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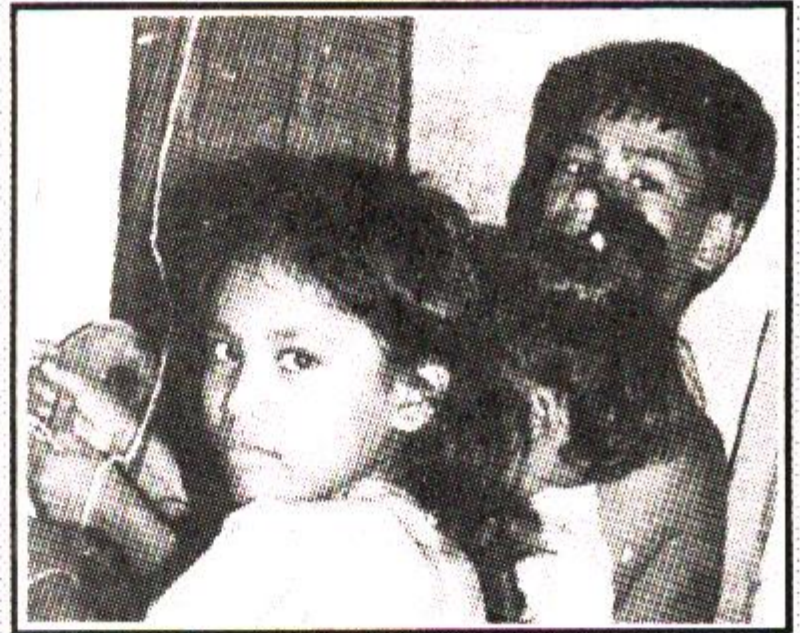
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*The Marxist voice of the labour movement*

Issue No.19 - February 1994

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## Pakistan



The horrors  
facing  
Pakistan's  
child  
labourers

.....

**Trade**

**Unions:**

Bitterness

Grows as

Bosses

Attack

.....

**Back**

to

**Basics:**

*Tory*

*Campaign*

*turns to*

*farce*

ANTIIMPERIALISTISCHE SOLIDARITÄT



Unite to  
defeat the  
Tories

**Plus:** • Mexico • Science • Union News



# Hung, Drawn and Quartered?

Nothing concentrates the mind like a good hanging. The herd instincts of the Tory back-benchers are driven by panic at the prospect of political annihilation at the next General Election.

"Some remember what happened in the Canadian general election last October, when the ruling Conservative Party was left with only two seats," comments the Guardian. The Prime Minister, John Major, has now become the scapegoat of all the ills that have descended upon the Tory Party. Even Norman Lamont, the ex-Chancellor, now describes Major as "weak and hopeless". The Tory leader is fighting for his very survival. A bad showing in the local elections in May, and the Euro elections in June, which is certain, could mean the end of Major. Clarke is now odds-on-favourite to take over as PM. This is likely to be a bloody affair, with a new group being formed called the "A.B.C." group (Anyone But Clarke).

## Opinion Polls

Opinion poll after opinion poll has confirmed the demise of the Tories. It appears, unless the Labour leaders throw it away, that the Tories are doomed. "A Tory MP with a majority more than 12,000 is worried - as are most Tory MPs - about a landslide that would cost him his seat", continues the Guardian. The most recent MORI poll adds to this terrible fear. According to them, Labour's share of the vote in London, the South-east and South-west has gone up 14 points since the 1992 election to 39%. The Tory share is down 19 points to 31%. The Liberal Democratic vote is up five points at 28%. If taken to the next election, this would spell absolute catastrophe for the Tories. They would expect to lose up to 160 seats (out of the 192 they currently hold) in these three regions, with the Liberal Democrats taking around 45 and Labour taking around 120 seats.

This collapse in support for the government is due to the crisis of the economy and the disappearance of the "feel good" factor that developed in the boom of the 1980s. Mass unemployment, which has now become a permanent feature of Western capitalism, is affecting new layers of the working and middle class that previously believed they were immune. The crisis of British capitalism, which at best will only experience a very weak recovery, has served to undermine Tory support. Whereas Thatcher sustained her



Tony Blair - making no commitments

government on the basis of the 1980s world boom, Major has been faced with recession and slow growth. It is no accident that a series of governments have been turfed out of power on the basis of the recession and a programme of austerity. There is little wonder that the Tories are at each others throat. They are clutching at straws. However, instead of taking advantage of the Tory disarray to drive them from office, the Labour front bench are engaged in a pantomime over denying making any commitments (which cost money) to the electorate. Gordon Brown, Shadow Chancellor, explained: "We will spend only what we can afford. There are no manifesto commitments at this stage." He then stressed that future policies would be based upon "what resources allow." Blair stated that the party would make "no false promises", and commitments would only be made just before the general election!

## Taxation

While it is essential to expose the Tory hypocrisy about them being the party of low taxation, it is ridiculous to play hide and seek over how little the Labour Party is prepared to promise now. According to the Sunday Mirror poll 2 out of 3 voters believe that the Tory government can never be trusted over tax again. However, only 51% believe that Labour were more honest than the Tories. The Labour leadership is tying itself in knots trying to prove that it is not promising an expansion in the health service, in education, a minimum wage, and so forth. It is a scandal that a row took place at the NEC of the

party over the refusal to detail Labour's promises on health for fear that the Tories will accuse Labour of reckless spending.

The Party leadership is boxing itself into a corner by accepting that all promises will have to be paid for "as the economy expands". British capitalism is in deep crisis. The bosses are demanding not reforms but counter-reforms and cuts in the "social wage", i.e.. spending on hospitals, schools, social services, and the Welfare State generally. The system can no longer afford the "luxuries". That is why the Tories are carrying through these measures. That is why the Welfare State is under attack everywhere.

The capitalists are desperate to reduce their swollen budget deficits, which weigh around their necks. This unprofitable burden must be cut down and eliminated. This is not due to the spiteful intentions of governments, be they Tory or not, but is dictated by the economic laws of capitalism and the crisis that affects it.

If Labour is to win the next election, it must inspire millions of working people. The Party cannot simply rest on the anti-Tory feeling that exists, but must offer a programme that will solve the burning problems faced by ordinary workers: unemployment, poverty, low wages, poor housing, inadequate education for their children, decaying social services, and all the other ills that they are forced to endure. A campaign to eradicate these ills would enthuse millions of workers to participate in a movement to get rid of the Tories and bring Labour to power.

## Public Ownership

It is clear that the crisis-ridden capitalist economy is unable to "afford" such reforms. Labour must not tinker with the system, but take action to bring into public ownership the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies which dominate the economy. That is the real meaning of Clause Four of Labour's constitution. Only then will it be possible to draw up a Socialist Plan of Production using the resources of society.

With the abolition of unemployment, and the harnessing of the advanced technique that exist, the wealth can be created to boost living standards and implement the necessary reforms. Such a transformation of society will not only see the end of Major and the Tories, but the entire rotten system they represent.



Hilliers strike reaches crucial stage...

# "The law's an ass"

**The fourteen-month long strike at E. Hilliers in Reading has reached a crucial stage following the publication of a long-awaited court ruling .**

The judgement in the case, which was brought after two of the strikers were taken back to work whilst the others were refused their jobs back, went against the strikers. One local AEEU member said the decision "showed the law was an ass, allowing employers to engineer disputes and then sack who they want."

On top of the ruling, money has become a key issue for the strikers as strike benefit has run out leaving the workers more desperate than ever for donations and support from the labour movement.

The Hilliers dispute began on December 7, 1992 after the company sacked employees for taking part in official industrial action in protest at the company's plans to unilaterally cut wages and conditions.

The changes which the company imposed on the workforce, without agreement included wage cuts of up to 38%, abolition of the company sick pay scheme,

reduced holidays from 25 to 20 days and two hours compulsory overtime when necessary paid at flat rate.

The workers, members of the AEEU and MSF, started an overtime ban at which stage the company began sacking those who refused to work overtime. The unions initiated a number of industrial tribunals and won numerous cases for unfair dismissal for those sacked before the strike for refusing to work overtime. But the company was intent on engineering a dispute and refused to back down on the proposed cuts. The workers had no choice but to strike. 96% voted in favour of strike action.

At the beginning of the dispute all the strikers were sacked. However, the company agreed to take back two of the "strikers". The unions challenged this in the courts as the law says you either take back no-one or everyone." It was this ruling that went against the strikers. The court said that although the evidence from some witnesses was not clear it was felt that the two were not actually on strike! Since the dispute began the company has attempted to bring in

scab labour but as an AEEU member told us: "There are only about a dozen scabs working and there are no lights on in there and there is still a picket every day. We don't think there's any work going on in there."

And the strikers are as determined as ever to win. In December there was a 300-strong demonstration in Reading to support them and they vow to "go to the limit to show other employers they cannot get away with treating their workers this way."

The Hilliers strikers deserve the full support of the whole movement..

*Donations (made payable to Hilliers Shop Stewards Committee Strike Fund) should be sent to: Ms Lyn Collick (Strike Committee Treasurer), 8 Launceston Avenue, Caversham Park, Reading, berks RG4 0SW*

*If you wish to have a speaker or require more information, contact: Ray Dillon, AEEU on 0753 554100 or Dave Stoddart, MSF 0923 249044.*

*Badges and T-shirts are available from Lyn Collick at the address above.*

## Strike Call Over Pay Freeze

It did not look promising. As the London Region UNISON branch secretaries gathered at the TUC headquarters on 28th January, the likelihood of them issuing a resounding call for strike action seemed remote.

Summoned together, in place of an agreed branch delegates meeting, the secretaries, weighed down by the responsibility of office, looked a far cry from hot-headed activists. Surely they could be relied on not to rock the boat for head office. But, against all expectations, as the morning's debate on pay got underway, one after another, branch secretaries from Health, Local Government and higher Education stood up to call for a 24 hour national strike against the government's three year public sector pay freeze. Low profile "days of action" were decisively rejected. With a serious danger of consensus breaking out, a mild backlash surfaced. In Health particularly, isolated, defensive and defeated strikes had left some speakers cautious. But others pointed out that the way forward was to end the isolation and co-ordinate our action.

The debate moved on to timing. Before or after the May elections? The most compelling arguments were put for the later date, giving time for members to absorb April tax rises lowering their pay packets, and for councils to take the gloves off once in office, with new attacks on terms and conditions. Calls were also made to link a pay strike with the need for jobs and defence of services.

The message to regional office was clear. No more half-baked "action" with leaflets, balloons and lunch-hour walk-outs. No more balloting on local issues to disguise and discourage united action. London branch secretaries, under obvious pressure from their members, want a national co-ordinated campaign on pay, kicking off with a 24 hour strike. With the other public sector unions if possible - but if not, giving a clear lead for others to join.

**Liz Short, Hackney UNISON (personal capacity).**

### Quote of the month

**" This privatisation is looking more and more as though it was expressly designed to hit natural Tory supporters, especially those in the south and south-east. Wouldn't the government save itself a lot of effort if it just located everyone who voted Tory at the last election and told them sternly not to do it again?"**  
- Daily Express leader on rail privatisation

## In the News

● Lecturers at a Derby college staged a one-day strike to protest at threats to jobs. The lecturers, members of Natfhe, at Wilmorton College of Higher Education fear a restructuring plan will mean the loss of a number of teaching jobs and they are also angry that they have been excluded from consultations over the plan. The union has called for the resignation of the Principal Andrew Strongburg but he has refused to go and remained adamant that changes would go ahead despite the industrial action.

● TUC general secretary John Monks has led a delegation of trade unionists to the European parliament to hand in a petition calling for more rights for British workers. The 25,000 signature petition noting the fact that British workers have the least rights in Europe was presented to the parliament's leader on the day the head of the Institute of Directors called for the banning of strikes in the public services and the removal of all immunities for trade unions.

● Lecturers at FE colleges have called for industrial action after employers refused to budge at recent talks. Natfhe delegates at a special conference urged their executive to "plan for escalating industrial action" after employers refused to budge on talks over attempts to impose longer hours and shorter holidays. The action is due to start on February 28th.



# Winning the 5-day week...Again

**At the time of going to press it appeared Aslef's leaders were set to call off the planned ballot for industrial action after London Underground Limited (LUL) promised to accept demands for a five-day week. However, this is not the first time LUL have promised us the five-day week and we should not be content to accept their "promises".**

In December 1992, London Underground Limited (LUL) introduced the Company Plan which dramatically worsened our conditions in one fell swoop. Among other measures it:

- Increased driving times
- Introduced unpaid meal release
- Scrapped unsociable working allowances
- Cut 500 train staff and 5000 LUL jobs

These changes were unacceptable to train staff but before the result of a ballot for industrial action was announced, Aslef cancelled the ballot on the promise of a "speedy" introduction of the five-day week.

## Compromise Deal

At the time no mention was made of increased driving times. Following over 12 months of negotiations a compromise deal was finally proposed by management and Aslef leaders which meant increases in continuous driving times. Desperate to get more time away from the job Aslef members accepted the new arrangements by an overwhelming margin in a referendum. Everything looked rosy in the garden and all that had to be done now was a safety validation by an outside company, Trident Consultants. Trident Consultants then stated that it was going to take a further eight months for the safety validation to

be completed as they had insufficient information and it looked like LUL would have to employ more train staff than expected.

Now LUL are pleading poverty - despite saving more than £60 million a year through the Company Plan, £12 million from train staff alone.

LUL now expect us to absorb a further £28 million worth of cuts

- exactly the shortfall in the government's subsidy. Aslef's leadership had no choice, under pressure from members, but to call a ballot for industrial action. It was in the face of this determination that LUL were forced to concede. The Company Plan did not only introduce worse conditions but a dictatorial management which treats us like slaves and sends

us on indoctrination courses into their way of thinking.

There is a mood of anger, bitterness and frustration. Once it is unleashed, and our industrial muscle realised a new mood of confidence and strength will put management on the defensive.

**Steve Tree,  
Aslef**

## We should have told them to stuff it!

The bus lurches violently as it hits the speed bump - its only passenger woken by the familiar jolt rises to get off.

It's 9.00 am and I'm so tired I feel sort of disconnected - as if I'm watching myself walk the few yards from the bus stop to my door. Fumbling for my keys I open the door 14 hours after I last closed it. Christ, its been a long night.

"Do you want 9 hours?" the gaffer had said. That extra hour on your basic plus mileage allowance does things to your commonsense - "Yes please" I said.

If only it was just 9 hours - you can tell how long I've worked by the colour of my eyes. I check the mirror, a little more bloodshot than usual. Yeah, those are 12 hour shift eyes alright.

I force myself to make something to eat - warning myself of the consequences of not doing so.

I lie down consumed with weariness - it's shifts like these when you can feel something has been taken out of you. Something that can not be put back by any amount of sleep and rest. My eyes close for a moment. I raise my head an inch off the pillow to check the time - it's 5.00 pm.

Moving around the room slowly I switch off the 3 alarm clocks carefully as if I were diffusing a bomb. In another half an hour

they would simultaneously erupt in an explosion of noise. The dread of hearing this somehow makes me wake early. 2 hours, 2 minutes until I have to leave for work - must eat, must eat something.

"Alright mate? How's it going?"

"OK"

"Working the overtime next week?"

"Nah, eff them" he pauses "eff them!"

The door slams.

Without looking up from his desk the gaffer asks what I'll do when the depot shuts. "Oh, I'll go anywhere me"; "that's the way son, that's the way". Patronising bastard.

The messroom looks packed, the conversation lively.

"Heard the latest? ... NASA is going to use our place as a launch pad"

"Yeah, at least the fitters will have plenty of work".

Much laughter. Another voice cloaked in false good humour asks what I'll do after the depot closure. "He'll be down the docks earning £25 a go like the rest of us!"

Much crude laughter.

"We should have told them to stuff it".

"We should go on an overtime ban" another adds.

"It's too late - we should have told them to stuff it right up..."

If we all pull together they had said.

If we were more flexible they said.

If you want to save the depot they had said.

So we did. And what happened? A dozen lads relocated or redundant over Christmas. The rest? well who knows - perhaps we'll go next week, next month, tomorrow?.

For those that are left the future is grim. Like children terrifying each other with ghost stories we speculate on life after privatisation. Much black humour, much bitterness, much anger. My thoughts turn to last night.

"By God, you're earning some money tonight kid". The gaffer had stood there grinning. He was waiting for me to thank him. thank him for the opportunity to work half a day. Bastards.

Another day over, a few more quid to put away in the bank, a lot more bitterness and anger to put away in the mind. when the time comes to get our own back there will be those who sympathise with our grievance but are mystified by our anger. But I'll know.

**by J.A., train driver.**

## Hitting the Buffers

*"Instead of fattening it up, he is running it down; starving the network of vital investment. The suspicion is growing that BR is being deliberately derailed. Dozens of lines are now at risk from inadequate maintenance and crumbling bridges. Trains are running slower as the annual subsidy is reduced. In order to make some routes profitable a lot more will have to go. Is it any surprise that opinion polls suggest such deep hostility to rail privatisation?"*

*Mail on Sunday*



# RMT activists call for action as... Anger Grows at New Tube Jobs Slaughter

## Unity Needed

Since the inter-union leadership squabbles let London Underground Limited (LUL) bring in their Company Plan, the bosses have really stuck the boot in, attacking conditions and cutting hundreds more jobs.

The plan was sold to Aslef leaders who urged members to accept on the basis of a promise of the longed-for 10-day fortnight. The RMT and TSSA wasted their ballots for action by going to the impotent Wages Board (we are still waiting for the outcome!) and Aslef cancelled their ballot. The attacks and cuts are a direct result of this backtracking.

Now under pressure from members the RMT are balloting over job losses as 800 maintenance staff face the sack following the LUL PSD claim that they are £1 million in the red. More contractors and short term labour are being brought in every day. 500 clerical jobs are also threatened over the next nine months and one-third of jobs at the central directorate are under threat. That means the TSSA have the basis for a fight too.

It is urgent we unite and fight on common issues with common ballot dates and action so as to avoid the damaging splits of the past.

**By a LUL worker**

Jimmy Knapp has urged London Underground members of the largest rail union the RMT to "fight for their livelihoods."

In a speech to tubeworkers RMT leader Jimmy Knapp said: "Redundancies are spreading like a cancer. No job is safe....Tunncliffe's dream of a decently modern Metro had now become a nightmare...Enough is enough. We intend to mount a fightback to this insane policy."

And Knapp urged members to be ready for strike action.

His message was backed up by left executive member Bob Crow who said there was growing

anger at job cuts and reductions in the quality of service. Central Line guards have already made it clear they will resist the move to one-person operation. What is needed now is a co-ordinated policy between the rail unions with Aslef already balloting on the five-day week and growing anger throughout LUL's operations. With the threat of an extended public sector pay freeze and job cuts threatening every tubeworker the potential for a united fight for jobs and conditions is clearly there. The union leaderships must grasp the opportunity.

## Stop Press!

Socialist Appeal announces the launch of an exciting new project - an important series of four new pamphlets under the banner of *In Defence of Marxism*. This spring will see the publication of Trotsky's classic *Marxism in Our Time* with a new introduction by Alan Woods. This will be followed by pamphlets on *Russia, Economics and the fundamentals of Marxism*. Full details and an order form will appear in next month's issue.

# Unite for a left leadership

The decision at the CPSA Broad Left recall conference last month to fight for a united left union leadership marks a big step forward. The

Tories' plans to privatise the civil service through Market Testing is the biggest challenge to the CPSA for decades. The union needs a fighting leadership to meet up to these attacks.

The current so-called Moderate leadership of the union has proved itself impotent in face of this onslaught. They are terrified of taking industrial action. They were reluctantly dragged howling into calling the

one-day national strike on 5th November, but then blocked calls for further action by the other civil service unions. They are trying all sorts to hoodwink the union membership by glorifying in-house bids as a step forward. They are clearly incapable of defending the interests of the members.

These "Moderates" have only managed to cling to their positions because of the divisions in the left. Their support in the local branches has melted away. As a result, the need for genuine left unity is absolutely essential. Last year saw the victory of Unity candidate, Chris Baugh, for vice-president.

This was the result of an agreed election strategy between the Broad Left (BL) and Broad Left 84. This unity of the left in the fight for jobs, pay and better conditions is of paramount importance. As the BL statement to the recall conference explained: "Experience of the past year has reinforced the case for Left Unity. The successful action on 5 November was graphic proof that members are looking to their union for a way out from the endless cycle of attacks upon pay, jobs and conditions."

Following the decision of the BL conference in November 1993 to continue talks with BL84

to secure a joint programme on Market Testing, pay, democratic reform and a national election slate for the 1994 CPSA elections, a report back was given to the recall conference by Chris Baugh. On behalf of the BL National Committee, he explained that the agreement over the Unity Programme "provided the best prospects since 1987 for ousting the "Moderates" and providing the CPSA with a fighting leadership." After a serious debate, where all the doubts and hesitations were given a thorough airing, the recall conference overwhelmingly endorsed the provisional

agreement.

We now need to build on the unity that has been established. It is a decisive challenge posed before the ranks of the union. In the period that opens up, the "Moderates" can be swept from office and the union put back in the hands of the membership. Through a united campaign with the other civil service unions the Tory privatisation plans can be defeated and the way opened to further the interests of our members.

**John Rubidge,  
CPSA DE West  
Glamorgan and  
Dyfed (personal  
capacity)**



# Another Major Disaster

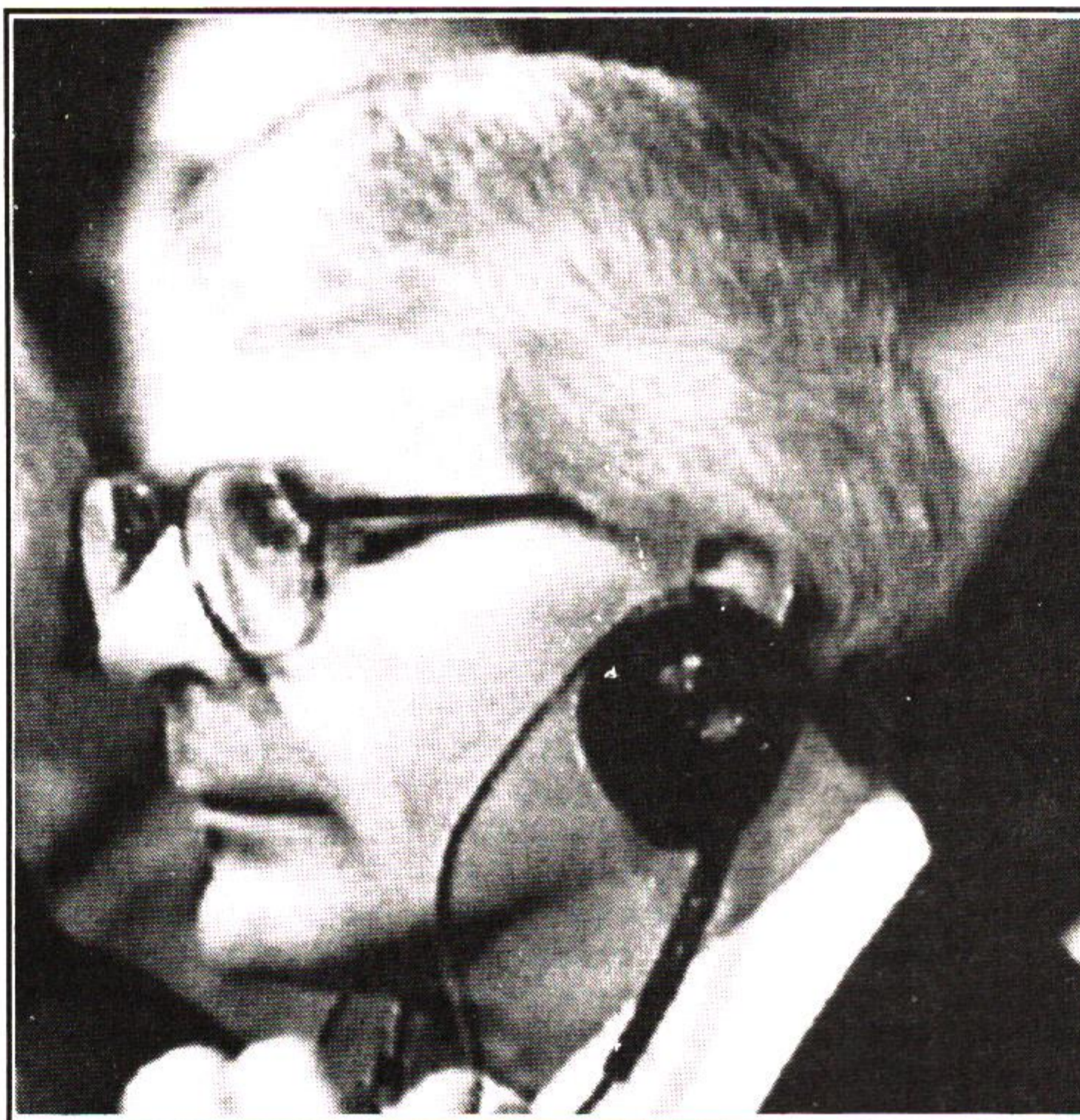
Only a few short months ago John Major launched his 'Back To Basics' programme at the Conservative conference which was intended to be the new Big Idea that would ignite the nation and rally the grateful British people back around the Tory flag.

Intended as a follow up to the Back to Victorian Values slogan of Thatcher it was presented with a vicious tirade against sexual morality and single mothers. However these dreams of a Tory recovery in the polls have been rudely shattered. 'Back to basics' has become instead the butt of a thousand shop-floor jokes. For Major and the ruling class this is no joke.

## Scandals

A whole series of scandals have dominated the front pages of the national press since just before Xmas. First Environment Minister Tim Yeo was forced to resign after it was exposed that he had fathered a so-called love-child with an Islington Councillor. He later remembered having another one before that in the sixties. Tory MP Alan Duncan was then exposed as having made £50,000 out of the sale of a neighbour's Westminster council house. Farce entered the stage when the 'volatile' wife of David Ashby MP accused her husband of sharing a French hotel bed with a male friend. Lord Caithness then had to resign as minister of state at the department of transport after the suicide of his wife. The papers were full of stories concerning his alleged infidelities. Transport Minister Steve Norris had already been forced to admit to having had up to five mistresses (depending on which paper you read).

Major attempted to brush all this aside by talking about there being "a little flurry of criticism that would die away" and said that Back to Basics had been misunderstood. By Mid January the Tories were arguing among themselves over all this. John Patten attacked Yeo by saying that there was "no greater betrayal than having a child and walking away". Whereas Virginia Bottomley said that politicians



## The Tories' Back to Basics campaign has turned to farce. Steve Jones looks at the crisis of the past month and the reasons behind Major's campaign.

were not churchmen and should not be judged as such. Major then swung back in by saying that Back to Basics was not an attempt to attack single parents although Social Security secretary Peter Lilley had said at the Tory conference that "children needed two loving parents". No wonder the Economist called the Back to Basics slogan 'absurdly banal'. Even Barbara Cartland stepped in by claiming to have invented the slogan - something Number 10 did not deny! And worse was to follow.

The auditors report into allegations of a vote rigging scandal in Tory controlled Westminster council was presented provisionally in Mid January. Six councillors and four officials were named as being involved in the policy of selling council houses to engineer votes in key wards and if found guilty would be forced to repay £21 million and be

disqualified from office. The report referred to what Labour called "political corruption and gerrymandering on a scale unknown in modern Britain". The report said that the council acted in a "disgraceful and improper" way. The silence from Tory spokesmen was deafening with few prepared to openly defend the council.

The month of January then preceded with John Major joining a whole chorus of other current and former leading Tories - including Thatcher - in denying knowing anything about the arms-to-Iraq scandal in evidence to the Scott enquiry. Of course, scandals and corruption stories are not new with the Conservative Party, they have always been there - it has not been forgotten that January was the 30th anniversary of the Profumo affair - but what is new is the way in which they are effecting the political mood. As the usually sympathetic

Economist said in its January 15th leader article: 'Taken on their individual merits, the "scandals" that are dogging John Major's Conservative Party are trivial, some so trivial they do not even deserve the word scandal. Yet together they are endangering the government's ability to do its job - to govern. And they are doing so because the party has destroyed its own credibility'.

You cannot help but be reminded of how the Dreyfuss affair in France between 1896-1904 (where a Jewish officer in the army was framed by the establishment and accused unjustly of selling secrets to the Germans) exposed the corruption and decay in the French establishment and nearly brought the government to its knees.

## Deep-rooted Crisis

Scandals may well be a source of amusement in the tabloid press but when they expose a more deep rooted crisis in the bourgeois then the consequences can be far reaching. This plague of scandals is not just confined to Britain - it is part of an international phenomena. In Italy, Japan and elsewhere deep rooted corruption has come to the surface as the old order crumbles under the hammer blows of the crisis affecting capitalism.

The back to Basics fiasco has reopened a series of splits in the Tory party which reflects the crisis and divisions in the ruling class and the anger of its former supporters in the face of the effects of the recession. Even the formerly loyalist Sun has referred to Major as having the leadership qualities of a Lemming. Major's request that his Ministers should all "sing the same tune" will go unheard as they scheme behind his back. They are manoeuvring for position as Major looks increasingly doomed. The ultimate indicator of the middle classes disillusionment with the Tories has come with the vote of no-confidence in Major passed by the Manningtree Tory branch - even Essexman has deserted him! ●



*Bosses Turn the Screws As...*

# Bitterness Grows

Along with the rest of Europe, Britain is poised to enter a very turbulent period. Although capitalist commentators have repeatedly portrayed the trade unions as "tamed" and the British worker "docile", the underlying reality is entirely different.

Although the trade union leaders have moved to the right and are terrified of strike action leading to sequestration of their funds, the mood on the shop floor and in the workplace generally is one of growing frustration and bitterness.

This mood has arisen from the enormous intensification of labour that has built up over more than 10 years. The move towards greater labour 'flexibility', privatisation, competitive tendering, market testing, personal contracts, etc., have borne down heavily on the working class. Workloads

continue to increase, and conditions are systematically driven down. The constant pressure and the squeezing of every ounce of profit from workers has created intense dissatisfaction. Workers were forced to stomach this burden as long as wages increased and the only alternative was the dole. Now the situation is becoming intolerable.

This mood of anger is beginning to surface as the bosses cut costs further and the Tories try to implement their three year wage freeze in the public sector. Already civil servants have taken industrial action over Market Testing. Public sector unions are warning of strikes over wages. London Underground workers are threatening an all-out strike over jobs, pay and spending cuts. Bank workers are being balloted over industrial action to preserve jobs, while P&O Ferry

crews have voted by massive majorities to strike against cuts. Despite the start of a shaky economic recovery, the employers are continuing to tighten the screws, with greater 'flexibility' and further job loses. Last month alone, thousands of redundancies were announced in gas, electricity, coal, British Aerospace, Fisons pharmaceuticals, Nat West Bank, BP chemicals, and other companies.

## Short-time Working

The car bosses have put workers on short-time working and closed down their plants for longer periods over the Christmas break, with the loss of shift premiums and bonuses. Fords management at Halewood have done away with the night shift. The same was true of Nissan in Sunderland. Nissan also launched an "agreed separation

programme", offering volunteers six months pay to take redundancy, and so far 250 have gone. Some are single men tempted by the lump sum. Others are family men who have calculated that, without the 16.6% shift bonus for night work, they would be better off on the dole than on the £11,600 basic. At the same time bosses are continually attempting to force up productivity through cutting the workforce. Only young workers are now found on the tracks, as older workers are forced out through pressure of work. Whereas Ford's Halewood plant produces 160,000 cars with a workforce of just under 5,000, management is now looking to production at Toyota, which intends to assemble 200,000 cars a year at Burnaston with a workforce of 3,000. This is a recipe for big battles as the car market picks up.

## Employment Laws

Using the cloak of the Tories' employment legislation, bosses have got rid of workers on full-time contracts, and re-employed them on a part-time basis. This has particularly affected workers in the retail sector, who have seen their conditions rapidly deteriorate. A year ago the Burton Group shed 2,000 full-time jobs and replaced them with about 3,000 part-time jobs. BHS and Allied Maples Group have done the same with about a third of all staff being part-timers. Last month, Sock Shop announced that 400 workers would be put on part-time contracts. In early January, 128 workers employed by the retail giant Costco were sacked in favour of casual labour. **This is a sign of the times. It gives the bosses greater flexibility of labour, allowing more hours to be worked as demand rises, and less when demand falls. It allows them a free hand to cut their costs and boosts**

London bus workers are just one group who have been forced into defensive actions - more battles are looming





## profits.

Any worker who works less than 15 hours per week, or earns less than £56, does not have to be covered for National Insurance. As soon as that level is reached, then N.I. has to be paid on all the hours worked. Any worker who works less than 16 hours per week does not qualify for employment protection or for any statutory benefits such as redundancy pay and maternity benefit. Although the number of jobs will increase, the number of hours will be static or even fall.

**Added to the other forms of 'flexibility' and changed shift patterns, this squeezing of the workforce represents a greater intensification and exploitation of labour.** It is a process that Karl Marx described as "increased relative surplus value".

### Health Undermined

While this is very profitable for the capitalists, it creates great insecurity and strain for workers, and ultimately undermines their health. In 1991, the number of days lost through sickness reached the record level of 500 million, of which one third was due to stress related illness. Recently, the Heriot-Watt Business School explained that many shiftworkers suffer sleeping and digestive problems. It explained "only the hardest could tolerate shift work", who comprise one in eight workers.

The campaign to bring in Sunday trading, was seen by many employers as a window of opportunity. The Institute of Directors has already come out in favour of scrapping fixed bank holidays to allow employers to re-allocate them according to production schedules. According to a recent article in the 'Guardian', "the attack on the weekend and the attack on bank holidays are two prongs of the same campaign. Once the weekend becomes 'integrated' into the working week, there is no reason why bank holidays cannot be 'allocated' by employers on various Sundays" (28.12.93). This would, if implemented, push conditions back generations. With mass unemployment as a

permanent feature of the capitalist system, workers are feeling increasingly insecure about their jobs. According to the recent MORI/IRS survey, the number of workers who fear they might lose their jobs in the next year rose to more than 50% in December. It is only the third time since the survey started last April that this 'fear factor' has gone over 50%. Anxiety is upper most among part-time workers, who are overwhelmingly women. This has given rise to so-called agreements to save jobs by accepting wage cuts. The CBI announced that pay freezes of up to 12 months had been reported by a quarter of manufacturers and one in six service companies. This has not only occurred in Britain but also overseas.

In Germany, the workforce at Volkswagen were told to accept 30,000 redundancies or accept a 28.8 hour week and a 20% cut in wages. The workers through their IG Metal engineering union accepted lower hours and a 10% cut in pay. Hans Jurgen Arlt, the spokesperson for the German Federation of Unions said the deal was "forward looking" and that "it makes sense"!

In the German coal industry, 87,000 miners agreed a 9% wage cut over two years and a four day week in an attempt to save 22,000 jobs. In Britain, last year workers in Sheffield City Council reluctantly agreed to a 5% wage cut to avoid sackings. This form of work-sharing, linked to wage cuts, is simply asking the working class to pay themselves for the unemployment crisis. Instead of the blame being placed where it belongs, on the bosses and their system, the workers are asked to shoulder the burden. The trade union movement must resist these agreements. Where redundancies are threatened, the unions should demand work sharing with no loss of pay. This time around, 2,500 Sheffield workers refused to cover for the cuts of the Council and voted for all-out strike action over threatened redundancies. These workers have had enough of falling living standards and attempting to make ends meet with big tax



An ever increasing burden is being placed on the shoulders of British workers. A number have been killed building the channel tunnel as firms cut corners

rises in store.

This 'work-sharing' with wage cuts is being promoted by Delors in his plan for European recovery. It is simply a means of bailing out big business and boosting their profits at the expense of the working class.

### Unemployment

This argument is also being peddled by Frank Field: "If those of us in work keep our draw-bridge mentality, ensuring the unemployed do not rejoin us, then the outlook is grim.. Throughout the 1980s, with unemployment at a level unseen since 1930, those of us in work continued to award ourselves real pay increases."

**Like all those who accept capitalism, he expects the workers to make sacrifices to bail out the failings of the system.** "If we cannot learn now to share our wealth more equitably, we are not likely to behave more fairly in the future. Job-sharing is not a gimmick...It shows a determination to impose some moral order on the market system", continues Field. These remarks about the 'redistribution of wealth' are not aimed at the rich or bosses, but at the working class. These people, who apparently need to stop awarding themselves "real wage increases", should forgo these rises to help the unemployed. Every employer in the land would greet these sentiments, which, in reality blames unemployment on 'greedy' workers who take

unnecessary wage rises to feed their families. According to Field, unemployment, as in the 1930s, is nothing to do with the capitalist system and the private ownership of industry, but individual greed. There is no such thing as "a moral order on the market system". Capitalism produces for profit. It is the motive force of the system. If profit levels are not maintained, then factories are closed and workers are sacked. For Field and his Moralists the solution is simple: the workers must stomach cuts.

### Wage Freeze

To follow Field's logic, the three year wage freeze that the government is attempting to impose on millions of public sector workers must be a good thing. But, after all, is not this the age-old argument of the Tories and Big Business, that the workers have priced themselves out of a job? Is this not the argument the Major gave to abolish the Wages Councils? Already British workers are the cheapest labour of all the major capitalist countries. A recent book, 'International and Comparative Industrial Relations', ranks hourly labour costs for production workers in Britain below those in Germany, Sweden, Canada, Italy, the US, France and Japan. "Labour costs in the UK are lower than in any other leading industrialised country", states the 'Financial Times' (5.1.94).



But still the bosses are not satisfied. The attempt to impose a three year wage freeze on 5 million public sector workers, is part of an overall plan to cut wages across the board. Any pay rises would have to be paid out of increased productivity, in other words, a greater workload on fewer shoulders. With feelings running high on the extra £12.50 a week rise in tax, Major has signaled a so-called retreat on pay by saying that certain groups will get higher rises through "efficiency

## **If ever there was a time to take on the Tories, it is now. The trade union leaders should launch a campaign, linking up all the attacks on working people, to drive the Tories out**

savings", suggesting that the review bodies' recommendations could be met. In other words, wages would be financed through cuts and redundancies. It is a meaningless gesture, as workers are already at their wits end over staffing levels. Even so, Government officials stressed that there would be no general relaxation, particularly as regards the other 3 million public-sector workers. Despite the initial protest of trade union leaders against the pay-freeze who predicted "an explosion of anger", they have

suddenly back-tracked on the proposal for a Day of Action on 11th April. Such a protest could have signalled a one-day general strike in the public sector. It could have provided the focal point that millions of workers are looking for. It would have been a massive show of strength, and the starting point of campaign to defeat the Tories. Unfortunately, the trade union leaders have failed to give a lead. There have been times when a generalised struggle could have been undertaken against the Tories. **The magnificent movement in against the pit closures, for instance, shook the Tory Government to its foundations. This could have been the starting point of a co-ordinated fight-back. But the TUC saw the massive demonstrations as a means of workers letting off steam. Their dithering and lack of leadership allowed the mood to dissipate.** Again, the one-day strikes of railworkers and miners remained isolated. As a result, 25,500 miners have taken redundancy in the past 15 months. It is time the TUC held its ground.

### **Sequestration**

The over-riding consideration of the trade union leadership has been to keep within the law to safeguard its finances from possible sequestration. The Tory laws have made it legal for a individual to sue a striking union if the person is deprived of some goods or services! The latest incident was a High Court order to stop RMT busworkers in Cornwall from striking over pay, despite a double ballot vote in favour. The action was brought by managers, and the ballots declared illegal by the Trade Union and Labour Relations Consolidation Act of 1992. Defiance of the order would allow the court to seize all union funds and hold the executive members responsible, facing fines of 5,000 and up to six months in jail. This has thrown the legal position of the trade union movement back to the last century. At best, it could take 28 days from an employers' attack to the first day of a



John Monks, TUC general secretary

strike, by which time the momentum can be lost. From 1996 unions will have to finance their own ballots and work through the legal maze. Given the fact that it is virtually impossible to organise a legal strike - such is the tangle of anti-trade union legislation - then the question is posed point blank: either bend the knee to the Tories and employers or challenge the trade union laws. As Bob Crow, of the RMT executive pointed out: *"It is becoming impossible for trade unions to act effectively for their members and stay within the law. The logic is simple. If we are to have a trade union movement capable of representing working people at the most basic level of winning them pay increases and better working conditions, we must defy the anti-union laws."* It was only through breaking unjust laws in the past that basic trade union rights were won. As every trade union activist knows: weakness invites aggression. Already the Institute of Directors are demanding that the Government go much further and ban public sector strikes. It also calls for them to continue to extend its anti-union legislation *"with the goal of the complete removal of all special privileges for bodies which organise employees with the purpose of collective action."* **This onslaught on workers' conditions extends throughout Europe. It reflects the crisis of**

### **European capitalism, and the drive to reduce costs.**

Despite trade union membership falling by about a third during the 1980s, around 40% of all European workers remain organised. In country after country, the workers have taken action in defence of wages and conditions. General strikes have taken place in Belgium, Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal in the recent period. Big movements have taken place in France, especially over redundancies in Air France. The employers were forced to retreat out of fear of a new 1968 developing. According to Fausto Bertinotti, a leader of the Italian CGIL, *"a season of battles, with strikes and demonstrations by all workers"* lies ahead. In 'peaceful' Sweden mass demonstrations have shaken the government over its austerity measures. The TUC should act as a real general staff of the labour movement. The remarks of John Monks, TUC general secretary, that Tory Employment Minister was "a man we can do business with" serves only to sow confusion.

### **Tory Splits**

The Tory Government represents the class interests of big business. That is what dictates their policies. However, the Tories are in a very weak state with open splits and demoralisation in their ranks. The Government has stumbled from on crisis to another. John Major is the most unpopular prime minister since records began. If there was ever a time to take on the Tories, it is now. The trade union leaders should launch a campaign, linking up all the attacks on working people, to drive the Tories out. An official 24 hour general strike would galvanise millions of workers who have been ground down under the Tories. It would signal the opening of a serious campaign that could force a General Election, and finally defeat the Tories after 15 years in power.

**Rob Sewell**



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**A.A, Sindh, Pakistan**

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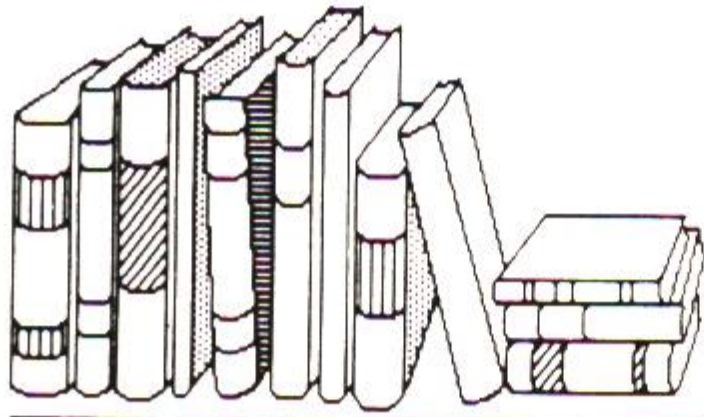
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**Sales News**





## Bookshelf

# The Iron Heel

by Jack London

published by Journeyman Press

Order your copy by sending £5.50 to Well Red Books, PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

**Trotsky became acquainted with The Iron Heel, the Looking Backward of revolutionary socialism, through a copy which the author's daughter, Joan London, sent him. This excerpt comes from a letter he sent her.**

The book produced upon me - I speak without exaggeration - a deep impression. Not because of its artistic qualities: the form of the novel here represents only an armour for social analysis and prognosis. The author is intentionally sparing in his use of artistic means. He is himself interested not so much in the individual fate of his heroes as in the fate of mankind. By this, however, I don't want to belittle the artistic value of the work, especially in its last chapters beginning with the Chicago commune. The pictures of the civil war develop in powerful frescoes. Nevertheless, this is not the main feature. The book surprised me with the audacity and independence of its historical foresight.

### Reformism

The world workers' movement at the end of the last and beginning of the present century stood under the sign of reformism. The perspective of peaceful and uninterrupted world progress, of the prosperity of democracy and social reforms, seemed to be assured once and for all. The first Russian Revolution, it is true, revived the radical flank of the German social democracy and gave for a certain time dynamic force to anarcho-syndicalism in France. The Iron Heel bears the undoubted imprint of the year 1905. But at the time when this remarkable book appeared, the domination of counter-revolution was already consolidating itself in Russia. In the world arena the defeat of the Russian proletariat gave to reformism the possibility not only of regaining its temporarily

lost positions but also of subjecting to itself completely the organised workers' movement. It is sufficient to recall that precisely in the following seven years (1907-14) the international social democracy ripened for its base and shameful role during the world war.

Jack London not only absorbed creatively the impetus given by the first Russian Revolution but also courageously thought over again in its light the fate of capitalist society as a whole. Precisely those problems which the official socialism of this time considered to be definitely buried: the growth of wealth and power at one pole, of misery and destitution at the other pole; the accumulation of social bitterness and hatred; the unalterable preparation of bloody

cataclysms - all those questions Jack London felt with an intrepidity which forces one to ask himself again and again with astonishment: when was this written? Really before the war? One must accentuate especially the role which Jack London attributes to the labour bureaucracy and to the labour aristocracy in the further fate of

mankind. Thanks to their support, the American plutocracy not only succeeds in defeating the workers' insurrection but also in keeping its iron dictatorship during the following three centuries. We will not dispute with the poet the delay which can but seem to us too long. However, it is not a question of Jack London's pessimism, but of his passionate effort to shake those who are lulled by routine, to force them to open their eyes and

to see what is and what approaches. The artist is audaciously utilising the methods of hyperbole. He is bringing the tendencies rooted in capitalism: of oppression, cruelty, bestiality, betrayal, to their extreme expression. He is operating with centuries in order to measure the tyrannical will of the exploiters and the treacherous role of the labour bureaucracy. But his most "romantic" hyperboles are finally much more realistic than the bookkeeper-like calculations of the so-called sober politicians. It is easy to imagine with what a condescending perplexity the official socialist thinking of that time met Jack London's menacing prophecies. If one took the trouble to look over the reviews of The Iron

**In 1907 Jack London already foresaw and described the fascist regime as the inevitable result of the defeat of the proletarian revolution.**

Heel at that time in the German *Neue Zeit* and *Vorwaerts*, in the Austrian *Kampf* and *Arbeiterzeitung*, as well as in other socialist publications of Europe and America, he could easily convince himself that the thirty year old "romanticist" saw incomparably more clearly and farther than all the social democratic

leaders of that time taken together. But Jack London bears comparison in this domain not only with the reformists. One can say with assurance that in 1907 not one of the revolutionary Marxists, not excluding Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, imagined so fully the ominous perspective of the alliance between finance capital and the labour aristocracy. This suffices in itself to determine the specific weight of the novel.

The chapter, "The Roaring Abysmal Beast" undoubtedly constitutes the focus of the book. At the time when the novel appeared, this apocalyptic chapter must have seemed to be the boundary of hyperbolism. However, the consequent happenings have almost surpassed it. And the last word of class struggle has not yet been said by far!

### Optimist

The "Abysmal Beast" is to the extreme degree oppressed, humiliated and degenerated people. Who would now dare to speak for this reason about the artist's pessimism? No, London is an optimist, only a penetrating and farsighted one. "Look into what kind of abyss the bourgeoisie will hurl you down, if you don't finish with them!" This is his thought. Today it sounds incomparably more real and sharp than thirty years ago. But still more astonishing is the genuinely prophetic vision of the methods by which the Iron Heel will sustain its domination over crushed mankind. London manifests remarkable freedom from reformist pacifist illusions. In this picture of the future there remains not a trace of democracy and peaceful progress. Over the mass of the deprived rise the castes of labour aristocracy, of praetorian army, of an all-penetrating police, with the financial oligarchy at the top. In reading it one does not believe one's own eyes: it is precisely the picture of fascism, of its economy, of its governmental technique, its political psychology! The fact is incontestable: in 1907 Jack London already foresaw and described the fascist regime as the inevitable result of the defeat of the proletarian revolution. Whatever may be the single "errors" of the novel - and they exist - we cannot help inclining before the powerful intuition of the revolutionary artist.

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# NZ teachers prepare for new battles

**Teachers in New Zealand are gearing up for a new battle to defend the education system after the coalition government hinted at new threats to school funding.**

The move comes just months after a long battle by teachers scored an important victory against similar government attempts to undermine the education system and teachers' conditions.

## Reform Programme

When the Labour government was re-elected in 1987 they pledged to undertake a wholesale reform of the New Zealand education system. These reforms involved major discussions with, amongst others, the two main teaching unions: - the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA, membership 20,000) and the New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI - membership 10,000 - 15,000). These unions have such a high voluntary membership that compulsory membership is unnecessary.

The proposed reforms included a major parental presence on the Board of Trustees which run schools. In addition teacher representation was increased and students were on the boards as of right.

However, there were three reforms at which the unions took umbrage;

- Teacher appraisal being related to performance pay
- The introduction of a "merit teacher"
- Bulk funding of salaries.

The idea of a merit teacher was supposed to reward those outstanding classroom teachers who did not seek promotion to middle management positions.

The New Zealand education system has generally been considered very egalitarian with differences in pay not that great. Promotion was open to anyone who had taught on a permanent contract for three years or more.

The principle behind merit teaching undermined this. Union members were concerned at the likely methods used to choose those teachers, with fears that known union activists would be victimised or short-changed especially if they had clashed with management. There were also fears of favouritism. Union protests ensured that this concept was scrapped before it could be implemented. Proposals for means of appraisal also provoked a wave of protest from the unions as they breached

existing agreements over procedures regarding disciplining and competency of teachers between the unions and the Ministry of Education. The unions fought strongly for custom and practice to continue and the government was again forced to back down.

After being forced into two retreats the government announced that bulk funding of salaries was to be made non-negotiable.

## Teachers' Salaries

New Zealand has a centralised education system with teachers' salaries being paid from central funds. Generally New Zealand state schools' funding was done in two main ways. One was a grant called Free Textbook, by which each child attending school was worth so much money, and this money was used to buy textbooks and resources. The other major fund was Teachers Activities where all the finance from school money-making activities was allocated. Staffing had historically been outside these two areas and was not a cost to the individual school. This meant the salaries of all teachers were protected. Local management could not tamper with salaries. The decision to bulk fund

salaries meant that schools would be given the equivalent amount of salaries which would then be used to pay teachers, ancillary staff including secretaries, and anyone else remotely involved in their particular school. It was easy to see how unscrupulous head teachers could manipulate this money and penalise activists or divert money into certain areas at the expense of others. Teachers rightly feared for their wage levels and they were also worried that any vacancy would be filled by employing a teacher who was cheap instead of going for an experienced teacher who would cost more.

In the 1990 election Labour lost and the National Party (equivalent of the Tories) won by a landslide. Bulk funding of salaries was one of their ideas and they have been pursuing its implementation for three years. But the unions put up such a good fight including public meetings, a one-day stoppage throughout the country and the threat of widespread strike action that the government conceded defeat and bulk funding has been dropped.

However, now the government are coming back for a second try and teachers must be ready to fight again to defend education.

**Auriel Downs, NUT**

## One Million Rally to Defend Education

One million demonstrators took to the streets of Paris to defend state education against attacks from France's right wing government in one of the biggest protests ever seen in the capital.

Despite the pouring rain, the march stretched for seven miles and lasted for nine hours - and this after the government had already announced that they were backing down on plans to increase funding for fee-paying, mainly catholic schools in the face of mass anger.

Socialist and communist party leaders addressed the rally which organisers

estimate may have been attended by "well over a million people" and more would have attended but public transport facilities were unable to carry all those who wanted to attend.

Demonstrators called for increased funding for state education and shouted slogans supporting free education for all.

The proponent of the increased fees plan Francois Bayrou, the education minister, has been relieved of his duties in negotiating school funding as a result of the protests.

## Unions Reject Pay Offer

Trade unionists in the Ivory Coast have rejected a government pay deal following a devaluation of the franc. The pay deal would have left workers worse off in real terms than before the recent devaluation and was overwhelmingly rejected by representatives of the country's unions.

One union leader said: "The government must do better than this. They are stealing money from our pockets by devaluing and then paying us less. We will fight this."



*Hundreds of thousands take to the streets as...*

# Spanish General Strike Gets Massive Response

**On Thursday January 27th the workers of Spain responded massively to the call for a 24 hour general strike launched by the main unions, the UGT and Workers' Commission (CCOO).**

This was the fourth general strike since the PSOE was elected in 1982.

The fears of the union leaders that the strike would not be successful proved unfounded. The strike was solid in industry, construction and transport, especially in the industrial areas. In Asturias and the Basque country, the stoppage was total. There was a demonstration of 100,000 in Oviedo and the same number in Valencia. Numerous demonstrations took place in the Basque country, despite the attempts of the nationalists to split the movement by calling separate demonstrations. The demonstration of 40,000 in Guadalajara, a small industrial town near Madrid was a record.

## Mass Demonstrations

In Barcelona, one of the traditional bastions of the proletariat, more than 200,000 workers came out on the streets to express their opposition to the government's anti-working class policy.

However, there were demonstrations in practically every town and city in which hundreds of thousands participated.

A significant new element in the situation was the involvement of a large number of young people, which was far greater than in the past. The SE (students union) participated actively in the strike. In Alava and Guadalajara, the representative of the SE spoke from the platform at the mass rallies. In the massive Madrid demonstration, held on the 28th, the role of the SE was underlined by the leaders of both the UGT and the CCOO.

This final demonstration in Madrid was spectacular - at least 250,000 people participated. The

mood was extremely militant. The most popular slogan, repeatedly chanted during the final meeting, was "Otra! Otra!" (Another general strike!).

These figures are enough to illustrate the enormous sweep of the strike, which took both the government and the bosses completely aback. They had been confidently predicting that the strike would be a flop!

The tremendous response to the strike caught the government off balance. They did not know how to react. As could be expected, they lied through their teeth about the result, with the government claiming a derisory 30%. But anyone who participated in the movement would know that the unions' figure of 90% was the correct one.

Not only the factories and mines but many small shops came out on strike.

Nevertheless, there was a difference between this strike and the general strike in 1988. This time, the situation was much more polarised. The mood was much tougher.

The right wing socialist government tried to whip up a vicious anti-trade union campaign in the months before the strike.

The main issue over which the strike was called was the proposal of the Gonzalez government to abolish the existing labour laws and to make more 'flexible' the right to hire and fire. With 23% official unemployment and a severe economic crisis the Spanish bosses want the right to sack workers at will. The right wing of the PSOE has bowed to the pressure of the employers and announced their willingness to carry through this brutal assault on workers' rights and living standards, ignoring the protest of the unions.

In addition to a vicious press campaign, the government mobilised the full force of the state in an attempt to intimidate the workers.

On Thursday 27th, Madrid looked

like an occupied city, with armed police on the street in large numbers. At dawn, at the EMT bus depot, police outnumbered pickets, although the latter numbered anything up to 500. The government tried to break the strike by use of the police at a number of key points, such as transport, where they tried to run a 'minimum service', without agreement with the unions. The EMT strikers vented their anger by breaking a few windscreens. As a result, the few buses which ran were mostly empty.

lines, in addition to ensuring the success of the strike in the schools - a fact which was publicly recognised by the leaders of the UGT and CCOO. A poll, which was only given on Spanish television, asked people why they had gone on strike and others why they had not. A large number of people - 500,000 - said that they had not come out because they had been threatened with the sack and were afraid of losing their job. On the other hand, the common most reasons given for striking were opposition to the government or because the majority had voted to strike. However, a large number said that they had struck because of picketing. It is clear that the determination of the strikers encouraged other layers to join in.



Unions march against government attacks

Fierce battles between police and pickets erupted outside the big stores like the Corte Ingles. In Bilbao, however, the action of the pickets succeeded in closing the Corte Ingles. In general, this was a far more bitter strike than in the past. One picket (a UGT member) was killed when an angry car driver drove at the picket line in Burgos. The most striking feature was the mass participation in pickets. Tens of thousands of strikers turned up to man the picket lines on the night of January 26-27th. By 1.00am, up to 5,000 pickets were active in Madrid, for example. Members of the SE played their part on these picket

We should bear in mind all the factors which weighed against the success of the strike: mass unemployment, threats of the sack, a hostile press campaign, police intimidation and the absence of a really energetic campaign by the unions. Given this situation, the response of the workers and youth must be seen as a clear answer to all those who doubt the willingness of working people to defend their rights and living standards in struggle.

**Barbara An'al  
National Executive  
SE, Madrid**



The peasant struggles in the Chiapas region represent an important step in the development of the struggles of Mexican workers as Daniel Andrade of the Mexican Marxist paper *El Militante* explains.

# From Revolt to Revolution

Poverty and exploitation was the key factor behind the recent peasant uprising in Mexico. This, together with the historical repression the peasants have suffered under the capitalist system, have thrown whole communities, most of them native to the area, into desperation. This has led to the beginnings of a classical peasant war in Chiapas (Mexico) headed by the Zapatistas National Liberation Army (EZLN). The policy of wild capitalism pursued by the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) Government of Salinas de Gortari has been the spark for the social upheaval. Mexico, with Venezuela was for decades "the example" of stability for the whole of Latin America. However this "example" was merely to try and con the workers and youth that the choice was between democracy and dictatorship instead of capitalism and socialism. Mexico has one of the strongest proletariats and only 20% of the population are peasants (70% of them landless peasants). Chiapas is the poorest region of the country: 94 out of 111 municipalities are labelled as

## Government genocide aimed at crushing uprising against poverty and repression

"very poor" by the Governments own standards. On top of that, the fall in the international price of coffee and the closing down of the state-owned company IMECAFE ( Mexican Institute of Coffee) closed-off one of the few possibilities of getting a job in Chiapas, increasing the despair. In Ocosingo, Altamirano and Las Margaritas, three of the small towns seized on New Year's Day by the EZLN, with a total of 225.000 inhabitants, 80% of the families get less than 800 new pesos (£170) a month, 80% live in overcrowded conditions,

between 50 and 70% do not have piped drinking water. Many native poor peasants are forced to work for the "caciques" (big landowners) for some meagre 28 new pesos (£5.50) a week or just for some food. Last year, 15,000 natives died because of the repression of the "caciques" and the Government, famine or illnesses.

### Landowners

Reality has nothing to do with the illusory falsehood Salinas was trying to sell that "*Mexico was going to join the first world with prosperity and democracy*". This is not a local nor an ethnic issue. Reality in other States as Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla and others is the same. Land is still concentrated in the hands of a handful of "caciques" who, with their "white guards" and the federal army, have terrorised the poor peasants for decades, killing them, or jailing them with false evidence in order to steal their properties. The subterranean process of accumulation of unrest and despair came to the surface in one of its weakest links. Marxists had already explained that the policy of Salinas Government was a finished recipe for social upheavals. And Chiapas will not be the only one. There will be more throughout the country, both in the countryside and in the towns. If there is any surprise in it at all, it is how long has it taken

to explode.

The bourgeois understood perfectly this perspective. "This is going to blow up" were the words used by the Chiapas regional governor, recently promoted to the Mexican Home Office Secretary by Salinas. But the PRI still thought they could control the situation, basing themselves on the inertia of the masses. PRI won the 1976 elections in Chiapas with 97,7% of the votes, the 1982 ones with 90,2%, again a 89,9% in 1988 and in 1994...*hardly a peasants uprising!*

The inability of the bourgeois state to provide any alternative for the needs of the millions of workers in the countryside and in the towns, whose only perspective under capitalism is to join the ranks of the 55 million poor of the country, is the real root of the explosion, and not at all "*foreign professional agitators who are manipulating the native poor*".

The only alternative the bourgeois can offer is more poverty, more repression and more dependence on the big multinationals and imperialism to loot the wealth. This will inevitably lead to a new raising of the anti imperialist banner, as in the rest of Latin America.

### Chiapas Uprising

The peasants uprising in Chiapas is a serious blow against the PRI and the Government. It sinks the official demagogic campaign. Let's remember Salinas' cynicism in the last Government's Report (1.11.93) when he said that "*poverty had decreased from 15 to 13 millions*." The so-called National Programme of Solidarity, supposedly "*to reverse poverty*", and its rural version (Procampo), have been shown to be just a farce. Its real aim was to win votes via corruption to avoid an electoral defeat in 1994 at the hands of the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). It is also a blow against Clinton, quickly losing his popularity, and imperialism, most notably the NAFTA free trade

The poverty gripping Mexican villages sparked the Chiapas uprising





deal, which had only just been signed. The explosions in L.A. and in other 10 US towns is a warning to the North American bourgeois, fully aware that a victorious revolution in Mexico would quickly spread to the USA. Another important factor to be considered is that the peasant uprising has stirred the consciousness of the oppressed masses. More important than the actual achievements of the uprising and the limits of the EZLN itself, this is leading to a wider and more critical questioning among the broad masses of the population of the capitalist policies followed by the Mexican bourgeois.

### Politicisation

The peasants uprising has heralded a general politicisation in society. It has meant a break with past inertia. A peasant from the state of Jalisco, a member of the rightist PAN (Party of National Action), said on TV that "if the Government does not solve the crisis in the countryside we will have to do the same as in Chiapas." The movement in Chiapas has won sympathy among the youth (70% of the population is under 30) and workers. The idea that "things are bad, but, what can we do?" has been replaced by new ones like "somebody has boldly gone against the Government's policy". Despite the ambiguity of the EZLN programme and being a minimum bourgeois democratic programme, including some demands from the Ayala Plan of Zapata on the land (1910), some EZLN rank and file members have stated that "we are fighting for socialism".

The points of the EZLN programme known so far include:

- On the urban reform law: they demand exemption from the cadastral taxes depending on the time of use of the house/flat, together with the use (they do not yet speak of expropriation) of urban lots and public buildings
- On Labour law: free medical care, both in public and private health centres; workers being given company shares in relation to their years of service for it (the old idea of "popular capitalism": all the workers would be capitalists!); the foreign companies will have to pay the same wages as in their countries of origin (and what about the national companies?. They do not even mention them); monthly wage increases; sliding sale of

prices and wages.

- On industry and commerce law: control of prices by democratic committees involving bosses, settlers, traders and authorities, in order to fight against the monopoly of products.

- On the law of justice: freedom for the political prisoners.

- On the rights and duties of the peoples who are struggling: democratic election of the authorities. They defend arming the people in some cases and dissolving the bourgeois army. They demand the armed forces be completely separated from civilian issues. They also talk of accepting the farming, commercial, financial and industrial capital (they respect and they give stimulus to the private property: they only wish the wealth being distributed more "fairly").

- On the war tax law: small traders should pay 10% of their monthly income; medium-sized traders, 15% and big capitalists 20%.

They also talk of giving back the land to the native communities, however, they never talk of expropriation of the big multinationals. The measures they stand for do not go beyond the limits of the national bourgeois state and the EZLN is not an internationalist movement, which limits its scope.

### Union Democracy

For Marxists, the development of the consciousness and the mood in the labour movement in the towns and in the countryside is a key issue. The immediate effects of the situation will be to encourage the struggle for democracy in the unions and against the PRI union bureaucracy, which has ruthlessly controlled the unions for decades. The democratic tendencies in the unions, as in the teachers union (CNTE) or the health service (SNTSS), are participating in the mass actions against the PRI regional Government in Chiapas. And now, for the first time in years, the protests have a more general character, questioning the whole of the Government's economic policy, which has increased poverty and repression, and not just a sectoral workers struggle. The idea of bringing down the

PRI, which is possible given the Government's weakness, if the struggle is widened, will get support. With presidential elections due in August 1994, this piling up of frustration and anger will be reflected on the electoral plane coming, as it does, before the memories of electoral fraud in the 1988 presidential elections (which was in reality won by Cardenas) have faded.

In Mexico City and in interviews broadcasted by Radio Educacion, comments by the people showed sympathy for the uprising, saying that "the vicious policy and the Government's repression led the poor peasants to seize the arms". Two demos in Mexico City showed this mood:

demanding their leaders to go to the wire in the struggle to bring down the PRI Government. Looking to the August elections, Cardenas has been forced to state that "in 1994 there will not be room to retreat in the face of electoral fraud as there was in 1988". It is inevitable a process of greater polarisation and more pressure on the leaders will unfold.

The EZLN guerrilla has so far mobilised 4,000 armed men. It was not an spontaneous insurrection. EZLN sources said they had been preparing for it for 10 years. It seems it was first organised around native self-defence groups and factions of the peasants organisations who launched the armed struggle in the 80's (as the Emiliano Zapata



8,000 on January 8th and 100,000 on January 14th. As an important side-effect, the Home Office Secretary was forced to resign.

In the last massive demonstration, organised by PRD, PAN, Unions, Settlers Associations of the Popular Urban Movement (MUP) and peasant organisations, Cardenas did not want to speak, despite the massive pressure on him. It is also clear that Cardenas and the PRD leaders are afraid of the pressure of the workers, afraid of a party full of workers and youth

Peasants Organisation - OCEZ- and a group of the National Council of Indian Peoples). It is a bigger guerrilla movement than the one which operated in the State of Guerrero during the 70's.

In those days, its leaders, Lucio Cabanas and Genaro Vazquez, were never able to mobilise more than 200 or 300 armed supporters. The simultaneous seizure of 4 towns has not happened since the 1910 Revolution. The Government was panic-stricken. Their first goal was to desperately suppress the



Zapatista guerrillas, because they represent the danger of a spark encouraging new convulsions throughout the country just 7 months before the elections. But now, the Government has changed tactics and it has opted for negotiation. This confirms, on the one hand, the PRI weakness and, on the other, the social support in Chiapas and the sympathies for the EZLN and against any kind of repression.

### Peace Agreement

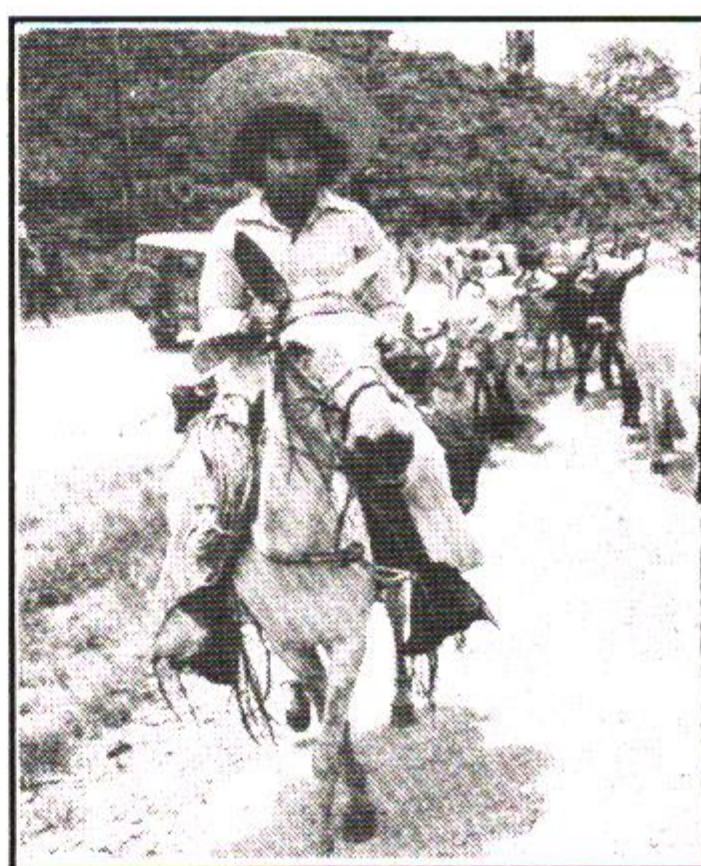
The social support for the EZLN in Chiapas is shown by the fact that no real information on the whereabouts of the guerrillas in the jungle has emerged from the native communities. Another significant fact was that when the EZLN seized those 4 towns, they did not take any food for them at the beginning, but just mattresses and medicines to set up hospitals and logistic centres in the jungle.

The Government negotiating commission with the EZLN includes Camacho Solis, former Mexico City council leader and leader of the PRI so-called "soft wing", who resigned as a protest against Salinas having personally chosen Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta as the PRI candidate for the August presidential elections. Could this mean that the PRI will now change its candidate at the last minute? It will mostly depend on Camacho Solis reaching a "peace agreement" to disarm the EZLN, enabling the PRI Government to exploit it as a propaganda victory.

However, at first glance, an agreement of this sort seems quite difficult. The EZLN's main demand, portrayed as the reason for the insurrection in their "declaration of war" is to fight for "free and democratic elections", together with Salinas' departure from office, urging the "powers of the Mexican Union" (Parliament and judiciary) to remove Salinas, something utopian, on the grounds that he is an usurper and a fraudulent president. Salinas is also presented as a "democrat", compared with Porfirio Diaz, head of a dictatorship for 30 years eventually swept away by the 1910 Mexican Revolution. It is unlikely the PRI would make any concessions of this sort (though they could swap prisoners) because it would further expose its weakness. It would be seen as a Government defeat, which

## ***It is unlikely the PRI will make any concessions which will be seen as a further sign of weakness. It would be seen as a government defeat and would encourage further struggles not only in Mexico but in the whole of Latin America***

would encourage struggles not only in Mexico but in the whole of Latin America, with new illusions arising among layers of the youth, mainly university students and the middle class, in guerrillism. It seems the Government tactic is to win time, to postpone the negotiations and to let the situation cool down, in order to defuse the biggest mass demonstrations for a long time. Furthermore, the Government proposals would mean in practice a complete surrender with no concessions whatsoever: a EZLN cease-fire; giving up the arms; swapping hostages and to reveal



**Many peasants are still forced to work for big landowners**

the identity of the EZLN leaders and negotiators. The EZLN leaders have already said they will not trust the government's words and they also have said that the Zapatistas ranks would not accept the Government's proposals. The room for manoeuvre, given the slowing down of the economy, to a meagre 1.1% GNP growth, is much smaller.

The other way out would be for the EZLN to abandon the arms and to transform itself in a political party, on the lines of the Salvadoran FMLN. This would be political suicide, being as they are a movement based in just one State.

Therefore, it seems unlikely they

will arrive at any kind of serious agreement and the most likely perspective is for the negotiations to break up. This would lead to a prolonged guerrilla war with the army in the Lacarona jungle, which would resort to brutal repression and a "scorched earth" strategy, as in Vietnam and Guatemala. By the way, it is not true, as the bourgeois press in Europe reports, that the army has withdrawn from Chiapas: it is now in the barracks surrounding the big towns. If the EZLN sticks with the erroneous tactic of individual terrorism and bombings in the big towns, the government and army will use it as an excuse to increase repression throughout the country coupled with new anti-strike laws and attacks against the organised labour movement and the PRD. We have already seen the signs of this with the arrest of 5 peasant trade unionists, CIOCAC (Workers and Peasants Independent Union) members, by the army when they were on their way to attend a negotiating meeting with Carlos Rojas (Health Service Secretary) in Tuxca Gutierrez, Chiapas State capital. The Government will not succeed in controlling the situation. The Mexican army has acknowledged that "it would take us 6 months to suppress Chiapas". It will take them much longer and a prolonged guerrilla war will open up. Illusions in guerrillism will rise again among some layers. The government is pursuing a vicious policy of bombings and repression. Just in the first few days of the peasants uprising 5 EZLN militants were murdered in the Osoningo market in cold-blood and a van was found in the barracks of the 31st Military Zone with its 5 passengers murdered (among them a 8 year old girl). To cover it up, the army placed a gun in the drivers hand...a gun used by the Mexican armed forces! According to some priests, followers of the Theology

of the Liberation, openly sympathetic with the EZLN movement (though they condemn "the use of violence") there were more than 1,000 killed in the first week of the uprising. The army said that 65 of them were EZLN. It should be noted that most of the casualties are civilians, who have suffered the consequences of the policy of vicious genocide with indiscriminate bombings and cannon shots on Pena Vieja, San Antonio and other municipalities around San Cristobal de las Casas.

Socialists in the PRD, the labour movement and the youth, supporters of the journal EL MILITANTE, appeal to the PRD, the unions, poor peasants and landless peasants organisations, and to the organisations of the popular urban movement (MUP) to organise protests all over Mexico, the same day and at the same hour, and to call a 24 hour general strike against the policy of poverty and genocidal repression of the PRI Government.

We also appeal for the launch of a campaign of telegrams and letters of protest against the PRI Government, both in Mexico and internationally. We demand an end to the genocide in Chiapas, to the bombings and an immediate withdrawal of the army from Chiapas.

### PRI Tyranny

The national leaders of the PRD, the unions, the rural organisations and the MUP should organise an action, a genuine national insurrection to the end, not just to bring down the PRI-Government, but to end once and for all the capitalist system. For co-ordinated action! For extending the struggle of the workers in the countryside and the towns, of the poor peasants and the youth to achieve Workers Democracy! This would be the first step towards a Latin-American Socialist Federation and towards the World Socialist Federation.

The EZLN struggle has a very relevant meaning, far beyond the limits of its programme and its methods. It is a symptom of the increasing rebellion against the policy of the Mexican bourgeois state. We have seen the heroism in the struggle of EZLN members, which has won the sympathies of the working class in Mexico and worldwide, against the rotten tyranny the PRI has



been leading for more than 60 years. The mood towards the elections has changed. The anti-PRI vote will increase. PRI will need an even bigger rigged vote than in 1988, in order to defeat Cuahutemoc Cardenas, the PRD candidate. If this were to happen, it would lead to a massive anti-fraud struggle which could be the spark for a big leap forward in the struggle against the Government's policy, linked to the struggles in the industrial field.

Splits will open up in the PRI, between the "hardliners", with Salinas at their head, who want to continue the present policy of wild capitalism, massive sackings and privatisations, aiming to control the social situation with more repression, and the "softs", who will demand more reforms and an increase in social expenditure to try to control the explosion.

On their side, the workers and peasants, PRD supporters will try to exert pressure on their leaders to launch a bolder and more co-ordinated struggle against the Government's policy. The

heroism of the EZLN members was shown by the fact that some of its cadres fought and died defending their positions with bare hands, wooden sticks and batons with a nail at their head and painted wooden rifles.

### Guerilla Movements

However, the tactics of guerrillaism, both in general and in this concrete case, clearly shows their limits. The conscious organisation of the masses and their mobilisation, and not the isolated actions of a small group, are the key factor in transforming society. Marxists support the struggles of all oppressed classes, but we cannot unconditionally support a peasant guerrilla movement separated from the movement of the working class. Even with a victory of the peasant war, the idea of building socialism in one country cannot be viewed as any alternative. It would be isolated, as we can see is the case now with Cuba.

As happened before with the Nicaraguan FSLN, it seems now that for the EZLN the choice is

not between capitalism and socialism, but between democracy and dictatorship. The EZLN's aims are very similar to those of the Nicaraguan FSLN, i.e. an utopian attempt to reform capitalism, rather than following the Cuban model. In Nicaragua after a period of ten years, we saw how the reformist policy of not breaking with capitalism and the lack of involvement of the workers and youth in the running of economy and society, laid the basis for the counter-revolution to recover.

Only a common struggle of the poor peasants in the countryside and the workers and the youth in the towns around a programme of nationalisation of the big banks, monopolies and foreign multinationals, with compensation only in the case of proven need, together with the expropriation of the big landowners will open up the possibility of the real creators of wealth to manage and control the economy with a democratic socialist plan, in the interests of the needs of the population and not to fill the pockets of a handful

of millionaires. This is the programme Marxists are fighting for in Mexico, rooting it in the mass organisations of the working class (namely the PRD and the unions) and the youth. The crisis of Mexican capitalism and its inability to satisfy the basic needs of the population will lay the basis for these ideas multiplying their support. The revolutionary traditions of Mexico, in the modern conditions where the working class has become the decisive force in society, will again come to the fore.

**Keep abreast of events in Mexico by ordering a regular copy of *El Militante* - see sales page for details**

## A Socialist Appeal to Workers

Socialist Appeal was launched in April 1992 to provide trade unionists, labour activists and youth with a Marxist analysis of events. Given the complexity of the political situation in Britain and internationally there has never been a greater need.

The boast of the capitalists of a "new world order" after the collapse of Stalinism have turned to dust with the crisis in Russia, the bloody civil war in the former Yugoslavia and the continuing economic recession in Europe and Japan.

As the employers continue their offensive against wages and conditions, governments everywhere are attempting to push through austerity measures against the working class. In Europe these attacks have pushed workers into militant action. The ideas of class collaboration are more and more threadbare as the ills of capitalism re-emerge with a vengeance: mass unemployment, wage

cuts, squalid working conditions, and so on.

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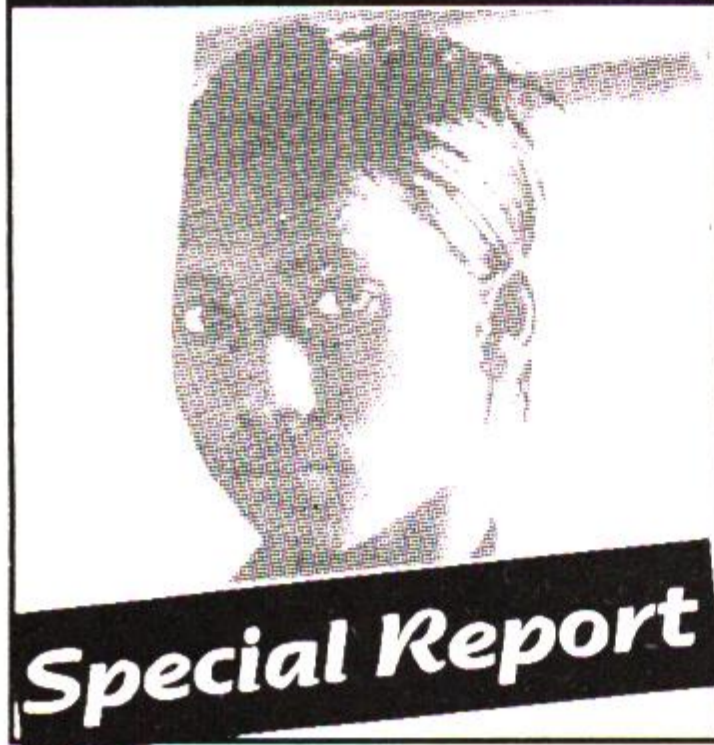
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## Pakistan



They say that childhood is the happiest time of your life. Those that say that must be ignorant of the way in which millions of children are forced to live.

In December of last year a conference sponsored by the United Nations was held in New Delhi on the question of education and attended by representatives of the nine most populous developing countries. The "Education for All Summit" received little publicity and only two heads of state bothered to show up to sign the summit declaration.

Figures were compiled by Unesco and Unicef to show the levels of attendance and literacy in the nine countries but the figures of one country - Pakistan - stood out like a sore thumb. They stated that in Pakistan only 29% of children were enrolled in schools (the figure for girls was below 20%) and the literacy level stood at 35% as against the next worst

Will life pass him by?

On his recent visit to Pakistan Rob Sewell saw first hand some of the horrors which daily face millions of children across the world. His report on the nightmare facing child labourers is a harrowing but telling indictment of capitalism in Pakistan and the third world in general.

# Child Labour: In Human Bondage

level which was Nigeria with 59% enrolment and 51% literacy. The summit made reference to the lack of funding of education in Pakistan and the political upheavals but one reason remained hidden - the question of child labour. This is a problem that is increasing world-wide (including the developed countries and Britain where legislation which protects child workers is being eroded) but it is particularly prevalent in Pakistani society.

### Cloak of Silence

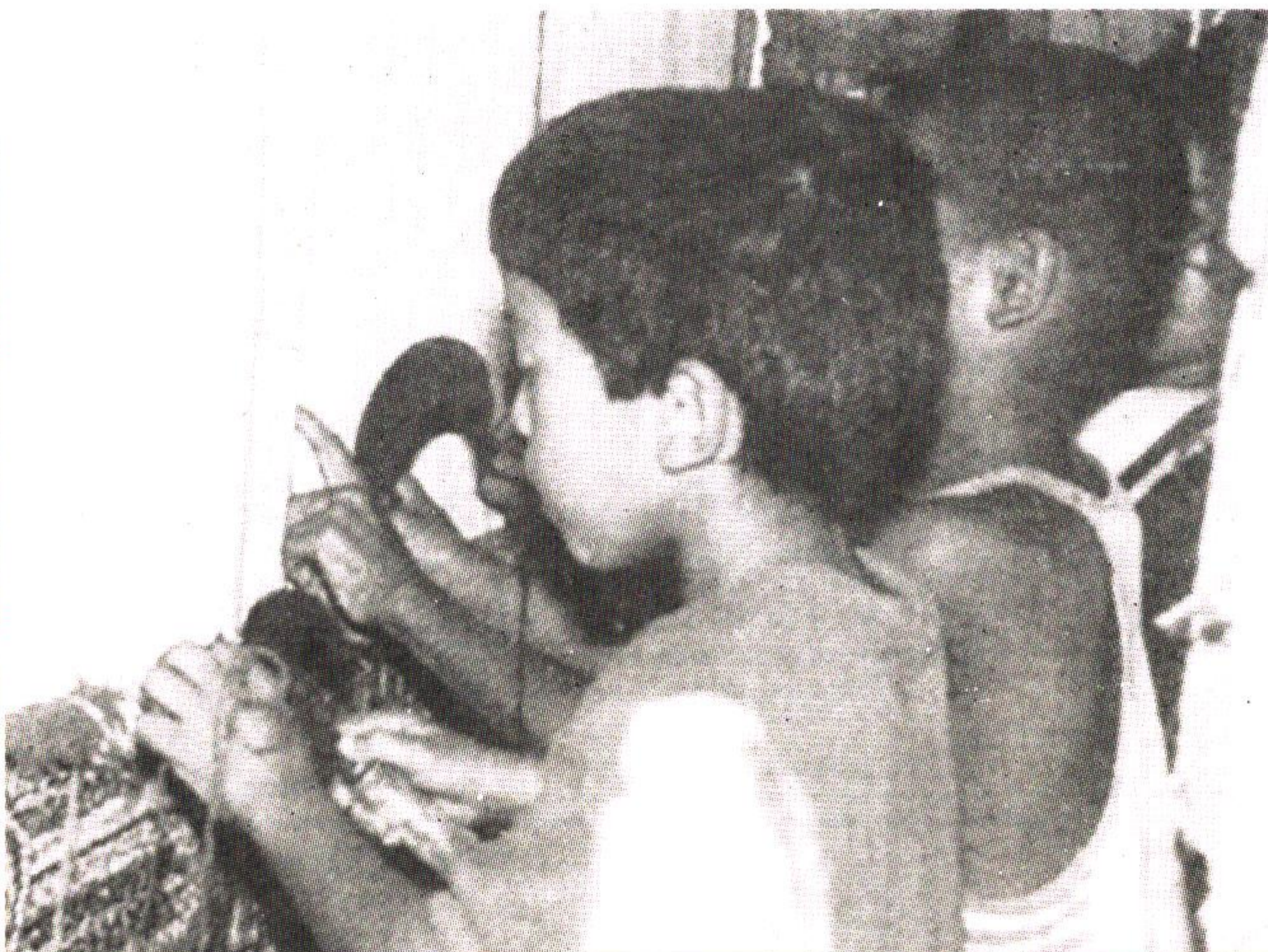
It is a problem covered in a cloak of silence. Few in authority will admit to it even existing although it affects millions of Pakistani children. The estimates compiled by UNICEF are devastating. Over one million children work in the carpet industry (which generated over 250 million dollars in exports in 1992), another million are employed as domestics, over 300,000 as bonded labourers in brick kilns together

with many more in soap factories, small garages, shops etc. To this must be added the many street sellers, ragpickers and beggars. The reason for these high levels is clear. As Shireen Rehmatullah of the Institute for social research and development was quoted as saying in the Pakistan journal *Newline*: "Culturally child labour is accepted as an inevitable consequence of poverty". Families are forced by extreme poverty to send out their children to work or worse. Bonded Labourers are forced to take loans from their bosses at high interest rates which in order to attempt to repay means they have to accept low wages. Even if the bosses are honest - which many are not - there is little chance of the debt being repaid. People cannot run away as there is no where to go and in any case the rest of a debtors family would then become liable for the debt. They are forced to sell their children into what is nothing short of slavery. Here

we see the realities of the crisis in Pakistan's education system. The standard of education is seen as low and simply not leading to a job at the end - many families cannot afford to wait. Teachers are seen as disinterested and complaints of abuse are common. The standards are seen as so low that parents often see the workplace as a safer environment! Laws against child labour are ignored. The passing of the Employment of Children Act in 1991 and the Bonded Labour Abolition Act in 1992 was supposed to have prohibited child labour in hazardous occupations, abolished bonded labour and provided regulations on hours of work and conditions.

### Laws Ignored

However these laws can be avoided through vagueness of interpretation or through one of the many loopholes that exist. For example, children are allowed to work in prohibited industries (carpets, cement etc.) if they do so with a member of their family! Needless to say enforcement of these laws are negligible. The labour department responsible for this has, for example, only 79 officers for the whole of the Punjab. Reporters even discovered that government training centres had been converted into illegal workshops. In Tharparker whole villages have become enslaved as a result of this process of government involvement. The carpet weaving industry employs children for over 90% of its workforce. Conditions are extremely hot with children working for 11 hours a day with little breaks. Health problems are rampant; wool fibres





damage lungs and bone deformations occur as a result of the effects of the hard labour involved. One reporter visiting a carpet factory was confronted with children begging him to take them to hospital as "we all suffer from coughs". No wonder that he felt unable to take any photographs as he believed that no photo could adequately show the horror of these places. The lack of light in these sweatshops means that many children will also suffer damage to their eyesight. The degree of this can be guessed by looking at a survey in Iran which stated that at least 60% of the children employed in the carpet industry suffered from sight-related problems. The younger children who are not used to sitting for long periods of time will often have their feet tied with chains. Sexual and physical abuse is rife with beatings being the norm. Employers are quoted as saying that they choose factory locations according to "the availability of children".

### Cheap Labour

Newsline reported on one squatter town at the end of Karachi which had been turned into in effect a bonded slave labour camp of 30,000 people run by owners of Kladi workshops and underwritten by the giant carpet companies who can see the massive profits that can come from cheap labour. Many of the families had been crushed by debt and had sold their children as collateral to the local bosses. A large number were also illegal immigrants who had paid the bosses large sums to be helped across the borders and given forged papers. These workers are especially profitable with pay being very low perhaps half the market rate or less. One worker was quoted as saying: "He has not increased our wages over the last four years while the price we pay for our kerosene oil has doubled". Children are also harassed and beaten by the police who provide no protection. Other industries that employ children are no better. The Brick Kiln industry where over two million families are bonded labourers have appalling conditions of heat and dirt with skin and lung diseases common. The heat will be over 100 degrees Fahrenheit with

dust and dangerous gasses everywhere. The NWFP reported that children here suffered 50% more chronic illness than other children. Cuts and burns are to be expected. Some jobs are even worse. Children are employed to clean inside oil truck tankers. Up to 3 children at a time spend as much as a hour inside these hot and oily tankers. Since they are working in the dark injuries are common. As this work is classed as scavenging police harassment is expected. One child said of this work: "It's dark inside. I can't see anything at first. It's suffocating too. I fell once and broke my head. It's difficult work. If you are hurt and covered in oil, you can't escape, you can even die. That's why I decided to leave this work". Police bribery is routine with each child paying 5 rupees a day as 'bhatta'. Children who don't pay are taken away and beaten until they pay up. One child described this fate: "They (the police) took me, beat me up with a chithar in the thana and kept me there for 19 days along with 12 other children. Our maalik paid a zamatan of 4000 rupees, only then could we get out". Other children work in garages as mechanics and welders. They are supposed to be trained but little actually occurs. Blindings from the sparks of the blow torches is only one of the hazards they face. One child

Trapped in the contractors net



worker who's eyesight is impaired says: "My eyes become red and hurt me terribly every morning. Yet I cannot stay away from work. There are plenty of others waiting in line if I don't show up". Another was told to soak his eyes with warm tea leaves or rose water to ease the pain. At the bottom of the heap are those children who hawk goods in the street. Their conditions are pitiable. Many turn to petty crime and prostitution to make ends meet and physical and sexual abuse is common. Rape and drug addiction is a part of what passes for their daily lives.

### Grip of Poverty

Child labourers work outside the protection of the law such as it is in Pakistan. The future for them and their families is bleak under capitalism. Their fate is being increasing mirrored by millions of others throughout the world as the search for cheap and expendable labour intensifies on the one hand and the grip of poverty tightens on the other. Many will be looking to the new PPP government for a way out but there can be no solution by following the path of capitalism. The need for the socialist transformation of society is graphically burned into the faces of these many millions of boys and girls condemned to a childhood of hell. ●

## In the News

● More than 200 strikers were arrested in the Nicaraguan capital Managua as demonstrators and police clashed.

Transport strikes have brought large parts of the city and surrounding areas to a standstill.

The strikes among bus and taxi drivers began after talks with the government over fuel and vehicle tax rises broke down.

● A series of strikes and protests have hit Germany as workers step up their campaign for better pay and benefits.

The campaign, mounted by the engineering union IG Metall, follows the continuing deadlock in talks with employers who have refused to discuss union claims for 6% pay rises. Workers in several factories pre-empted the official start of the campaign by staging short stoppages late last month.

Workers have made it clear that they will fight for a "serious" pay rise but that they would be prepared to negotiate the exact amount in return for concessions on redundancies. However, employers claim they must also cut holidays and change existing working practices in order to offer any pay rise. Some companies have also threatened to move work to eastern Europe at short notice if they are hit by strikes.



# The best laid plans...

The results of December's elections in Russia have dealt a severe blow to the plans of Yeltsin, the so-called 'reformers' and their Western backers.

Four years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, two years after the defeat of the 1991 coup of the 'hardliners', and only two months after Yeltsin's bloody dismissal of Parliament - when the western imperialists and their co-thinkers in Russia believed they were on the 'fast track to capitalism', all their dreams have now turned to dust.

The West was euphoric about the collapse of the old Stalinist regimes throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. They hoped for new markets and new fields of investment. Everything seemed to be going their way. But their vision of a weak and divided Russia, in a sort of semi-colonial subservience to the West, has proven to be false. The crushing of Parliament last autumn gave Yeltsin the green light. The elections in December would only be a formality. His sidekick Gaidar already had the victory celebrations sorted out. But it was not to be so. The 'reformers' victory has turned into a wake.

## Resignations

"Alarm bells began ringing in Washington and other Western capitals (yesterday) over the increasingly clouded future of President Yeltsin's reform programme.." (Guardian 22.1.94). First Yegor Gaidar, chief architect of the programme, and then Boris Fyodorov, the 'reforming' finance minister were forced to resign. A senior Clinton aide put it bluntly, "We're disappointed. These two guys had credibility with the international community. We had worked extremely close with them." The resignations mean that there are no leading 'reformers' left in the Cabinet.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin has summed up the new situation with his

## Yeltsin's Reforms in Tatters After Election Defeat

statement, "*The mechanical transfer of western economic methods has caused more harm than good.*" He even went on to describe the end of "*market romanticism.*"

Rather than confirm the 'reformers' in their positions, the elections have thrown all their plans into total confusion. Right wing nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and his Liberal Democratic Party came out clearly as the biggest party with 23% of the vote. Widely ignored by the Western media, however, was the result for the Communist Party and its old ally the Agrarian Party who received a combined vote of over 20%. The results clearly show that wide layers of the Russian

workers are already drawing conclusions from their experience of the 'market.' The movement to the 'market' has caused the most appalling misery and poverty. Between 1985 and 1991/92 real household wealth in Russia fell 86%. Many pensioners now live on only half of the 'minimum income for physical survival.' The mushrooming numbers of people unemployed get benefit of 14,000 roubles per month (about \$12), this represents only around 1/3 of subsistence levels or 1/7 an average wage. The economic collapse has been even more profound than that in the West during the 1929-31 slump. Output in 1992 fell 18.2%, in 1993 it fell by 15%.

Yeltsin's support is crumbling



Inflation is currently running at 1200%. If the 'reforms' continue estimates show that about 40% of industry would be destroyed and between 25 and 40 million people thrown into unemployment.

US Vice President Al Gore, on a visit originally planned to greet the victory of the 'reformers', pointed out that the catastrophic position now facing Russia was directly a result of the rapid 'reform' programme and the advice from the IMF and world bank. His initial answer was to slow down the programme. However, the Western imperialists do not all share this view.

## Failed Coup

The Financial Times (editorial 7.1.94) is arguing for "More shock, more therapy." It states, "*It has been obvious since the failure of the coup in August 1991 that reform in Russia would enjoy but a short window of opportunity. If the opportunity was let slip, the collapsed Soviet Union was likely to turn into a simulacrum of the former Yugoslavia, but an order of magnitude bigger. Mr. Zhirinovskiy's electoral success demonstrates that this danger is not a theoretical one.*" And the solution of the FT: "*If voters are calling for a return to the past, there is no remedy to offer. If they are calling for a better future, fast reform is the only remedy... They want more food. They want an end to corruption. They want secure jobs. They want a currency they can trust. None of these things is achievable without reform.*" The West is clearly having difficulty coming to terms with the post-election situation and what its policy should be. But one thing is clear, the overwhelming majority of Russians have turned against the moves towards capitalism. Zhirinovskiy, as well as his virulent racism and chauvinism, has argued against the 'reforms' and against the implantation of western capitalism into Russia. He supports imperialism - but a Russian imperialism that would take up a strident anti-western



stance. The recent pro-Serbian vote of the new State Duma reflects this mood clearly. They do not want to continue the humiliating game of being Western puppets. Zhirinovsky has come out as an admirer of the Chinese 'model' of introducing capitalism; "Here we have democracy, but no economy," he stated, "there (in China) they have economy but no democracy." Zhirinovsky, of course, favours the latter. The Chinese Stalinists have allowed the rapid growth of capitalist enterprises - but under the strict control of themselves. The Russian bureaucrats who have moved over to capitalism did so with the intention that they would be the capitalists. But this has seemed more and more unlikely under the 'reform' programme advocated by the West and pursued by Yeltsin. With the elimination of 40% of the Russian economy, what role would there be for a wide section of the Bureaucrats? This is one reason for the programme of Zhirinovsky - it may well reflect the thinking of a big layer of Russian military officers too.

### State Intervention

They believe there cannot be a real development of capitalism in Russia without massive state intervention and direction. In China investment increased in 1993 by 70%, it has the fastest growth rate in the world and it is now no. 3 in world trade. Compare this with the catastrophe in Russia. This is also the lesson of the post war economic build up in Germany and Japan where the state played a central role. In China, however, inflation is developing and the economy overheating, big social problems are emerging - it is only a matter of time before the bureaucracy is forced to reverse the process and rein in the moves towards capitalism.

The vote for the CP and the Agrarians also shows the growing discontent with the 'reforms'. Although obviously with the support of a section of the bureaucracy, a wide section of its vote came from the working class. No longer directly connected to the state, but still with its base in the factories and workplaces, and with its connections with the former Stalinist trade unions which predominate there, the CP is

much more open to the pressures of the workers and can play a leading role in future developments. The elections, then, have left Yeltsin in a far weaker position than before. Harvard University economist Jeffrey Sachs stated (Financial Times 8.1.94), "It looks as if it's pretty far down the road towards the end for the reformers. The return of the old guard is not inevitable still, but it now seems the most likely outcome."

The 'reformers' have retreated but it is not yet clear what lies ahead. The FT (8.1.94) states that the 'reformers' now realise that "the tide is flowing strongly in favour of a return to state-controlled, interventionist policies aimed at supporting industries and preserving employment." They go on to outline a range of decisions taken by Yeltsin and his Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, which "point to their acceptance of the need for a centrist economic course in which industries - including military plants - will be heavily subsidised and a strong push made to form a tight economic union with former Soviet republics under Russia's leadership."

Stalinism collapsed because it could not develop the productive forces - but neither can capitalism. A big layer of the old bureaucracy went over to capitalism because they believed that it could succeed and that they would become the new capitalist class. But they are not interested in a catastrophe. A large section of the bureaucracy must now favour a return to a centralised plan. This explains the shift in the situation. Although the privatisation programme was pushed ahead in 1992/93 with between 700 and 800 medium and large enterprises a month being auctioned off, this did not amount to the restoration of capitalism. Recent events are highlighting this and show that the whole process could be reversed. The government was attempting to move in the direction of capitalism, but the situation is now beginning to unravel.

Yeltsin is weak and sick, both physically and politically. A new coup is inevitable. The bonapartists who take over could either recentralise the economy or attempt to move



The price of basic foods has continued to rise

further in the direction of capitalism. Both would be vicious dictatorships. A regime moving back to centralisation would probably start off by unleashing a wave of terror against the nascent capitalists, the black marketeers and gangsters. But they would not have the social base of the old Stalinists, permeating every aspect of society. The regime would not have the same apparatus of control over the working class. A bourgeois bonapartist regime would need to crush the Russian workers and their organisations.

### Shattered Illusions

One thing is clear, the only way capitalism can be fully introduced in Russia is over the crushing of the working class. The main feature of the past period has been the passivity of the working class. But this will not last indefinitely. All the conditions are now there for a social explosion. The poverty and unemployment, the economic debacle, the humiliation.

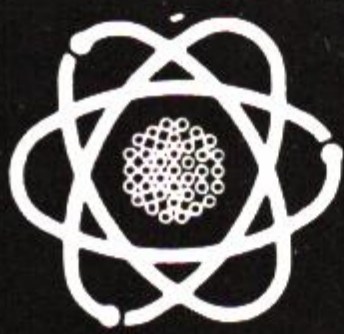
The Russian workers have already begun to draw the conclusions. The election showed that the illusions in capitalism have been shattered. We have the example of the miners who formerly backed Yeltsin and have now come out strongly against the 'reforms'. The capitalists are now trembling in their boots. The turn towards the former Stalinists in the recent elections in Lithuania and Poland, and now the events in Russia have upset all the plans

## Against the failures of Stalinism and capitalism the Russian workers must adopt the programme of workers democracy and a democratic plan of production

of imperialism. In this period there is even more need than ever for the ideas of genuine Marxism and socialism. Against the failures of Stalinism and capitalism the Russian workers must put forward the programme of workers democracy and a democratic plan of production. In the coming period big movements of the working class will be on the order of the day. A new October Revolution will arise, this time on a qualitatively higher level. These developments can transform not only the situation in Russia but throughout the whole world to a far greater extent than even 1917.

**Alastair Wilson**





## On Human Development

The great weight of material evidence on the origin of the human species comes from palaeontology - the collection of fossils and stone tools. The earliest stone tools are between 2.5 and three million years old. These hominid (human-like) artefacts include tools used to make other tools and they mark a clear distinction with the present day apes, who though they make and use tools of soft materials (twigs and leaves) never use them to manufacture other tools.

The hominid tools, often associated with particular sites where they were manufactured or used, were relatively simple to begin with, but over a period of a million years or so, increased in complexity and sophistication. The simple Oldowan stone culture, named after the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania where the implements were found, became transformed between 2.5 and 1.5 million years ago into the Acheulian, a more refined, stone culture. But of course stone tools are preserved, while others that may have been made of bone, wood, or hide could not be. It is generally assumed that such tools were made and used before progress was made on to stone materials which are much harder to shape and to adapt to a particular use.

### Early Tool Use

Even extremely simple tools would be the product of a long period of experimentation, experience, observation, reflection and recollection. The simplest tools like sharpened sticks to dig roots, or hide bags to carry food, would represent almost a revolution in human development - they would give any early hominid species a huge advantage for survival, yet none of these soft artefacts would be preserved. Long before the 2.5 million year old Oldowan stone culture, therefore is likely that early hominids were using tools, although of perishable materials.

This scenario fits in with recent fossil discoveries made in East Africa by the American paleoanthropologist Johanson, notably the female skeleton (nicknamed Lucy) which belongs to the species he describes as *Australopithecus Afarensis* (around 3.5 to 3.75 million years old), which demonstrated a number of remarkable facts:

1. Lucy and her cousins were fully bipedal, they walked upright. The configuration of the hip, thigh and knee bones pointed to a capacity for an upright gait no less efficient than that of modern humans.
2. The hand had a fully opposable thumb, was capable of a strong grip, and capable of good manipulation. It was a very human-like hand, capable of making and using tools, but not a completely human hand.



3. The cranial capacity, a measure of the brain-size of the species, was only marginally larger than that for comparable apes of the same body weight. The cranial capacity of a chimpanzee is 300 or 400 ccs. Specimens of *Australopithecus Afarensis* had cranial capacities of between 380 and 450 ccs (The average cranial capacity for homo sapiens is 1400 ccs).

These fossil remains therefore pointed to an apparently small brained but upright hominid with clear manipulative ability. These discoveries were complemented by those of another paleontologist, Mary Leakey, who discovered in Laetoli, in Northern Tanzania, two sets of remarkable footprints fossilised in ash. Examination of these footprints, between 3.5 and 3.75 million years old, shows unmistakably that they were made by a hominid - in Mary Leakey's words, "a fully-

**In the second of  
our two part  
analysis of human  
evolution we look  
at the role played  
by labour in  
humankind's  
development**

**by John  
Pickard**

upright, bipedal and free striding species." Both Johanson and Leakey have suggested that the finds at Hadar in Ethiopia and Laetoli in Tanzania are related, the former even suggesting that they represent remains of the same species. What these finds do show is that a highly developed manipulative skill, indicative of tool use, and a fully upright gait clearly preceded the full human brain development.

Stone tools have not been associated with these fossils, they are normally associated with a later, different species of fossil (although some would argue a later development of the same species) *Homo Habilis* with, among other things, a slightly larger cranial capacity and other more human characteristics. These finds would seem to confirm the dawning realisation among modern anthropologists, that tool use and upright walking anticipated the development of the human brain. Ten years before these discoveries, an American anthropologist Napier had written: "It is now becoming clear that this important cultural phase in evolution (the use and manufacture of tools) had its inception at a much earlier stage in the biological evolution of man, that it existed for a much longer period of time and that it was set in motion by a much less advanced hominid and a much less specialised hand than was previously believed."

There is no doubt that the 3.5 million year old Lucy would have had sufficient manipulative skill to have made and used implements, perhaps of materials like wood and skin - which were not preserved along with her own bones. Moreover, she had an upright gait as developed as that of modern humans, allowing her the full freedom to use her hands to make, use and carry implements or food. Indeed, there is no other explanation for the shape of Lucy's hands except that she was a regular and habitual user of tools. As Engels said: "It stands to reason that if erect gait among our hairy ancestors became first the rule and then, a necessity, other diverse functions must in the meantime have developed upon the hands."

Whereas with modern apes, tool use is casual and not passed on in any way from one generation to the next, in a species beginning to learn social organisation, including, communicative speech, expertise in tool use is cumulative from one generation to the next. Lucy's hand would suggest a dexterity qualitatively superior to modern apes, but without a brain very much bigger. Yet the continuous and regular manufacture of tools would tend to lead, as Engels explained, to an even greater development and refinement of human characteristics, especially the hand and brain. That, in later hominid species, appears to be exactly what happened. The hand, to use Engels'



expression becomes therefore both the organ of labour and also the product of labour.

"One sees the great gulf between the undeveloped hand of even the most manlike apes and the human hand that has been highly perfected by hundreds of thousands of years of labour...The hand is not only the organ of labour, it is also the product of labour. Labour, adaptation to ever new operations, the inheritance of muscles, ligaments and, over large periods of time, bones that had undergone special development and the ever renewed employment of this inherited finesse in new more and more complicated operations, have given the human hand the high degree of perfection required to conjure into being the pictures of Raphael, the statues of Thorwaldsen, and the music of Paganini."  
(Dialectics of Nature)

Lucy the large brained ape, was capable of the use and manufacture of tools, but by the performance of labour, she was also thereby capable of pushing primate development on to the road of the perfecting of the human hand and brain. Scientific disputes about the precise relationship of Lucy's species to the human lineage do not alter the fundamental fact of bipedalism and hand development preceding the large growth of the brain. As Richard Leakey, son of Mary, explained: "As the fossils from Africa illustrate, the hominids were ape-like in size. Presumably the hominids were living very differently from their ape relatives because they were also walking around on two legs. But whatever their lifestyle, it does not seem to have demanded a significantly expanded brain. Not until 2 million years ago is there firm evidence of Homo Habilis whose cranial capacity was close to 800 ccs.

This creature had a brain nearly twice as big as Lucy, but without being any bigger in stature. The next step in hominid development, Homo Erectus showed an even greater brain development, reaching 1000 ccs."

Marx and Engels' emphasis on the social character of human development is now repeated almost universally by modern palaeo-anthropologists. Concrete evidence of

social behaviour does not exist and could never be preserved, but there are enough indications pointing in that direction. Stone tools, for example, are not found at random, but often in particular sites whose functions seem to vary. One two million year old site at Koobi-Fora, in Kenya, is associated with hippopotamus bones and it is clear from the stones and flakes found there that tools must have been made and used on the spot. But the materials used to make the tools (hammer stones and smaller stones) did not originate in that area but must have been carried there from some 3 or 4 kilometres distance. Apart from this "butchering" site, others have been discovered with apparently different special functions - as living places, as sites used purely for the preparation of tools to be used elsewhere. In addition to these preserved tools, as has been said, it is likely that there were, over an extended earlier period, tools of materials that were not preserved.

### Co-operative Organisation

Even without any further evidence, the manufacture and use of tools would suggest already some form of co-operative organisation. The collection of stones, their selection, preparation, transport, use and retention are all operations that would be inconceivable without social labour. No modern ape collects and transports food to be eaten elsewhere: and although hunting occasionally, no ape will ever persevere in the hunt for a long period of time.

The early hominids, in collecting food, carrying it and storing it had already taken a qualitative evolutionary leap. But all these operations suggest there would be sharing, co-operation and a division of labour, and therefore a more or less well-established pattern of social relationships and behaviour. How else would it be possible to transmit the large accumulation of experience and practice from one generation to the next, except through some form of social organisation? Co-operative behaviour is even suggested by the anatomical development of hominids. Lucy herself had not apparently developed a hip sufficiently well adapted to give birth to large brained infants. As the size

of the brain expanded from one species to the next, however, problems would have arisen with birth because of the size of the infant's brain. But evolutionary development found a way around this problem by delaying certain aspects of growth until after birth. At birth the brain of a rhesus monkey is 65% of its final size, a chimpanzee's is 40% and that of a human child only 23%. Consequently, compared with the nearest ape relatives, human children have

to have an extremely long and protracted childhood, something that would be inconceivable without some social mechanism to provide the necessary care and attention. Moreover, such a social organisation and a prolonged childhood would be the only way to give the child time to absorb the tradition of labour to which it would be heir.

In evolution in general the development of a particular physical attribute (colour, size, shape etc.) can give a selective advantage to a particular species or strain of organism; therefore that attribute is likely to be passed on from one generation to the next. But in the development of humankind, tool use and social behaviour can themselves become adaptive, carried from one generation to the next by the teaching of these cultural skills to the young.

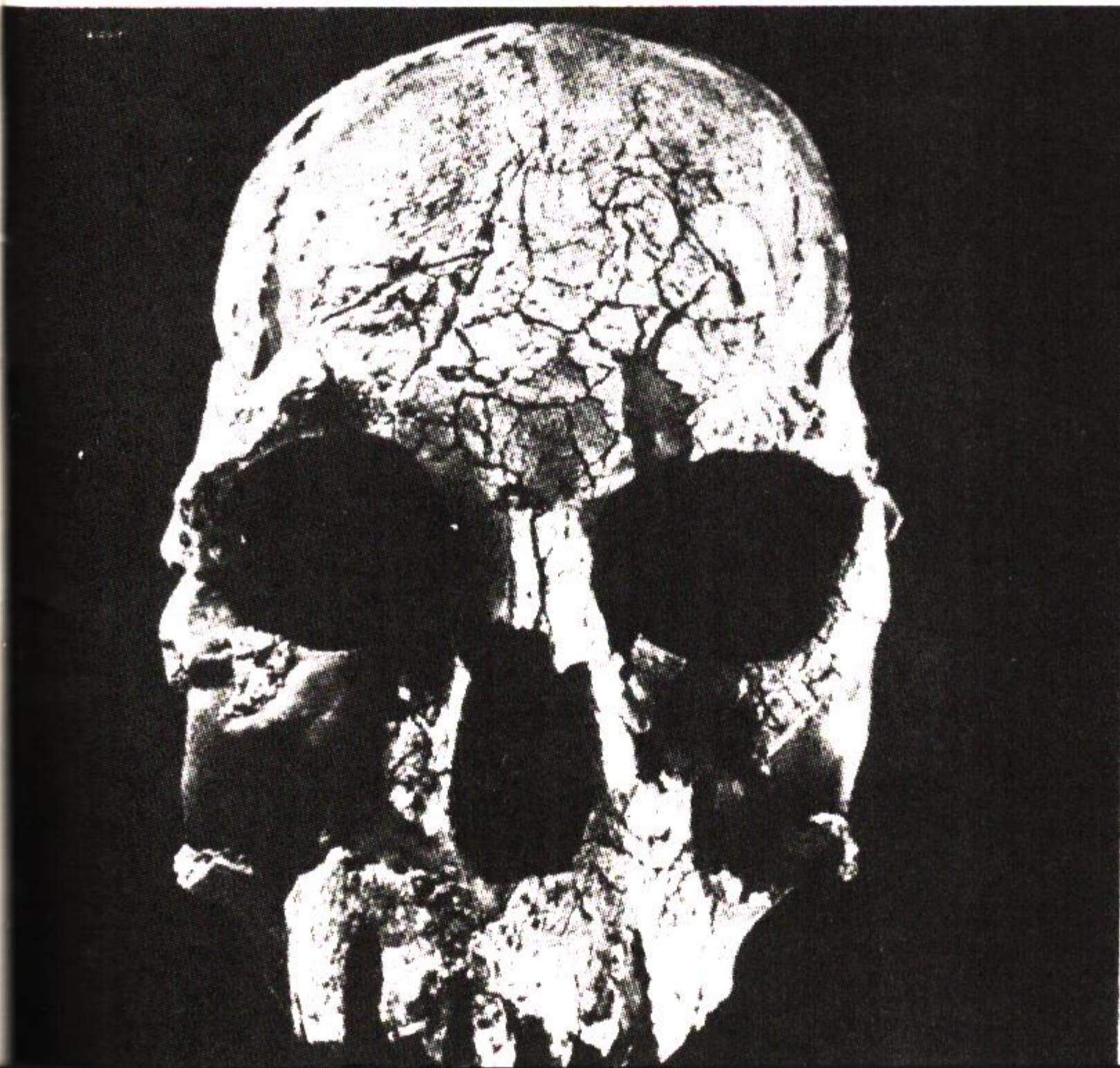
The constant social use of implements - as Engels would have said, the labour - becomes more and more a necessary part of the hominid lifestyle, without which it would perish. But having the faculty of labour imparts to the hominid an enormous selective advantage over any other species that lacks it altogether, or over one that may possess the same faculty in a crude and rudimentary form. Biological evolution - change through genes - is not eliminated, but a powerful impetus is given to cultural evolution - the accumulation, generation by generation, of a vast store of skill, knowledge, expertise and language.

### Environmental Conditions

There are a variety of modern theories dealing with the specific environmental conditions of development of the human species. The most generally held view is that humankind began to develop in an environment of semi-open savannah land at a time, four or five million years ago, when there was a shrinking of the large forests, particularly in what is now East Africa. Such an environmental pressure - moving out from a forest to a more open environment - could also correspond to the development of an upright posture described by Engels as "the decisive step in the transition from ape to man."

Even within this general framework, however, there are differences of emphasis for example on the relative importance of gathering vegetable foods compared to hunting for meat. Studies of modern hunter-gatherer communities would indicate that for the amount of time per person spent on each activity, gathering food is nearly 70% more productive of calories than hunting. In addition, whilst modern apes like baboons and chimpanzees do hunt from time to time, their meat consumption represents a tiny proportion of their diet.

The evidence of hominid development, especially the use of stone tools with special butchering sites, shows that at some stage there must have been a big increase in the incidence of hunting as compared to apes, moving perhaps from small to larger prey, something also noted by Engels, who also pointed out that meat had a higher nutritional value than vegetable matter. But nevertheless, vegetables would probably





have remained the main part of the diet and the implements most likely associated with their production and collection - digging sticks or carrying sacks - would have perished. But the characteristic common to all modern theories of human evolution is that they all recognise the essential role of social organisation and behaviour. Early hominids were adept at hunting, gathering, collection, transportation, tool manufacture and use which suggest sharing, co-operation and a division of labour. None of these are even conceivable without well developed social rules and practices.

Another important element in the evolution of man, intertwined with social labour and tool use, is the development of speech, of language.

"The development of labour necessarily helped to bring the members of society closer together by increasing cases of mutual support and joint activity and by making clear the advantage of this joint activity to each individual. In short, men in the making arrived at the point where they had something to say to each other. Necessity created the organ... this explanation of the origin of language from

## Human language is necessarily associated with the development of the human cognitive processes and both are necessarily associated with labour

and in the process of labour is the only correct one," stated Engels.

It would follow then that man, being the only animal able to perform labour would be the only animal capable of language. This is in fact the case. Repeated attempts have been made, especially by American anthropologists, to teach sign language to chimpanzees. But after years of learning, there is no evidence that chimpanzees have achieved anything more than complex rote learning, involving variations of signs, each of which in its own right is meaningless to the animal. Learning in chimpanzees is qualitatively different to learning in human infants. Chimpanzees simply learn to mimic longer strings of sign words, whereas a human child learns a deeper and more complex use of words and concepts as it grows older.

Key elements of human language are completely absent in apes, Man's nearest relative in the animal kingdom. With apes, communication is entirely emotional and always concerns the immediate environment. Human language is necessarily associated with the development of the human cognitive

processes and both are necessarily associated with labour.

None of the processes mentioned earlier - tool making and social labour - would have been possible without a parallel development of the thought processes. Man must have developed the faculty of mental "displacement", that is the ability to have a mental picture of a situation removed in time and place from the immediate surroundings. The manufacture of tools would be impossible without a preconceived idea of what the implement would look like, what its function would be and where it would be used, and these faculties are way beyond even the most intelligent ape.

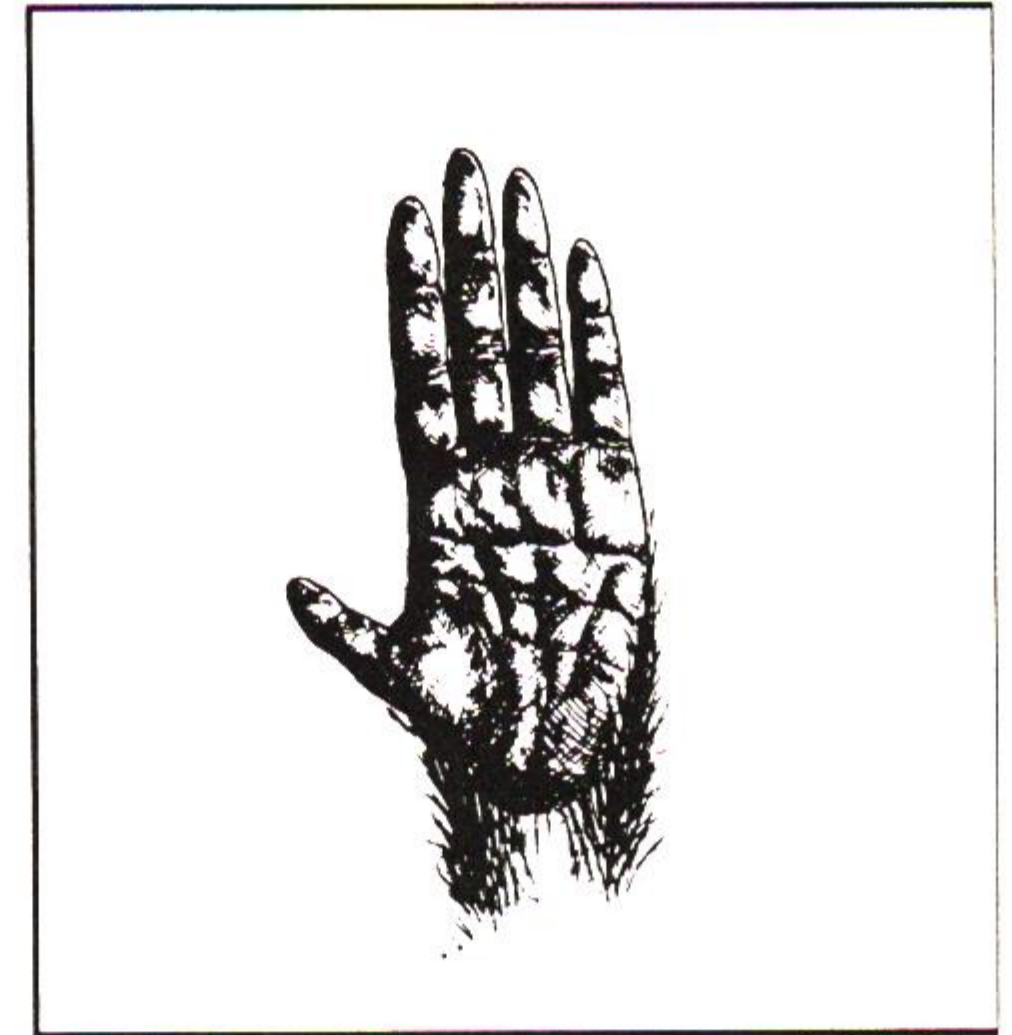
Just as tools are a product of labour, so also human mental processes and language develop from labour, from an active interaction with nature. Mental reflection is not a passive but an active process and language and speech becomes integral to it. Words and language help humankind make the transition from elementary sense perception to generalised abstract thinking. Modern anthropologists have no concrete evidence, like fossil evidence, upon which to base their theories of language development, but most link the origin of language with tool use and the social labour of the early hominids. Thus the practical labour is interwoven with speech, the development of tools with cognitive abilities and language. As Marx said: "Language is practical consciousness."

The anthropologist Dobzhansky explained: "The capacity to form and operate with abstract ideas is correlated in evolution if not in physiology, with the capacity to use human language. Here too the product grows with the instrument and vice versa. And these capacities in turn are correlated with tool making."

Certain biological conditions must have been present for early hominids to begin to develop and interweave the processes of speech, tool making and social labour. But Engels makes it clear that in his view the fully human brain was a product of labour, not its originator. "First labour, after it and then with it, speech - these were the two most essential stimuli under the influence of which the brain of the ape gradually changed to that of a man."



Hominid hand



Chimpanzee hand

This view is fully endorsed by the modern fossil evidence, not only by the growth of brain capacity, but also by examination of the cranial casts to show which parts of the brain developed from the earlier man-apes. Referring to the very earliest hominid brains, the American anthropologist Washburn makes it clear, from the immediate point of view, this brain makes culture (i.e. labour - JP) possible. But from the long term evolutionary point of view, it is culture which creates the human brain."

With a co-worker, Lancaster, Washburn explains, "it appears that the form of the human hand, the large area of the brain directly related to the hand, the much larger areas of the cortex related to skillful motor activity, and a greatly expanded cerebellum, also related to skillful activity, all evolved long after initial tool use and in response to new selection pressures arising from the success of implements of many kinds."

All the modern evidence, therefore, more than there is scope to mention here, supports the basic theme of Engels' essay and confirms the materialist explanation for the origin of mankind. Engels perceived more than one hundred years ago, the dialectical relationship between language, intelligence, brain size, manual dexterity and their common denominator - labour.

It was the capacity to form labour in the pursuit of the basic necessities of life that catapulted some ape-like species onto the road of becoming a human-like species. Labour became the basis of human development.

Engels succeeded in showing the dialectical relationship between biological and cultural development. Once it became a part of mankind's necessary lifestyle, labour perfected the human hand and brain. But labour, or social production, also achieved an impetus of its own - an extension of, but a qualitative development from, biological evolution.

Thus, social phenomena or the development of labour cannot be crudely explained by genetic or biological factors - they can only be described in terms of their own separate laws. But they nevertheless have their foundation in the last analysis on material



processes. In a sense, the capacity to labour became a means of transcending the blind process of biological change. As Engels said: "...the more human beings became removed from animals in the narrower sense of the word, the more they make their history themselves, consciously, the less becomes the influence of unforeseen effects and uncontrolled forces... The animal merely uses its environment and brings about changes in it simply by its presence. Man, by his changes makes it to serve his ends, masters it. This is the final essential distinction between man and other animals, and once again it is labour that brings about this distinction." The enormous achievements of science and technique have all been made in what seems to be the twinkling of an eye compared to the millions of years of primate evolution - all the 2.5 to 3 million years during which culture, or labour was being created and was creating mankind. Yet none of the enormous cultural achievements of the last 10,000 years have been due in any significant way to biological change, they have all been achieved by labour.

"Man alone has succeeded in impressing his stamp upon nature, not only by shifting plant and animal species from one place to another, but also by so altering the aspect and climate of his dwelling place, and even the plants and animals themselves, that the consequences of his activity can disappear only with the general extinction of the terrestrial globe. And he has accomplished this, primarily and essentially by means of the hand," stated Engels.

Marx and Engels were not passive commentators on human development. They also understood that real human development would only succeed and flourish when society itself was changed appropriately. The rise of social classes, they recognised, was a necessary stage in social development, corresponding to changes in the mode of production, of labour. But a further stage of production could only be achieved by the abolition of classes and the social organisation of labour on a new and higher level, in other words by socialism. "Only conscious organisation of social production, in which production carried on in a planned way, can lift mankind in the specifically biological aspect."

John Pickard's article was first published in 1984. Reprinted with the author's permission.

# Under the shadow of fascism

**Sixty years ago this month saw the crushing of the Austrian working class under the jackboot of fascism.**

The victory of Hitler a year earlier and the humiliating defeat of the German workers, gave an impetus to fascist movements throughout Europe. In France, this culminated in an armed fascist revolt in Paris on 6th February, which forced the French workers to move onto the offensive. In Austria, the Christian Social Chancellor Dollfuss attempted to ape the fascists. He gathered greater dictatorial powers into his hands. Using the pretext of a parliamentary stalemate, Dollfuss ignored parliament and ruled through emergency decrees. He together with Prince Starhemberg entered into secret negotiations with Hitler. Dollfuss then made a pact with Mussolini, which propelled him on the road to a fascist dictatorship in Austria.

Throughout this period, the Social Democratic leaders, who formed the biggest party in parliament, refused to lead a serious struggle against the Dollfuss regime.

On the contrary, they worked and hoped for an anti-fascist block with Dollfuss himself. They watched as Dollfuss whittled away the vestiges of parliamentary democracy and attacked democratic rights.

Typically, decrees that were issued against Nazi terrorists were used against the workers' movement. The workers, who were prepared to fight, patiently waited for their leaders to issue the call. But these leaders were clutching at the straw of a last minute deal with Dollfuss. The workers were becoming increasingly despondent, and began to lose faith in their party. The initiative was handed to Dollfuss, who seized it with both hands. The Social Democratic leaders refused to face up to the realities of the situation until it was too late. For years the fascist wing of Dollfuss's party drilled and prepared for civil war.

On 30th January, the fascist militias occupied the provincial capital, Innsbruck, demanding the dissolution of the SPD. This was repeated in Linz. Then all the other provinces with the exception of Vienna. As the police in Linz moved against the Socialist workers, shooting broke out. Very soon the electrical workers struck in Vienna, which was supposed to be the signal for a general strike. Civil war broke out in the capital.

The fighting lasted four days. Unfortunately, due to lack of preparation and the past dithering of the workers' leaders, the general strike failed to materialise. Those who took up arms were mainly members of the Republican Defence Corps. The workers had been discouraged and demoralised. After the fighting had ended, workers were rounded up and hanged while the Austrian labour movement was driven underground.

Dollfuss had established a fascist regime over the bones of the Austrian workers, while the Social Democratic leaders escaped into exile. Soon afterwards Hitler invaded Austria without encountering any resistance.

As Leon Trotsky explained at the time: "For years, the Austrian Social Democracy threatened to answer by force, when their democratic rights were impinged upon. It turned revolutionary action into a legalistic-literary threat that it did not take seriously itself. Only a leadership that recognises in advance that the revolution is unavoidable, that makes this the fundamental principle guiding its actions, and draws all the practical conclusions flowing from this can measure up to the situation at the critical hour. Thus despite the heroic actions of the Austrian proletariat and to a certain extent because of those actions - bankruptcy of the Second International in Austria is no less plain and certain than was the case in Germany." (Writings 1934-40, p460).

Stan Rogers

# Complexities of Evolution

Dear Comrades,  
I wish to comment on the article in the December issue on the evolution of life. Generally this was an excellent article but with a few minor errors in scientific fact and emphasis.

The outline of the origin of life by the action of lightning and UV light on atmospheric gasses was very popular in the 1960's but unfortunately it has been shown by studying polar ice-cores that the early earth atmosphere contained more CO2 than was previously thought and was therefore unreactive. The exact origin of life is the subject of much debate, outlined in a popular form in a recent copy of Time magazine.

What I believe to be a

fundamental element in the evolution of complexity in organisms was largely overlooked. Many new qualitative forms do not originate from accumulated quantitative variations but from the rare yet essential mutation in the DNA code. For example, eyes need the random mutation of a photoreceptive cell (one that can discern between light and dark) before they can evolve into the complex organs of sight. Favourable mutation is the only source of new information in natural selection and is invariably followed by a leap in complexity.

Finally the statement that evolution gives rises to new forms through "... a combined and uneven development

involving progress and regression" needs qualification. In natural selection there is no true regression, any trait less efficient than the norm will be selected against. One mechanism for effective regression is if there is a significant change in the environment, the descendants of the original organisms will evolve adaptations to the new environment. Then if over a relatively short time period the environment reverts to a form similar to its previous state the organisms now present in this new environment will be less efficient than their ancestors would have been, had they been able to jump the generations.

Alex Grant



The defeat of the 1926 General Strike marked a decisive watershed in the development of British trade unionism. It served to entrench the position of the trade union bureaucracy, and helped to change the course not only of the unions, but the whole philosophy of 'industrial relations'. The defeat of militant trade unionism and the victory of Mondism (ie. class collaboration), put an indelible stamp on the development of the labour movement in the 1930s. According to the historian Francis Williams the 1926 defeat "marked the climax in the struggle of philosophies". In an earlier biography of Ernest Bevin, published in 1952, Williams suggested that for Bevin and the other trade union leaders, the General Strike was "the dividing line between the belief in force as the ultimate authority in industrial relations... and the slow acceptance of a new system of relationship in which the trade unions could at last take their rightful constitutional place in modern society." In place of "violence" read "militant action".

### Conciliation

For the trade union leadership, the events of 1926 confirmed their outlook and role as conciliators in the class struggle. The acceptance of class collaboration or "new realism" was an inevitable consequence. In this period, the evolution of the trade unions under conditions of capitalist crisis was summed up by Leon Trotsky. "The trade unions were formed during the period of the growth and rise of capitalism," stated Trotsky in September 1933. "They had as their task the raising of the material and cultural level of the proletariat and the extension of its political rights. This work, which in Britain lasted over a century, gave the trade unions tremendous authority among the workers. The decay of British capitalism, under the conditions of decline of the world capitalist system, undermined the basis for the reformist work of the trade unions. Capitalism can continue to maintain itself only by lowering the standard of living of the working class. Under these conditions trade unions can either transform themselves into revolutionary organisations or become lieutenants of capital in



## Lieutenants of Capital?

the intensified exploitation of the workers. The trade union bureaucracy, which has satisfactorily solved its own social problem, took the second path." (Writings on Britain, vol.3, p.75).

Following the defeat of the General Strike, industrial struggle fell to a low ebb. Although the strikes which took place were often very bitter, their numbers fell dramatically. While it is true that strike statistics do not tell the whole picture, they do give a rough picture of the industrial climate. From the end of the First World War to the General Strike more than 40 million working days were lost on average every year as a result of strikes and lock-outs. In 1926, the figure was 162,233,000. This represented a prolonged upswing in the class struggle, culminating in a bitter rear-guard battle. But in the seven years following the General Strike the number of strikes fell drastically to on average four million a year - one tenth of what it was previously. In the period to the Second World War the strike figures fell even further to less than two million a year. Again, most of these strikes and lock-outs were settled relatively

quickly.

According to Dr. N. Barou in his 'British Trade Unions', the average duration was only ten days. This reflected overwhelmingly the brake of the trade union leadership, who were extremely reluctant to sanction strikes after 1926. For them, class collaboration was on the order of the day. Added to this, industrial militancy was further dampened by the economic slump which began in late 1929, putting three million on the dole by January 1933 - close to a quarter of all insured workers. The workers were largely stunned by the collapse of production and the mass unemployment that followed. This served to undermine the confidence and combativity of organised labour of early 1920's. Mass unemployment also served to push down trade union membership to 3,300,000 by 1934 - little more than half of what it had been in 1920-21. The lack of fight from the trade union leaders simply reinforced this position. Although trade union membership recovered slowly from this trough, the number of strikes remained very low. With the revival of the economy in 1935-37, instead of a revival

of strikes and workplace organisation, strike figures actually fell to around 1,500,000 days lost. The role of the leadership proved decisive in keeping the movement 'in order'. Whereas strikes over recognition had accounted for more than 30% prior to late 1923, it was less than 3% in the seven years immediately following the General Strike.

### US Strike Wave

This was in complete contrast to the situation that developed in the United States. By 1933, America experienced its biggest strike wave ever, which mainly centred around unorganised industries, especially the car plants. Between 1933 and 1938 hundreds had been killed, thousands wounded, and tens of thousands arrested or victimised on the picket lines. Three big strikes in 1934 were to alter the course of American labour history: the Toledo Electric Auto Lite, Minneapolis truck drivers, and the San Francisco General Strikes.

The craft union leaders of the American Federation of Labour (A.F.L.) repeatedly worked to undermine these movements. By late 1935, militants from the A.F.L. established a new caucus, known as the Congress of Industrial Organisations (C.I.O.), to fight for industrial unionism, under the leadership of John L. Lewis.

The craft leadership of the A.F.L., which consistently opposed an militant action, eventually expelled the C.I.O. from its ranks. Despite this, the C.I.O. grew enormously in the battles that opened up, which coincided with the economic upturn from June 1935. In its first 22 months of its existence, it grew in strength to embrace 3,700,000 workers.

The strike wave reached new heights in the form of sit-in strikes. Between September 1936 and June 1937, in the order of 484,711 sit-in strikes took place. Out of the 1,000 reported in the press only 25 sit-in strikes were broken by the police. This demonstrates the colossal sweep of the industrial movement in the United States. By comparison, the situation in Britain remained at a very low ebb.

One of the immediate consequences of the defeat of the General Strike was a turn of the working class towards the



# The Great British Tradition

By Beatrice Windsor



## Lollards to Henry V!

The defeat of the Peasants Revolt in 1381 and the death of John Wycliffe in 1384 did not end of the struggle for emancipation in the Middle Ages.

The tribune of freedom now passed to a new movement - the Lollards. They continued the ideological struggle against the oppressive rule of the Church and Lords of the Manor. The only 'theory' available in Medieval times was the Bible - much of the New Testament contradicted the ideology of 'divine authority' perpetuated by the Church to justify the rule of the wealthy. Hence the Bible was only available to the select few of the Priesthood, and only they - as it was written in Latin - could 'interpret' it for the masses.

The Lollards began the herculean task of translating the Bible into English, and then circulating the hand written copies from hovel to hovel.

'Lollard' is a medieval term for mumbling, which the movement got from the secretive way in which it had to operate given the repression against such heresy. You can imagine these desperadoes at the back of the church on a Sunday, muttering their critiques of the propaganda from the pulpit. A bit like being on a Labour Party General Management Committee at the height of the witch-hunt in the 1980s. Except of course that if caught the Lollards got more than a one-way chat with the National Constitutional Committee.

The Lollards were most active in the Midlands. One of its champions was William Swinderby, otherwise known as **William the Hermit** - God knows why because far from being a recluse he spent his time holding the Medieval equivalent of 'paper sales' in villages on market day.

Like Wycliffe and John Ball before them, the Lollards argued that 'sin' derived from the expropriation of wealth and land by the rich and the church, and man could only achieve a 'state of grace' if all was held in common. Swinderby for example was arrested after such heretic ideas led him to campaign against paying tithes to those Priests and Lords he deemed immoral (i.e all of them).

The ruling class began to sit up and take notice of the Lollards as their social demands spread, to the extent that a Lollard Manifesto was found nailed to the door of Westminster Hall, when a 'Parliament' met in 1395.

The repression of the Lollards began in earnest when Henry V took the throne in 1413. Shakespeare immortalised Henry V for his victory at Agincourt. But far from being some dewy eyed, Kenneth Branagh-type, Henry spent most of his time persecuting the Lollards and defending the 'divine authority' of the feudal system.

The fightback by the Lollards however came from Henry V's very own ranks. One of his trusted knights, **Sir John Oldcastle** went over to the peasants and became their champion. Denounced as a heretic, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London but much to the King's rage, escaped courtesy of the Lollards' London branch.

He immediately organised an uprising, mobilising Lollards all over the country who began to move on London. The bulk of their ranks came from the growing class of artisans, the most well organised and radical section being the weavers.

This force occupied the area of London now known as Soho. However, Henry V was no push over - he had learnt the lessons of the Peasants Revolt of 1381, being a great scholar of the reign of Richard II almost to the point of obsession. He had built a formidable military machine, complete with a secret network of informers.

He soon rounded up the London Lollards and barred the gates to the rebels at Soho. Isolated, Oldcastle's force was quickly defeated and dispersed. Oldcastle was outlawed, but - indicating the widespread support for the Lollards - managed to survive on the run for three years until he was tracked down and executed.

## The Upper Crust



### Capitalist Clink

The attempt to restore capitalism in Latvia has revived some "good old" traditions. The authorities are planning to open a debtors' prison, last used before the Second World War. The jail is designed for tax dodgers and businessmen who deal in risky 'ventures'. Apparently officials in Riga were busy assuring its citizens that they would not be put behind bars if they failed to pay heating bills. They've said nothing about other bills yet. Welcome to capitalism!

### Hard Times or Oliver Twist?

Major's Back to Basics has meant Back to Victorian Times for millions for children. According to research from the National Children's Home charity 1.5 million families in Britain can't even provide the diet of the Poor Law workhouses. Families on Income Support can afford just 4.15 for a child under 11's weekly diet, which is 30% below 118 years ago! Tom White, the charity's chief executive, said: "It is appalling, as we approach the year 2000, that even an 1876 workhouse diet is too expensive for the families of one in four of our children."

A DSS spokesperson said that "income support allowances were considered adequate". It is like Charles Dickens: "Mr. Limbkins, I beg your pardon, sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more."

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every countenance.

'For more!' said Mr. Limbkins. 'Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted by the dietary?'

'He did, sir,' replied Bumble.

'That boy will be hung,' said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. 'I know that boy will be hung.'

At the same time as the kids of the poor endure the workings of the New Poor Law, the rich have got richer. In the four years since Lawson cut the top rates of income tax, 13.8 billion has gone into the pockets of the wealthy.

**Toodle pip, Lord Crusty**



# SOCIALIST

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## We Need a Single Union

The amalgamation of the NCU and UCW is more relevant now than at any time in the history of the two unions.

Management in British Telecom, the Post Office and Girobank are moving very quickly in the direction of marginalising the unions. Total Quality Management techniques, use of contractors and further advances in technology are continuing to threaten jobs and working conditions.

It has been the policy of both unions for many years to bring the two unions together. Whilst

management moves ahead the unions are in danger of standing still. The new merged union would have the strength to say to the employers, this far and no further. Our members demand a share in the success of the industry and no further cuts in jobs. But the amalgamation proposals are not

enough to ensure an integrated union spanning the whole communications industry. We must very quickly move towards regional and local co-ordinating machinery and branch amalgamations to consolidate the merger. The union rules must assist this process and not put obstacles in the path of progress.

Both unions have good democratic traditions which will be carried into the new union, but time is not on our side - we must endorse the merger and look forward to the Rules Revision Conference to give us the single fighting union that we so urgently need.

**Roy Wenborne**  
Assistant Secretary  
London Postal Engineering Branch NCU  
(personal capacity)

**On February 12 and 13 both unions in the communications industry are holding conferences to discuss a merger.**

The Union of Communications Workers (UCW) which represents most postal staff and some telecom staff will be meeting in Bournemouth as will the National Communications Union (NCU) which represents most British Telecom staff and some of those who work for the Post Office.

There is no doubt that the communications industry needs one union. It is long overdue and, indeed, it would have been much better if the amalgamation had taken place in 1920 when the Union of Post Office Workers (now the UCW) was formed. One union fighting the Post Office and government in 1971, for example would have made victory so much easier.

No amalgamation of two unions with their own traditions and even their

own personalities is straightforward.

Compromises have had to be made on all sides and while in each union activists will be trying to get the most democratic merger structure possible it is important that nothing jeopardises the merger taking place. There is some unhappiness that what is being called "constitutional safeguards" seem to give too much power to some small groups who have traditionally had their own structure. However, these problems will pale into insignificance as time goes by and people adjust to, working in a new union.

**Not creating a single communications union will do nothing to remove old, outdated and generally petty divisions.** To this end it is important that the "Instrument of Amalgamation", the legal document which creates the new union, is left fairly much intact. The transitional rules can and should be subject to improvement however. Following the two conferences the two

union executives need to try and reach agreement on the basis of whatever amendments or propositions are passed, bringing a final set of rules for endorsement at the Unions' annual conferences in May and June.



This is a period in which members of both unions must not lose sight of the goal - one strong and effective communications union.

**Phil Waker, UCW,**  
London 7 Branch  
(personal capacity)

## Labour/TUC: Force the Tories Out!