. Jamil has demonstrated that, in India as everywhere else, the 'progressive national bourgeoisie' was a myth. Yet this was the non-existent class the CPI proposed to march behind in a 'Popular Front'.

The policies imposed on the international communist movement by Stalin were normally reformist; indeed counter-revolutionary. But occasionally he lurched into an ultra-left phase as in 1947-48, called the 'Zhdanov offensive.' In lurching from right to left, a drunk will at one point be found upright. That is the significance of the correct perception of what was happening in India by the Moscow commentators Dyakov and Zhukov.

IN THE Indian communist movement, there are different views on exactly when the Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded. The date maintained as the foundation day by CPI is 26 December 1925. But the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which split-off from the CPI, claims that the party was founded in the USSR in 1920. During the 1920s and beginning of 1930s the party was badly organized, and in practice there were several communist groups working with limited national coordination. The British colonial authorities had banned all communist activity, which made the task of building a united party very difficult. Only in 1935 was the party ready to be accepted as the Indian section of the Communist Third International.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) could have acted as a powerful factor in taking up the interests of national minorities in identifying their specific interests and to fight for them within the framework of their struggle for independence. It is true that CPI arrived rather late, historically as an effective political force at a time when communalism had already become a very powerful factor in Indian politics; but even then if they could meaningfully link up class struggle with the struggle of national minorities

since the early 1930s, then the political developments in India could have taken a different turn.

The importance of various national minorities, emphasised by Lenin as far back in the early 1920s, was not properly grasped by the leaders of the CPI, though in their own way they tried to formulate a policy on the national question and unity of India as late as 1942. The CPI could have acted as a powerful factor in taking up the interests of national minorities, but in spite of making some efforts in that direction they floundered on the national question and failed to expose the communal designs and conspiracies of Indian big capital.

Role of CPI

The CPI failed to inspire and mobilise the people and play an effective role for two basic reasons.

CPI did not extend the national question to properly embrace the various national minorities other than the Muslim religious minority.

CPI depended too much, almost entirely, on Congress-League unity as the outcome of the national minority question and thereby left that question in real terms in the hands of those who were already divided quite decisively as communal parties of

the upper and middle class Hindu and Muslim communities respectively.

Thus they failed to inspire the religious, ethnic, linguistic and other minorities, as well as the scheduled castes (untouchables) among the Hindus, in identifying their specific interests and to fight for them within the framework of their struggle for independence. The failure of CPI was disastrous because they could open separate dialogues with Jinnah and the Sikhs and others on the question of national minorities. But instead, they pursued a policy of uniting the hands of Gandhi and Jinnah as leaders of the two most important and dominated religious communities and depended in a ridiculous manner on the prospect of a Congress-League understanding under the given conditions. It is because of a wrong analysis of the Indian national question and this failure of policy that the communist movement in India suffered a terrible setback from which it has not yet been able to recover.

It should be mentioned that at the second congress of the CPI in February-March 1948, greatly influenced not only the communist party of India and Pakistan but the history of the entire sub-continent. The central committee of the CPI in the

Indian independence (part 3)

last week of June 1947 arrived at certain decisions which were published as a 'Statement of Policy'. In that Statement of policy laid their attitude towards Nehru. In that they characterised Nehru as a person who was capable of guiding the democratic movement in India. The statement said, 'In the area of building the Indian Republic on a democratic basis, the Communist Party would proudly extend full co-operation'. Extending their policy to Pakistan, they said that the Communist Party also thinks that in order to implement any democratic programme in the Sub-continent it is necessary to unite the left of the Muslim League and the Congress.

Withdrawal

In order to extend their support to the Congress and Muslim League regimes in Pakistan and India, the Communist Party virtually withdrew all the programmes they were following just preceding independence. They even withdrew the Tebhaga (sharecroppers) Movement in Bengal in November 1947. The CPI made an appeal to the peasants not to initiate any direct action in demanding two-third of the crops, because the new government was to be given an opportunity to fulfil their promise. In fact, no promise was ever given to the peasants regarding 'Tebhaga' by the new Muslim League in East Pakistan.

It is quite amazing that shortly before the division of India in June 1947, the Soviet theoretician A. Dyakov, in an article called 'The New British Plan for India' published in the Soviet paper, *New Times*, on 13 June 1947, said the division of the Indian sub-continent is a well-planned conspiracy to keep the sub-continent under the British imperialist control. By submitting themselves to it the Indian leaders had compromised with imperialism and in this they have been forced by the Indian big commercial interests. Through this arrangement imperialism and commercial interest had tried to



sabotage the revolution by dividing the home market between themselves.

Following Dyakov's article another article by Soviet theoretician E. Zhukov called 'Concerning the Indian Situation' was published in which he said more clearly and in a straightforward manner that the Indian National Congress was nothing but a representative of the Indian big bourgeoisie and monopoly capital and in reality Congress entered the reactionary camp. He also said that the bourgeoisie are afraid of the people much more than imperialism.

From the articles of Dyakov and Zhukov it can be said that the Soviet leaders and the CPI were well aware of the situation in India before partition. Despite their awareness of the situation they were still following the Stalinist stance of the Popular Front.

Following the Popular Front stance, the CPI theoreticians totally failed to take into account the very clear power factors and the state of the existing production relations. Thus they failed miserably to analyse the actual situation in India after partition. In the absence of such analysis their political line was full of imaginary ideas and doomed from the very outset. It was nothing short of surrender to the Indian ruling classes. In order to justify their line the Indian communists involved themselves in the stupid exercise of separating Nehru from the Indian monopoly capital which he represented.

The greatest mistake of the second congress of the CPI was lumping India and Pakistan together as one unit. Much of their analysis rested on their attitude to Jawaharlal Nehru, a factor totally irrelevant to the situation of

Pakistan. It is true that till that time the CPI remained formally undivided, but this did not mean that exactly the same strategy could be applicable to both India and Pakistan.

The relations of the class forces and the strength of the organisation of the working people, the state of the party organisations, as well as the power of the Indian big monopoly capital, of the state and its armed forces, were not taken into consideration at all while evaluating the situation in India at that time. Nothing could be more futile than this blindness to obvious facts, and soon the organisation of the CPI were deeply endangered more by their own stupid acts than by any repressive measure of the governments of India and Pakistan.

Colonial masters

All the problems of minorities survived after partition and there was no sign of any attempt to improve the situation. The partition that both the Hindu and Muslim majorities carved out with the help of the colonial masters to their own advantage, was to the utter detriment of the interests of minorities of all descriptions.

Large scale migrations followed in the wake of partition which happened in its worst form and maddening proportions in West Pakistan and West India, particularly on both sides of the Punjab, where widespread riots broke out between Muslims on one side and Hindus and Sikhs, on the other, resulting in the killings of tens of thousands of people and almost a total exchange of population.

The partition of India was, in a very real sense, a game of majorities, and as such the interests of Muslim and Hindu minorities in India and Pakistan respectively and along with them the interests of scores of other minorities of British India remained a matter of indifference to the Congress, the Muslim League and the British, who presided over the partition of India. ■

Engels on science

Dialectics of Nature

New from Wellred

Review by Harry Nielsen

SOCIALIST ACTIVISTS will welcome the republication by Wellred of *Dialectics of Nature* by Frederick Engels, a collection of essays and notes first published in 1883, that derive from Engels' lifelong interest in science.

In this book he demonstrates that the fundamental philosophical ideas of Marxism - dialectical materialism - apply not only to politics and to society but also the natural and physical world.

Using examples drawn from a wide range of scientific topics he shows how all the phenomenon of nature reduce in the final analysis to different forms of matter in motion, and that the same general laws of motion apply here as in society.

Central to the book, as to all of Marx and Engels writings, is the idea that both society and the natural world can be explained from themselves alone, without the need for a God or any other type of ghost in the machine.

This book goes to the heart of perhaps the most important question for any political activist - how does change take place, in society and in the world in general? Change does not occur gradually, slowly, piece by piece, as the right wing of the Labour movement would like us to believe. It is revolutions, rare but extremely effective, that change society.

And the same is also true for change in the natural world. Continents are not built by slow change, but by revolutionary upheavals, when faults suddenly slip, volcanoes explode, and the accumulated pressure from years of slow development suddenly cracks and reshapes what has been laid down before. Liquids that are heated do not simply become hotter but suddenly, at a critical point, boil and change into gas, a substance with completely different physical properties.

Although it is 19th century science that Engels discusses, modern science also confirms this perspective. At the most fundamental level, in the physics of sub-atomic particles, the great breakthrough of 20th century physics was to understand that change takes

place through leaps and unpredictable transitions between different quantum levels.

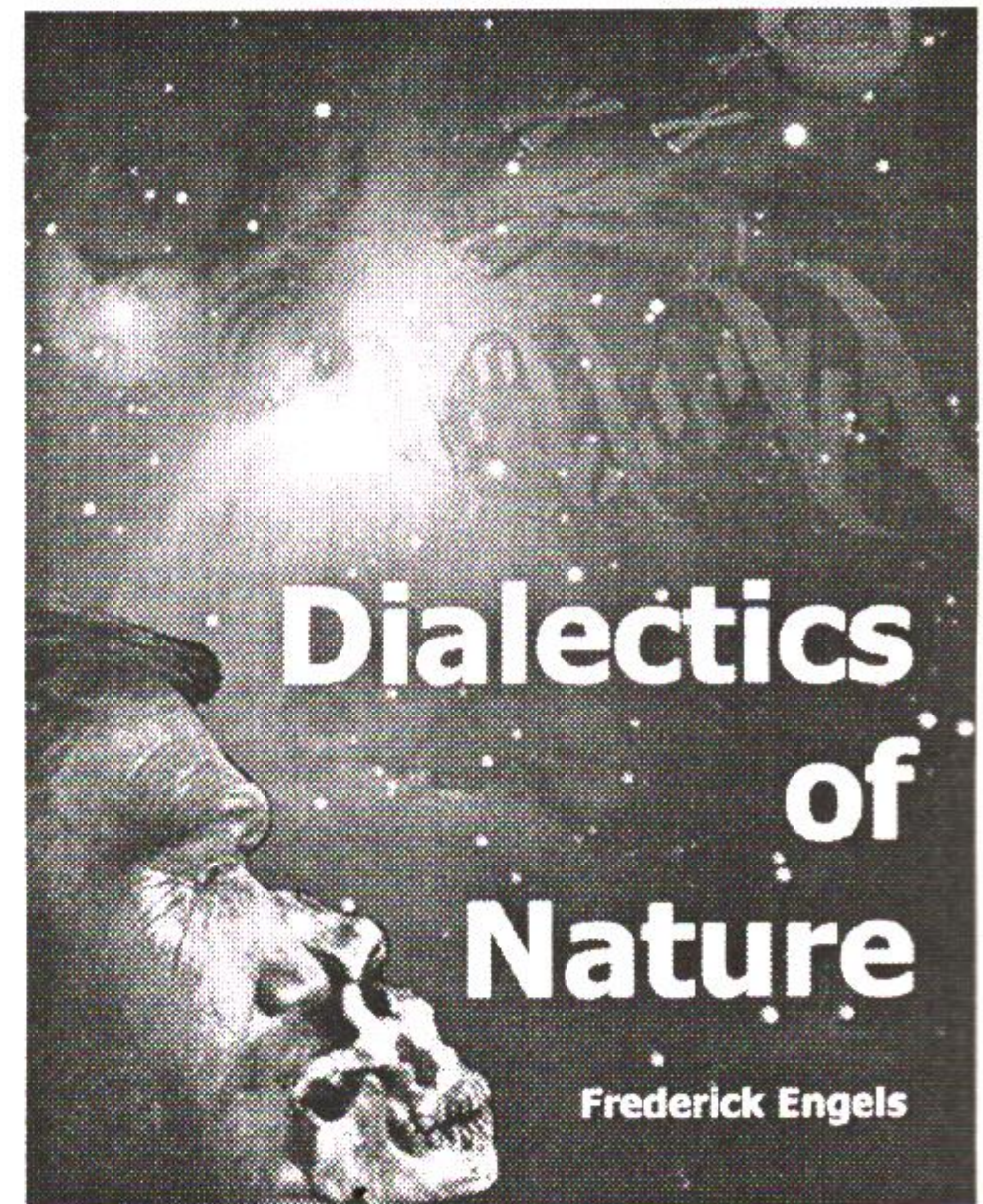
The book was unpublished during Engels' lifetime, and is an only partially finished piece of work. It contains some complete chapters, but others consist of partly written pieces and sometimes just working notes. Yet the book is a consistent demonstration of the accuracy of the dialectical and materialist view of the world..

Modern science is just beginning to understand that in complex "many body" systems there are general patterns of motion that appear in widely different physical systems. And these are exactly the dialectical laws first developed by Hegel and used by Marx and Engels in their work.

In large collections of molecules, in the multitude of different components of the earth's weather, and in the complex interactions between billions of human beings, the same general laws of change merge. Because of their revolutionary conclusions these ideas have been derided, misrepresented and ignored by bourgeois academics. Yet modern scientists unwittingly and unconsciously have stumbled on the laws of dialectics in their studies of complex dynamics, rediscovering what Hegel so brilliantly anticipated.

In many respects *Dialectics of Nature* remains one of the most modern books on science, despite its age. Engels says for example that "the whole of nature accessible to us forms a system, an interconnected totality of bodies....The whole of nature is connected and in flux." This is an astonishing insight that foreshadows some of the most recent results of modern biology.

Modern scientists rediscovered this idea, 150 years after Engels, in the 'Gaia' hypothesis, when they announced with a great fanfare (and some lucrative publishing deals) that they had discovered that the biological world is all interconnected and should be viewed as a complete system. Yet philosophically they remain centuries behind



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Engels when they talk about 'mother earth' and the 'spirit of the living planet', injecting the idea with mediaeval mysticism and philosophical idealism.

All things - in both nature and society - are in motion, and are interconnected, categories are not fixed, different objects have both common and different characteristics, have evolved from earlier forms, and adapted to particular conditions. This is a rich, all round description of physical reality, that sees the different sides of phenomenon in their contradictions, connections and change, and is exactly the point of view that modern science is approaching in many subjects.

Along with its companion book - *Reason in Revolt, Marxism and Modern Science*, by Ted Grant and Alan Woods - Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* is recommended to all those who wish to make a serious study of Marxist philosophy - and to use that understanding as a guide to political action. □

Legislative elections mark the end of the honeymoon period

by La Riposte - www.lariposte.com

THE SECOND round of the general elections has provided the parties of the right with an absolute majority in Parliament. Leaning on their control over the presidency and the Parliament, the UMP and its allies will from July engage in serious attacks against the rights and living conditions of the vast majority of the population: curbing the right to strike, scrapping of the state university, installing medical "franchises", etc. With an enormous ferocity increased by the victory of its representatives, the capitalist class will demand from Sarkozy and the Fillon government to act quickly and hit hard.

Nevertheless, the elections results of last Sunday have blown away the cloud of euphoria on which the right and the ruling class was living. Not only has the "blue wave" as announced by all media and institutions not materialised, but the second round indicates an equal vote between the right and the left, with both camps gathering just over 10 million votes. In passing, we cannot but revel in the defeat of Alain Juppé, who has not even had the time to display his arrogance in all the recesses of his "great ministry".

All of those who, for weeks, hammered us with their sensational conclusions on the "historically low level of the left, not seen since the 12th century before Christ," etc., will have to rethink this. The theory of "French society's profound shift to the right" is still-born. Shortly after the victory of Sarkozy, La Riposte wrote: "An election is like a photograph. It gives a fixed image of a society in motion, within the context of growing instability. Social consciousness, and the mood of the

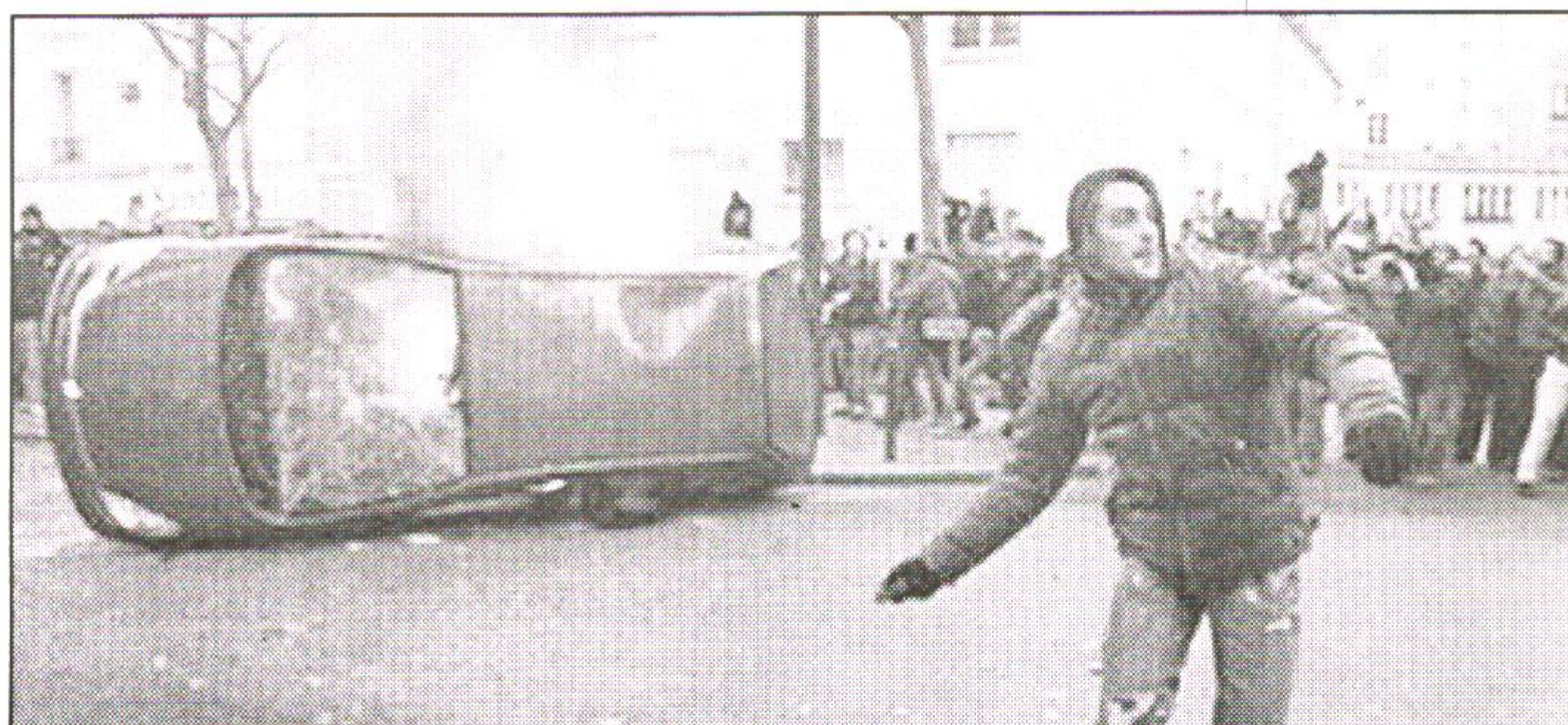
different social classes are extremely mobile and fluid." The second round of legislative elections is a striking illustration of this, since the net electoral recovery of the left took place in the space of one week.

These results thus clearly show that the idea that "the French largely approve of the President's project" is false, an idea which the right has been continually repeating since the election of Sarkozy. The truth is that Sarkozy was elected on the basis of a demagogic presentation of his programme, in the absence of a credible alternative on the part of the Socialist Party. However, barely one month after the formation of the Fillon government, the second round of legislative elections marks the first sign of distrust amongst the youth and the working class. Brimming with confidence, the right ventured, in the full electoral campaign, to lift the demagogic veil that covers its reactionary project a little bit, announcing an increase in VAT, which would result in a fall of purchasing power for the mass of the population.

The right is attempting to console themselves by considering that "the balance of forces"

in Parliament will defuse social protest. On June 19 Le Monde writes:

"With a left-wing holding 227 seats, Parliament will be, more surely than the streets, the place of discussion for people who are angry." But nothing will come of it, because there is nothing "to discuss" in Parliament aside from a long series of attacks against the youth and the labour movement. There will be no other choice in facing this other than to take the path of massive struggle, as was done during the struggle against the CPE. It is of course impossible to determine in advance the exact rhythm and extent of future mobilisations. Periods of advance and retreat are inevitable. But the general perspective seems clear to us: the period to come will be marked by enormous political and social instability, and the crisis of French capitalism will prepare the elements for a major confrontation of the classes - confrontations during which the left, if it rejects reformism in favour of a revolutionary programme, will be in a position to lead the workers to power and launch the socialist transformation of society. □



Spanish trade union leaders jailed

by El Militante - www.elmilitante.org

JUAN MANUEL Martínez Morala and Candido González Carnero have been arrested and jailed. They are the current and former general secretaries of the Left-wing Trade Union Current (CSI) in Asturias. Both are members of the Shop Stewards Committee of the Naval Gijón shipyard, which has been in crisis for many years and subject to constant lay offs. They are class fighters, refusing to accept any redundancies and consistently defending the viability of the shipyard. After the last battle to defend jobs, they were accused of having broken a traffic security camera located near the company's installations and have been sentenced to three years in prison. The only proof against them was the contradictory statements of the police. The judge refused to allow the screening of a police videotape which conclusively proves that they are both innocent. Despite all this, on Saturday, June 16, they were both arrested in the street and taken to the Villabona prison.

Throughout their trial a series of demonstrations and protests were organized against this attack on democratic and trade union rights. The sentence against Morala and Carnero is an attack on the labour movement as a whole, with the clear aim of criminalizing the struggle of workers and increasing repression. This attack was carried out with the complicity of the regional govern-

ment in Asturias and the local council of Gijón (which presented the case against them), despite being ruled by a coalition composed of the United Left and the Socialist Party.

It is urgent that this situation be exposed as widely as possible, particularly in the trade union movement, to put pressure on the judicial system to secure their immediate release. The Left-wing Trade Union Current is a point of reference for militant trade unionists and youth in Asturias. The organisation was key in the struggle to defend Naval Gijón and became a symbol of working class resistance.

Faced with this situation we are making an appeal for solidarity to all left-wing political organisations, trade unions, shop stewards committees and workers in general, to stop this attack and prevent what would be a dangerous precedent for the future.

We ask you to send urgent letters and resolutions of protest demanding their immediate release.

These to be sent to:

email CSI: csi@csi-asturies.org

El Militante Asturias: elmilitanteasturias@hotmail.com

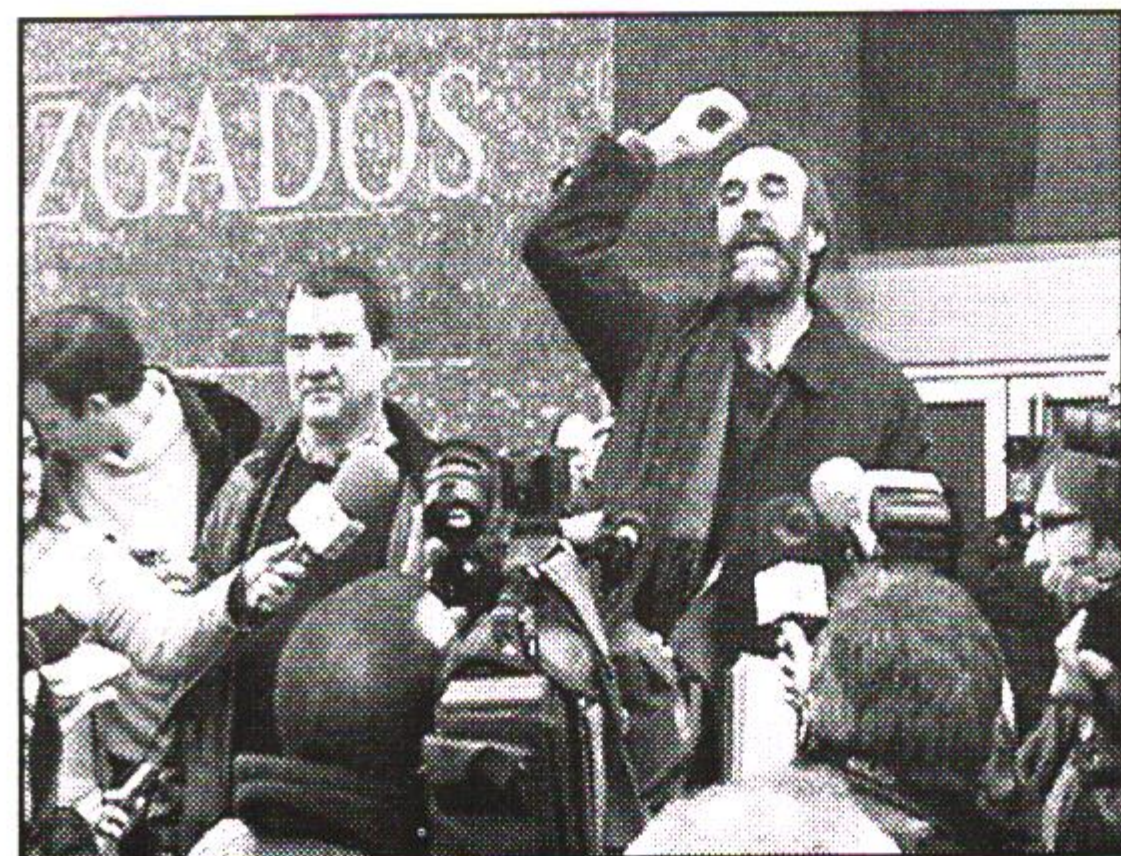
Ayuntamiento de Gijón:

fax 985 181 182

info@pazfelgueroso.es

Delegación del gobierno en

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Brazil: Another occupied factory under attack



FOLLOWING THE attacks on workers at the occupied CIPLA factory (see our last issue), the administrator of Cipla/Interfibra, Rainoldo Uessler, on June 19, went to Flasko, another occupied factory in Sumaré (Sao Paulo). He met with the general coordinator of the Factory Council, Pedro Alem Santinho, and sacked him.

As soon as they knew of this decision, the workers stopped work and demanded his reinstatement. Other workers were threatened with the sack.

Local councillor Marcela Moreira (PSOL - Campinas) went to the factory to show her solidarity, but faced intimidation from the administrator and his thugs. "I have come here to visit the workers, not to visit you", she said.

At the end of the day, given the resistance of the workers, the administrator, after having threatened to bring the Federal Police, was forced to backtrack on the threatened sackings.

There is now a state of permanent alert as workers remain inside the factory in order to defend their control. The residents of the nearby working class neighbourhood Villa Operaria e Popular have also joined the resistance.

The administrator has threatened to return. The workers of Flasko are appealing for solidarity. ■

Minister Tarso Genro: gabinetemj@mj.gov.br

Minister of Welfare Luiz Marinho: gm.mps@previdencia.gov.br

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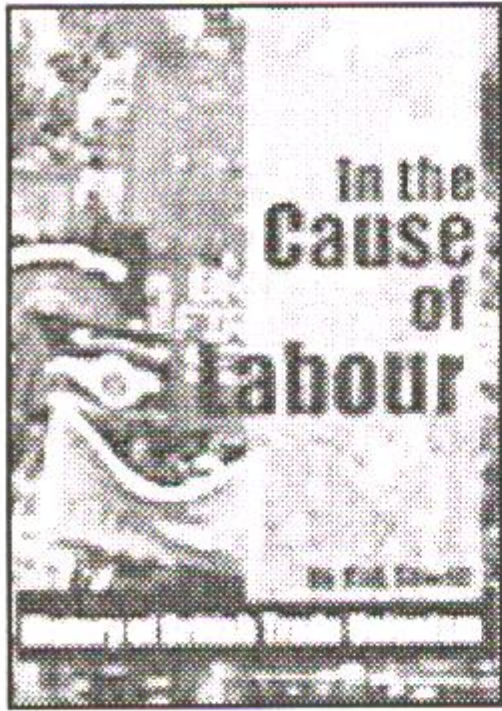
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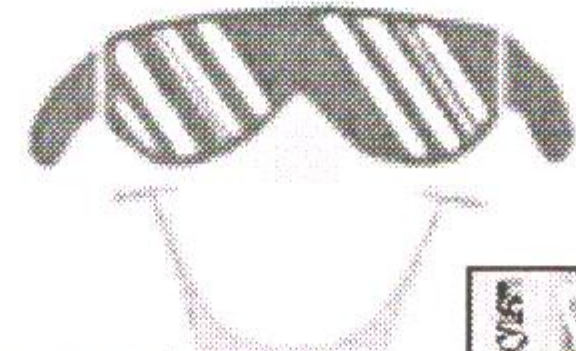
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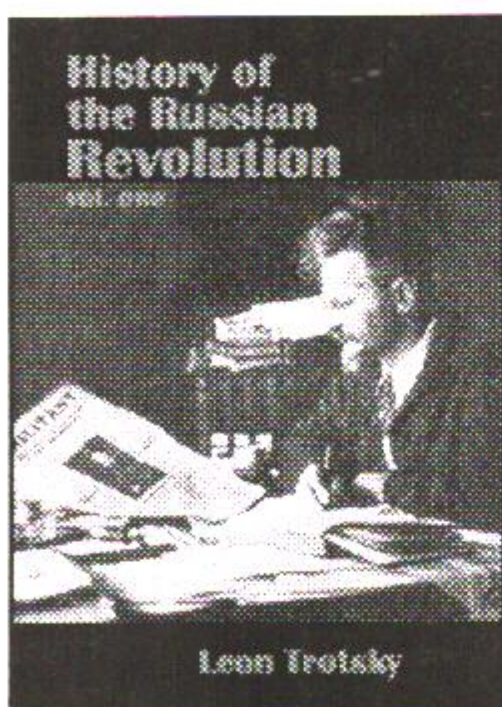
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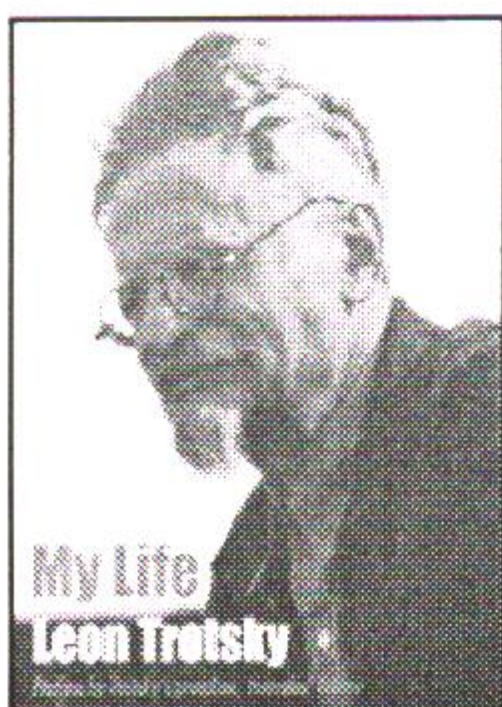
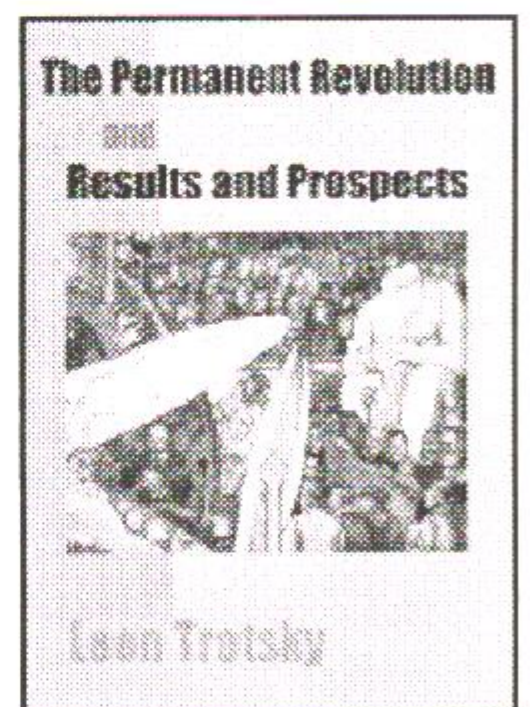
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Keep it up - your support is needed

LAST NIGHT as I was thinking about what to put in this column, a news item came on the TV which said that a new study had revealed that young people today are less likely to benefit from social mobility than those born in the 1940s and 50s. In other words, your parents had a greater chance of becoming reasonably well off, despite being born working class, than you can now ever expect.

So all this talk we are always hearing about greater opportunities and possibilities for people today seems to be total rubbish. The reality is that although society now offers more to working class people, it gives less in practice. This generation of working class youth is probably the most educated ever, yet the options to make something with this have been pushed back. The vice like grip of poverty has tightened not lessened over the last few decades particularly since capitalism started to retrench in order to protect its margins. They do not want you to make something of yourself, they want to make something from you - more profit.

So investing instead in a socialist future remains the best bet and one of the ways you can do that is to give a donation to the Socialist Appeal fighting fund. So far this year we have raised over £5,000 but we have a long way to go to hit our £10,000 target by the end of the year. It can be reached - and passed - if every reader

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Steve Jones



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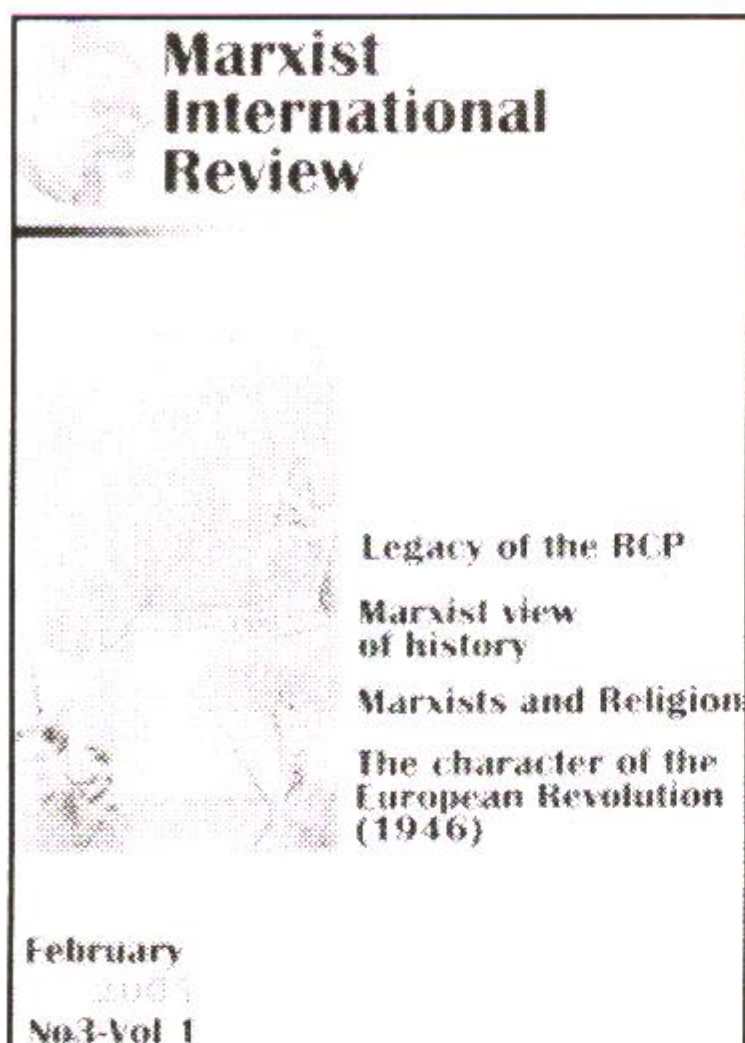
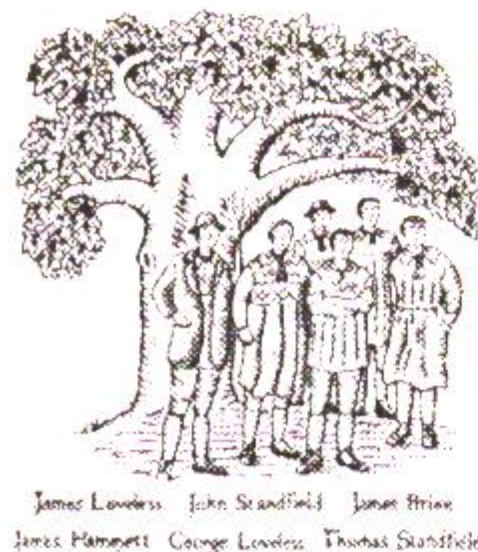
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✚ **A fully funded and fully comprehensive education system under local democratic control.** Keep big business out of our schools and colleges. Free access for all to further and higher education. Scrap tuition fees. No to student loans. For a living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

✚ **Trade unions must reclaim the Labour Party!** 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.

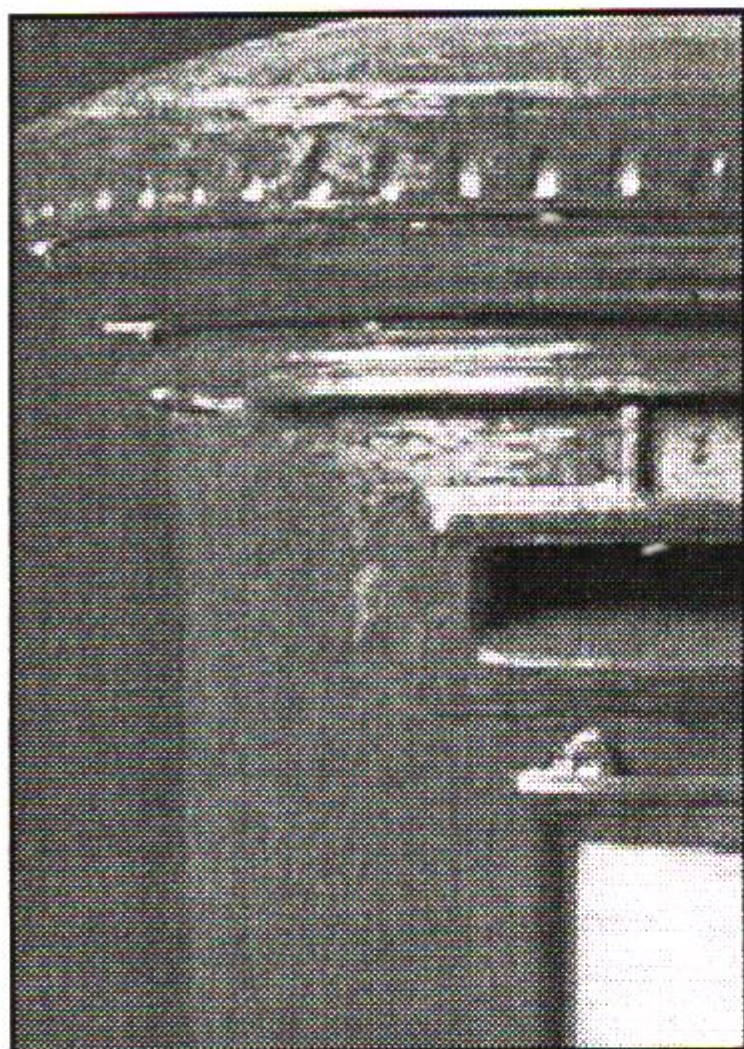
✚ **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises 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



Defend Postal services - Strike action the only way

THE FIGHT is on. Postal workers organised by the Communication Workers Union (CWU) are staging a series of national strikes following a 77% yes vote to defend jobs and conditions - in fact the very service itself. Post office management have spent the last few years running the postal service down and then complaining about lost income!

First they cut the second delivery (for those lucky enough to still have it), then they cut post offices, sorting offices etc., then they cut jobs. Of course the one thing they have not cut is charges - they have gone up and up. Bonuses for top management have also, naturally, not been cut either.

Meanwhile the service regulator Postcomm, under the direction of the government, had led the way in giving aid and comfort to the private alternatives in order to undermine Royal Mail. For example, UK Mail have seen their profits soar by 124% in return for collecting and sorting profitable bulk business mail before handing it back to Royal Mail to do the expensive bit - the actual delivery to the door. Many lucrative contracts have been creamed off to firms like UK Mail under rigged rules designed to undermine Royal Mail.

Postcomm's aim is to see the break-up of Royal Mail, with the most profitable bits being sold off to big business and the rest left in tatters. Far from defending postal customers, as it is supposed to do, it is acting as an agent for the City of London.

Royal Mail's management has responded by proposing still more cuts and job losses. A below inflation pay rise of 2.5% is to be imposed on employees and working conditions are to be downgraded to save costs at the employees' expense. If management are allowed to get away with this, the service will become a shadow of what it once was with ordinary users coming off worse.

They are also trying to threaten staff who take action. It has been reported that investigators hired by management will be videoing picket lines to identify who is actively involved. All the talk about Royal Mail management working hand in hand with the union to head off the attack from the private sector has been shown to be just words.

Now the time has come to fight. Every trade unionist should ensure that the CWU is given maximum support. Remember this is your postal service too - once it has been ripped apart then things will be too late. The Royal Mail needs to be returned to what it should be, a public service who employees are rewarded for doing work which benefits us all not just another source of profit.

- Support the CWU strike action
- No to management cuts in pay, jobs and conditions
- No more closures of post offices
- Give Postcomm the boot

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