

socialist appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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defend Clause IV approaches its
climax

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leader, Arif Shah, brutally assassinated.
Solidarity campaign launched.

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Lal Khan writes on the resurgence
of religious fundamentalism in the
ex-colonial world.

No "Big Bang!":
Alan Woods on why it never
happened!

Issue 29 March 1995 price:one pound

Solidarity, not Charity

The acts of repression against labour and trade union activists in Mexico represent a brutal response by the Zedillo government to the country's growing crisis.

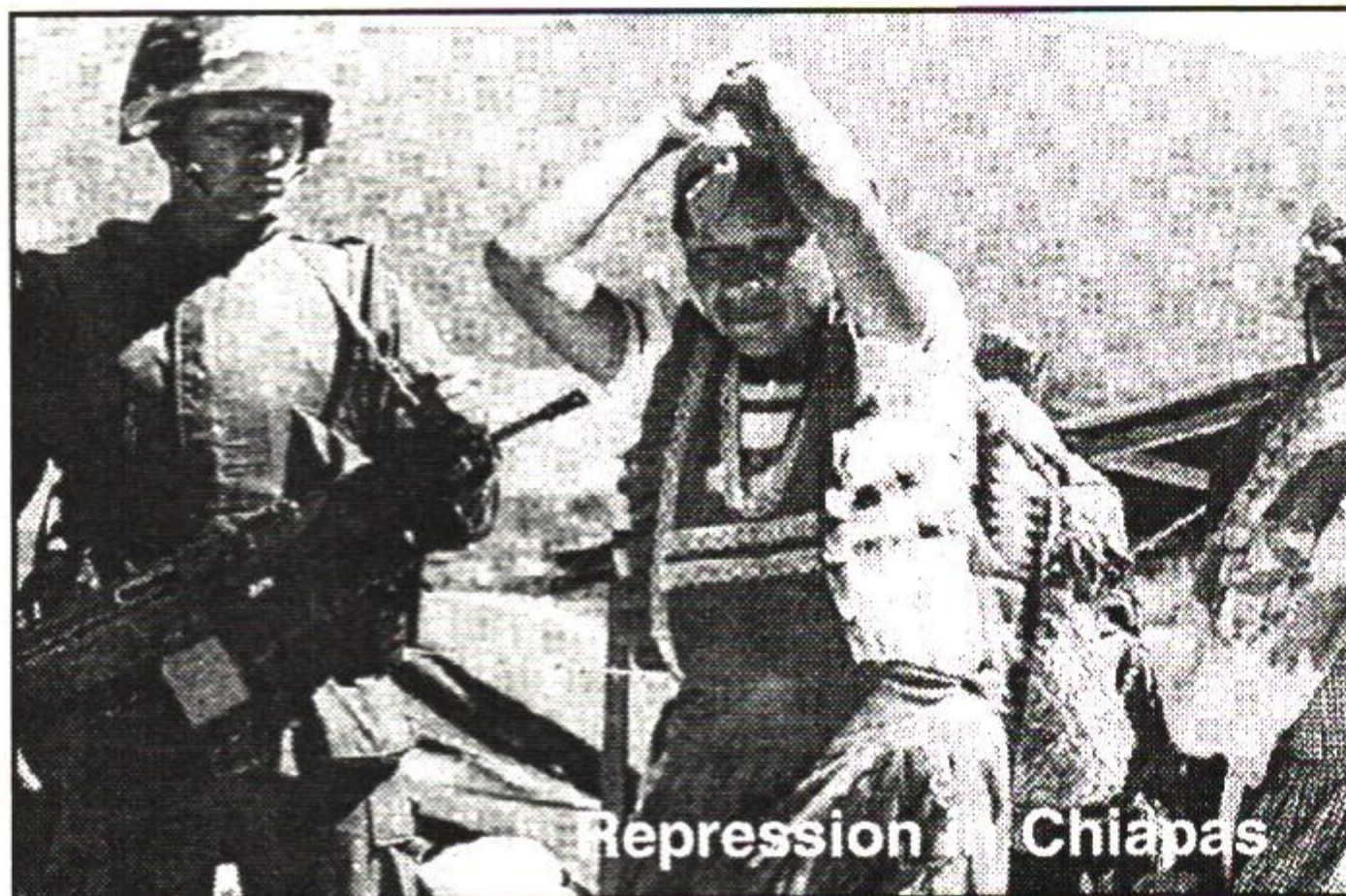
Using the pretext of uncovering an arsenal of weapons in Mexico City, Zedillo has sent in the army to occupy the southern state of Chiapas. He has ordered the arrest of all the Zapatistas leaders, charged with fermenting a guerrilla war. This has been widened to a general clamp down throughout Mexico, with the arrest of left PRD activists, including the leader of the teachers' union (CNTE) in the state of Puebla.

This follows a series of mass demonstrations against the regime, the biggest so far of 200,000 was held on Saturday 11th February. *"The image of Mexico as a progressive country fast moving into the developed world, carefully cultivated by former President Carlos Salinas and his cabinet, is shattered"*, stated the *Financial Times*. Within six weeks of the rigged Presidential elections, Mexico was hurled into a deep financial crisis which triggered a 40% devaluation of the currency. This sent shock waves through Latin America and the world's financial markets. It is reminiscent of Mexico's announcement in 1982 that it could not pay its debts to foreign banks.

The year-long peasant uprising in Chiapas was a symptom of the developing crisis. It is clear that the negotiations between the Zapatistas

and the government was an attempt to buy time. The social contradictions could not be suppressed indefinitely. With the backing of US imperialism, Zedillo now believe the time has come to crush the rebellion. However, far from halting the uprising, the situation could lead to a protracted guerrilla war threatening the whole social fabric of Mexico. The repression in Chiapas has resulted in mass protests not only in Mexico, but spontaneous demonstrations and occupa-

share of sacrifice since 1982", comments the *Financial Times*. To circumvent opposition, Zedillo has ordered a clamp down. The Clinton administration have pumped in \$50 billion in loans to prop up the discredited regime. But that will not remove the weaknesses of the economy or the political crisis that has developed. According to Peter West, economist at the West Merchant Bank in London: *"Mexico is likely to undergo a severe recession in 1995..."*



Repression in Chiapas

tions of embassies in Spain and the United States. In Mexico City defence committees have been established, with a planned student general strike on 22nd February. Zedillo hoped to pressurise the trade union leaders into a pact over wages. This will now break down with the effects of the devaluation feeding through to prices. That is what terrifies the government. *"The fall in real wages that is necessary for the devaluation to work will add to pressure on a population, many of whom feel they have borne more than a fair*

(which) will also have unpredictable financial, political and social consequences". A period of upheaval has opened in Mexico. It will be a colossal challenge to the leftwing of Cardenas' PRD, which has the mass support of the working class and poor peasants. The repression against the trade unions is a fore-taste of what the ruling class has in mind.

At this time of struggle, it is the international responsibility of the British Labour movement to come to the aid of the Mexican working class. As a minimum the Mexican

embassy must be inundated with protests against the repression, and messages of solidarity should be sent to those under attack in Mexico. This repression is not confined to Mexico, but has reared its head in a number of countries. Bush's New World Order has meant some thing totally different for working people. In Pakistan, the assassination of the President of the Punjab Labour Federation, Arif Shah, has high-lighted the harsh conditions of union organisation in the semi-colonial world. Mass demonstrations were held throughout Pakistan in February in protest at the assassination. Within a few days of Arif's murder, the general secretary of the All Pakistan Labour Unions Federation, Brother Hashmi, was shot and died on the way to hospital. As Pakistani newspaper, *The News*, stated: *"Sources smell out some industrialists behind the murder. However, no arrest has yet been made"* (20th January). In Bangladesh, police recently fired tear gas to disperse about 1,500 striking jute and textile workers, injuring 50, who blockaded railroads and highways. One of those shot later died. 600,000 textile workers are on strike after walking out over wages. This repression has led the Punjab Labour Federation and other trade unions to establish the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign. Given the past criminal role of British imperialism in the Indian subcontinent, the British Labour movement has a special responsibility to give its full backing, morally and financially, to this campaign. As the appeal from Shahida Jabeen, national secretary of the Pakistan People's Party women's organisation and secretary of the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, said: ***"We believe that there is a particular bond between the workers' movement in Britain and Pakistan, given the terrible role that British imperialism played in the Indian subcontinent. We do not appeal for charity. We appeal for solidarity."***

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Published by
Socialist Appeal,
PO Box 2626,
London, N1 6DU

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Young Labour

The first ever Young Labour conference was held in Brighton over the weekend of 4/5th of February.

Obviously this was an important event for the right wing party leadership. They wanted to show that they are able to create a "sanitised" youth organisation, free from the ghosts of the past. Consequently they were determined to eliminate opposition from the word go. Numerous Young Labour branches were either carved out of the conference or had extreme difficulty getting their delegations accepted. Even the RMT delegation was ruled out by the leadership so desperate were they to keep control.

At the same time the conference was flooded by a host of delegates from right wing Labour Student branches.

Some of these right wing students were so enterprising in their zeal to get to conference that they even popped up in one or two union delegations.

In reality, the conference was a good old fashioned stitch up and totally removed from the problems faced by working class youth. Who ever heard of a Labour youth conference more right wing than the national party conference itself.

Blair and the leadership had it all their own way on policy - even on such ABC topics as education cuts and getting rid of student loans the conference reneged on any responsibility it might have had to young people suffering under the Tories in its desire to please the leadership.

On Clause IV Blair got his way - but only after most

union delegates were told that they could not vote for Clause IV, despite their own union policies, because we were in a "consultation period."

Despite all the rigging the right's candidate in the election for the NEC position only received just over 60% of the vote, with not a few trade union delegates under the impression that she was a left!

The left vote was split three ways, with Paul Nowak (Wirral South) emerging as the leading left candidate and opponent of the right. Undoubtedly, the next conference in two years, possibly under a right wing Blair Labour government will not be so easy for the right.

Alastair Wilson

Right push delegates to left

The so-called Modernisers (a.k.a. "the Tony Blair Fan club") obtained victory in the Clause IV debate at the Labour Youth Conference at great cost to their long term prospects, even if they do manage to get rid of it in April. Left-leaning delegates who support the retention of Clause IV but who sympathised with the Blair/Prescott leadership were angered at the tactics used by the right wing at this conference. The branding of those opposed to the Criminal Justice Act as "loonies" and Clause IV supporters as "daft", the 'American political convention' style cheering and clapping each time a right winger opened their mouth to speak and the open bias of the chair and national executive against the defend Clause IV campaign completely shattered the illusions of those on my delegation who believed this YL

conference would be a 'forum for intelligent debate'. "I am disappointed with the lack of commitment shown by the leadership to issues relevant to young people... especially their refusal to repeal the Criminal Justice Act...". "I'm glad I came... now I know what this debate is REALLY all about... it's about getting rid of socialism from the Labour Party." But the point is that the modernisers had to use underhand methods like these to obtain their victory. To have let more YL delegates from left-supporting branches come, to have let the union delegations vote, to have allowed more pro-Clause IV speakers into the debate and to have promoted a genuine, healthy debating atmosphere (instead of turning the question into one of loyalty to the leadership): all this would have surely tipped the balance in favour of Clause IV and therefore

could not be allowed by these 'democrats'. This was a Pyrrhic victory for the right. By their tactics they have polarised the delegates, turning those former non-committed Lefts into more determined supporters of socialism and Clause IV. The Modernisers won't be able to stop, King Canute-like, the tide of a mass, socialist youth movement forever. The situation will be very different when consent gives way to anger as YL members realise that a Blair government sticking to a pro-capitalist line will be unable to offer any solutions.

Forward to a mass, socialist, Young Labour!

Forward to a free democratically run YL Conference in 1997!

Mark Caprioli
Canterbury CLP and
University of Kent Labour
Club

Midlands unions ready for fight

Unions in the Midlands have been squaring up to management in a series of stand-offs over pay and jobs.

In scenes reminiscent of the 1970's, production at the Peugeot Talbot factory in Coventry ground to a halt following unofficial action by several hundred workers in December. They walked out, against the advice of their union officials, over the issue of paid time off for a mass meeting. Peugeot Talbot management had said they would allow individual gangs paid time off to discuss the latest pay offer. But 35 workers from the Trim and Final Assembly section demanded a mass meeting to be addressed by union officials only. Their subsequent walk-out spread like wildfire along the track. The AEU eventually shepherded the workers back, although a strike ballot is currently underway after the 3,000 workers rejected a 7.5% pay offer. Pay agreements have been creeping up in the

car industry as car workers show an increased preparedness to fight. Van makers LDV have offered a 10% deal over two years, as have Rover. Jaguar have agreed 8%—this was originally rejected, but then accepted by the workforce after AEU officials joined with management in scaremongering over the parent company Ford's threats to switch investment from the plant, raising the prospect of closure. The *Birmingham Post* (24/1/95) complained that the 'high' pay deals reflected a sector where "...trade union members have become increasingly militant." Elsewhere, particularly in the public sector and the former public utilities, workers are standing firm to defend jobs and conditions. Workers at Severn Trent Water say they will not accept compulsory redundancies after the management—having just given their ex-chairman John Bellak a staggering £500,000 pay off—announced they will slash 750 jobs. In the health service

there are numerous simmering disputes where the new Trust managements are trying to cut back on terms and conditions. At the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch, for example, the unions have organised a boycott of management's attempts to introduce an annual parking fee of £50 for the staff car park. Now you must pay for the privilege of turning up for work! Elsewhere, local government workers are gearing up to fight the latest round of cuts. Coventry City Council Unison branch saw the largest branch meeting in its history in response to the Labour Council toying with the idea of a pay freeze, in a bid to find a way out of Government imposed cuts. More than two and a half thousand white collar workers crammed into the meeting hall and rejected the pay freeze idea—unanimously. Trade unionists are showing their willingness to fight—their 'leaders' have yet to match their mettle.

Midlands TU activist

Less for more

Statistics released by the European Commission show that British workers now work an average of 43.4 hours per week—an hour more than in 1983. This average is by far the highest in Europe with the next highest level (Portugal with 41.3 hours) being more than 2 hours less. Indeed only 5 countries exceed 40 hours per week with the main advanced industrial countries dropping below 39 hours per week. In fact the figures

show that in many cases the average working week in Europe has declined slightly—except in Britain! The authors of the report produced by the Commissions statistical office, Eurostat, note that the increase and high level of the British working week can be explained by the high amount of overtime worked but also by the increase in basic hours which many workers have had to endure. In other words we can see further evidence of the intensification of labour process which the bosses have been carrying out over the last period where they aim to get the maximum work out of the minimum number of workers. The loss of something like a million jobs can be put down to this trend.

South East Wales CWU members take official and unofficial action

CWU members in Cardiff Head Post Office and Ely delivery office walked out at 9pm on Monday 13 February on unofficial action. They were protesting at management's breach of procedures by taking on of 15 workers on "temporary" contracts. This would potentially mean 15 job losses in 6 months time. This was clearly an attempt by management to break the existing agreements. In the negotiations that took place management refused to confirm the status quo and refused to commit themselves to no victimisation.

Management immediately sought a court injunction and this was served on the local branch at 2pm on the Tuesday. Alan Johnson, CWU joint general secretary, claimed that the union leadership would "definitely repudiate" the action. He advised the local branch secretary to "lay down the law." Local officials would be held in contempt of court if the action continued - so would other union members in other branches if they refused to handle redirected mail. The workforce decided to go back and a ballot be organised as rapidly as possible.

In Newport a ballot on a similar issue forced management to make up 29 part timers to full time contracts.

The Cardiff action is a step forward - the action was immediate and solid, and management was taken by surprise. A good result in the ballot will mean these attempts at undermining the rights and conditions of the workforce will be defeated.

Also in Cardiff, after a ballot, workers at Parcelforce have been involved in three lots of official action in protest at the announced closure of the Cardiff Parcelforce depot.

So, South East Wales has seen the first official action and the first unofficial action in the new Communication Workers Union.

A Socialist Appeal reporter

Growing unrest in Post Office

with no strings would be a major step forward. The present indicators are that negotiations around the 35 hour week include the further introduction of aspects of TQM (Total Quality Management), loss of certain allowances, loss of paid breaks, loss of the 2.5 hour delivery span, forcing workers to deliver for periods of up to four hours in all weathers, with no break or toilet facilities.

Losses

All these potential losses have been hinted at while our only gain seems to be no longer a 35 hour week but a "shorter working week," which theoretically could mean a reduction of just 1.5 hours making it a 40 hour normal span. It sounds as if it will be a long way short of the 35 hours that is union policy and that we need to maintain and increase full employment in the Post Office.

Charlie Balch
CWU

Royal Mail Letters Section
Secretary SEWales
(personal capacity)

The recent "illegal unofficial action" in London is yet another sign of the continuing poor industrial relations climate in Royal Mail. Historically postal workers have been far from militant, but the rise in unofficial industrial action has shown there is a crisis in how the union leadership has tackled the problem of duty losses, second delivery cuts, productivity gains, reduced earning potential and increases in part time and temporary workers. It also highlights the growing unrest of our class

after fifteen years of savage Tory government.

The Post Office has been forced to make these cuts because of a huge hike in the EFC (External Financial Limits) - this is the money that the post office has to pay the government every year.

Decrease costs

This has forced the Post Office to either decrease costs or put up postal charges. This action follows the government's climb-down on postal privatisation and seems it will be here until

the Tory government is kicked out.

The Post Office now believes it is in a position of strength industrially because of the Tory anti-union laws. The Post Office has secured a fine of £7,000 and costs of £100,000 against the union. Any unofficial action that follows the London strike will almost certainly be repudiated by the union, which could lead to selective dismissal etc. unless any action is speedily escalated.

The continuing cuts have to be met by a coordinated national response. The 35 hour week

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Trade unionists support Clause IV

CWU member, Gary Heather, has written directly to Tony Blair on the issue of Clause IV. We reprint an edited version of his letter.

Dear Tony,

I am taking the liberty of writing to you as I am deeply concerned as a Labour Party member about certain aspects of the debate currently taking place on this subject. I believe we should "say what we mean and mean what we say." However, I must say at the outset that I have difficulty recalling you ever mentioning changes to the Party's constitution during your Party leadership campaign in July 1994. Indeed, I seem to remember you told David Frost... that you did not want to get involved in an argument about Clause IV. Moreover, 1994 Party conference carried a resolution reaffirming Labour's commitment to Clause IV. To be perfectly frank with you, the debate up to this to date has in my opinion been conducted in a less than honest and uncomradely way.

The recent attack in the press on Bill Morris, TGWU, as "confused, muddled and pusillani-

mous" over his opposition to redrafting Clause IV, attributed to an aide of yourself, can only be described as disgraceful. I'm sure you'd agree we would do far better using all our energies attacking the Tories. In my view the burden of proof lies with those in the Party who propose constitutional change; to date the arguments put forward for this do not add up. I read and hear everywhere platitudes by the bucketful about how Labour wants "Social Justice". Well so do I. I'm sickened at the way the Tories, aided and abetted by Liberals, have presided over the wanton decimation of people's rights to a decent standard of living. But how will Labour obtain "Social Justice" when we still place faith in a market economy. Why will it work more fairly under the stewardship of a Labour government? My own experience of the last 15 years is that privatisation of public assets has only served to vastly increase inequality in our society, with its consequent private profits, greed and sleaze, with the gap between high paid and low paid the biggest since 1886! Common ownership on the contrary has a proven track record benefits to all citizens in a much fairer and equal way. That's what I

What is Socialism?



In Defence of Clause 4

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call "Social Justice".

To those who say ownership is not important, I say "humbug". Tell a capitalist free marketeer ownership is not important and you'll be laughed out of the room.

In my own industry—telecommunications—we have a working example of how privatisation, based on regulated market principles, has assisted the introduction of increased inequality into society. Both telecoms workers and residential customers have played second fiddle to the needs of business. BT's charges—in line with Oftel's regulatory policies—have since 1984 rebalanced the cost of services so that in real terms business has reaped the lion's share of cost reduction. Over the same period shareholder dividend

increases outstripped pay increases by over 220%. And, despite its workforces' cooperation with the introduction of new technology and working practices, BT has cut 94,000 jobs since 1990 without reducing working hours by a single second—where's the Social Justice in that!

I should point out to you that the former National Communications Union set policy at its 1994 Annual Conference: "To oppose any attempt to delete Clause 4 Part 4 of the Labour Party constitution."

A socialist Labour Party, with Clause IV and common ownership retained, is the route forward to victory at the next General Election.

**Gary Heather
CWU (In Personal Cap)**

CLAUSE IV IS AS RELEVANT TODAY AS IN 1918

The following letter was printed in a recent edition of the UCU journal. The last paragraph was omitted!

Dear Editor,

As a member of the Labour Party for over 20 years, I disagree with the opinion expressed by our General Secretary at the Labour Party conference that Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution is "so unreal".

He correctly points out that it was written in 1918 but that does not make it any more irrelevant today than it was then. For example, the beginning of the clause

states; "To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry...". Today millions of workers are in low paid jobs with bad and dangerous working conditions. With the threat of mass unemployment, many can be dismissed at any time, simply for complaining about something. Indeed, the level of wages of many of our members, compared with Post Office profits, would indicate that we may not be receiving as much as half of the "full fruits" of our labour.

As for the overall socialist aims of the Labour Party, every major affiliated Union has references in its constitution to the common ownership and control of its own industries and I cannot see why it should

only apply to the Post Office and nowhere else.

With all the resources, technology, education and skills available today we should be looking at a society which will give a decent and secure future for our children, shorter working hours and be able to care for the needs of the majority rather than the greed of a few.

Print clause IV in the journal and see how many postal workers really think that its principles are irrelevant to them!

**Yours fraternally
Lee Waker, Postman,
East London Postal Branch**

Defend Clause IV, fight for socialism

As a contribution towards the debate taking place inside the movement on Clause IV, *Socialist Appeal* has produced a short but handy pamphlet, priced at a £1 a copy, on the need to defend Clause IV and taking up the question of socialism—what it is and what role it played in the development of the Labour Party. Those who think that socialism belongs now to the history books and is no longer relevant should obtain and read a copy of this work written by Rob Sewell. To introduce the pamphlet we reproduce below an extract from the first part of the text dealing with the background to the debate.

The Tory Government is in its death-throes. Mortally wounded over its defeat to further increase VAT on fuel, it has stumbled from one crisis to another. Given the removal of the whip from nine Tory MPs, the Major government has lost its parliamentary majority. The Dudley by-election was a catastrophe for the Tories. After nearly sixteen years of Tory rule, their end is in sight. The latest opinion polls - which give Labour a 40 point lead over the Tories - indicate the collapse of support for the Government. Labour has the biggest lead for any political party since records began. This is no mid-term blues but, as *Socialist Appeal* has explained many times, an irreversible malaise that will doom the Tories. It arises from the crisis of British capitalism and the lack of room for manoeuvre. The Tories have boxed themselves into a corner; whatever they do is wrong.

Secret report

This is confirmed by the damning internal secret Tory report from John Maples, leaked to the press, which, in effect, concluded the game was up. The prospect facing the Tories is a Canadian-type wipe out and the greatest defeat in Tory history. For Labour, the scene is set for a massive victory on the lines of 1945. For millions of working people, such a prospect will be greeted with jubilation. After a prolonged nightmare of attacks and cut backs under Thatcher and then Major, they can see light at the

end of the tunnel. If the Labour leaders concentrated their fire on the Tories, and mobilised the strength of the Labour movement to force an immediate General Election, this weak discredited Government could be swept from office without delay. Unfortunately, it is at this very time, that Tony Blair and the Labour leadership have launched an attack not on the Tories, but on the socialist aspirations of the Labour Party, Clause Four. If there was ever a greater diversion from the job at hand, a diversion from the interests of the working class, it is now! This proposal at the Labour Party Conference in October was a bombshell for party members. It has provoked



widespread anger throughout the party, and many see it as a complete diversion from fighting the Tories. As Bristol MP Roger Berry, pointed out: "In many, many years in politics I cannot remember anyone stopping me in the street and asking me about Clause Four."

It is essential that all labour movement activists wanting to retain our commitment to the socialist reconstruction of society, take up this challenge with the greatest urgency. Already, half of all Labour MEPs have signed a statement defending Clause Four. 52 of the 57 Labour Parties that have discussed the constitutional changes, back Clause Four. Of the 24 resolutions on Clause 4 submitted to the Scottish LP

Conference, 21 back the status quo. There is also mounting opposition in the trade unions. Let no one be under any illusion that this is some kind of 'reasonable' request to bring Clause Four up to date. As David Winnick MP explained: "the purpose is not to bring Clause Four up to date - and anyone who believes that is naive - it is to give a clear signal that we are no longer a socialist party." Although it could be better expressed, Clause Four is clear enough: "To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service." The Blair leadership wants to throw out any commitment to wholesale public ownership, the very basis of a socialist economy. As Tony Benn stated, "The leadership wants to commit us to capitalism, to a 'dynamic free-market economy' - that's the aim of getting rid of Clause Four."

Attack

The attack on socialism, together with the breaking of the trade union links, has been at the heart of the right wing's strategy to turn the Party into a version of the American capitalist Democratic Party or an SDP Mark Two. In other words, a party that is no threat to big business and the capitalist system. The right wing in the Labour Party look to the Clinton Democrats with envy. Their objective, if they can get away with it, is the Clintonisation of the party. They see this as the key to success. Unfortunately for them, Clinton has presided over the Democrat's biggest defeat for more than 40 years, with the Republicans gaining a majority in the Senate and Congress. Peter Mandelson MP, the arch "moderniser" and Clinton flag-waver, dashed to the press to

draw the lessons for Labour. It was nothing to do with Clinton's anti-working class policies, but the failure "to develop an effective communications strategy"!

No accident

It is no accident that Blair has openly called for those SDP traitors who stabbed the Labour Party in the back to return to the party. "Of course I welcome back", says Blair, "those people who left the Labour Party in the early eighties for reasons that were understandable at the time (!)" These traitors sabotaged Labour's election chances in 1983 and were responsible for keeping the Tories in power, to the detriment of working people. In reality, they were Tories and Liberals masquerading under the banner of Labour in the first place.

The attack on Clause Four is simply the continuation of the abandonment of left-wing policies throughout the 1980s—from nuclear disarmament to renationalisation of the privatised companies. They have simultaneously stolen the Tory's clothes on a whole range of issues, from welfare state benefits to education and health "reforms". David Blunkett, shadow education secretary, claimed to have "leapfrogged the Tories" by pledging even more tests for children! While promising the trade unions "fairness not favours" from a Labour Government, big business is lined up for special treatment and big favours. Under the pressure of big business, the Labour leaders have ditched mandatory reselection of MPs and attempted to break the links with the trade unions. Blair has even gone to the length of advising the unions not to be associated with one political party! Perhaps he has decided to forget that the trade unions founded and built the Labour Party to represent the working class in Parliament. *The Labour Party is the political expression of the trade unions—whatever the leadership may think...* ●

United action to defeat the cuts

Up and down the country local councils, mainly Labour, are finalising cuts in 1995/6 expenditure levels as a result of the latest cutbacks caused by the Tories budget settlements.

These are not minor reductions in expenditure. The government has sought to steal over £1,500 million back from local funds. Councils are talking about cutbacks of amounts such as £38 million (Lambeth), £20 million (Tower Hamlets), £17 million (Havering), £30 million (Newham), £45 million (Birmingham) and £107 million (Strathclyde). The cuts in council grants by the Tories have plunged local councils into crisis and provoked mass meetings and rallies from unions and local residents. The mood is one of anger and concern. Anger

because of the threat of compulsory redundancies. Concern because of the predicted closures of libraries, community centres, swimming pools, special training centres and many other types of local authority facilities along with a reduction in remaining services. Cuts have even reached the level where councils, for example, are talking about no longer supplying bin bags for residents to put their rubbish in.

These cuts are the most savage for a decade and come on top of cuts that have reduced local authority services to the bone. The response of the Government (and local Tories who are safely in opposition) has been to say that the cuts need not hurt and that there are plenty of savings to be made by reducing so-called 'wasteful' bureaucracies. This is rich coming from

a government who have wasted countless millions in setting up massive bureaucracies to run the NHS and the privatised industries via their endless quangos. The truth is that the Tories hate local government and want it to become a shell run by unelected businessmen and failed Tories with the poor and needy, who most rely on the services provided by local councils, being given as little as possible if not less. The reality is that there are no longer any 'easy' cuts—they all hurt now. The high attendances at meetings and rallies called to fight the cuts shows that there is a basis for the Labour movement to face up to the Tory robbers and make a stand. Unfortunately the position of the Labour 'leadership' has been to advise councillors to do nothing in practice, act responsibly and carry out the

cuts as 'humanely' as possible. This position is gutless and does nothing to defend the interests of those who elected Labour councils to act in their favour. Some left Labour councillor's have correctly raised the alternative of refusing to carry out the cuts but rather setting a deficit (or 'needs') budget thereby taking on the government. In this they are reflecting the stand taken by councils such as Liverpool City Council in the 1980s who were prepared to take on Thatcher and Co. However, this time individual councils and councillor's should not be left to stand alone. An emergency conference of local authority unions and Labour councils should be called to draw up a strategy to attack the government and unite all those fighting the cuts. The question of strike action by the unions and a national 24 hour general strike to be called by the TUC must be a part of this. Such a campaign, mobilising the strength of the whole labour movement, could not only defeat the Tory cuts but bring the government down itself. This would usher in a Labour government - but that government will need to be committed to clear socialist policies.

Shropshire schools crisis

Governors at more than 30 schools in Shropshire are threatening to either resign or set deficit budgets in protest at the cuts.

Governors are considering the action in disgust at £10 million's worth of cuts facing the education service in the county. They have told the local authority that they will not introduce a budget which could lead to either staff redundancies or increases in class sizes.

The chair of Scholl Governors at Much Wenloch primary school, Perce Muscutt, told the *Birmingham Post* (31/1/95): "Until now different governing bodies were not sure whether they had much common

ground. Now people realise it is a common problem. It is a dire situation and cannot go on."

While resignation is understandable, it is no answer. However, if all school governors followed Shropshire's lead and set deficit budgets—that is, reflecting the real needs of their schools—the Tory Government who have inflicted these swinging cuts, would be forced into retreat.

This task would be made all the most easier if all Labour Councils set deficit or



'needs' budgets; it is a measure of their failure to fight the Tory government that individual school governors have been forced into the position of trying to take on the government on their own.

A local Government worker

Football: defeat the racist enemy

The fighting at the Ireland-England international football match which resulted in the abandonment of that game after half an hour is just the latest in a series of events both in Britain and in Europe which shows that football is not as free from trouble as some would have us believe. The recent line from the powers that be in football, such as the FA, has been that violence and racism are things of the past in football.

Certainly it must be said that the amount of fighting which occurred during the 70s and 80s inside league grounds has sharply declined. However, it is a fact—as any black player or supporter can tell you—that racist comments and acts are still there hidden just below the surface. The fact that provocation and racist chanting is now technically illegal has changed very little in fact. Stewards and the police still only act when the targets are 'easy'. They are quite happy to throw out kids for jumping up and down but when it comes to sights such as greeted anyone who attended the recent West Ham-Spurs game, where hundreds of home 'supporters' (much to the dismay of some of the other home fans) were chanting racist songs and threatening away supporters whilst the stewards pretended they couldn't see anything and only had 'words' with those home supporters so stupid that they insisted on doing it whilst standing next to the police! This continued through out the whole game and only subsided when the away team took the lead—the winning goal being scored by a German player. A number of genuine football fans (who make up the vast majority of those who attend

matches week in and week out) spoke to *Socialist Appeal* about what happened in Ireland:

"I was amongst a party of 9 Southampton fans who had travelled to Ireland. We arrived on Sunday and toured Galway, where we stayed two nights and had a great time. In fact everything had gone well up until the game. But as soon as I stepped inside the ground all that changed. We were met with the disgusting spectacle of Nazi salutes accompanied with the 'national anthem'. I felt sick to the stomach from that moment on. It was to get much worse."

Enemies

"I don't like sitting with my enemies; the enemies of my class and the labour movement. If I could possibly have helped stop what happened I would have."

"I expected some right-wing Nazi elements to be there, but not on the scale which greeted us as we stood there. Its hard to say how many BNP/NF members were there, but a lot of characters aligned themselves with these scum."

"It was the most disgusting scene I have ever witnessed at a football match. We decided we had to get out of the ground. We managed to walk out with the Irish fans as the two teams went off. We continually apologised to them but they kept saying that it wasn't our fault."

"The lessons need to be learnt. The Nazi's must be stopped from attending matches... ordinary fans must stand up to them and stop them at every ground around the country. Fanzines and supporters associations must speak out and act. I know a lot of clubs think that they haven't got a problem but we must fight against this

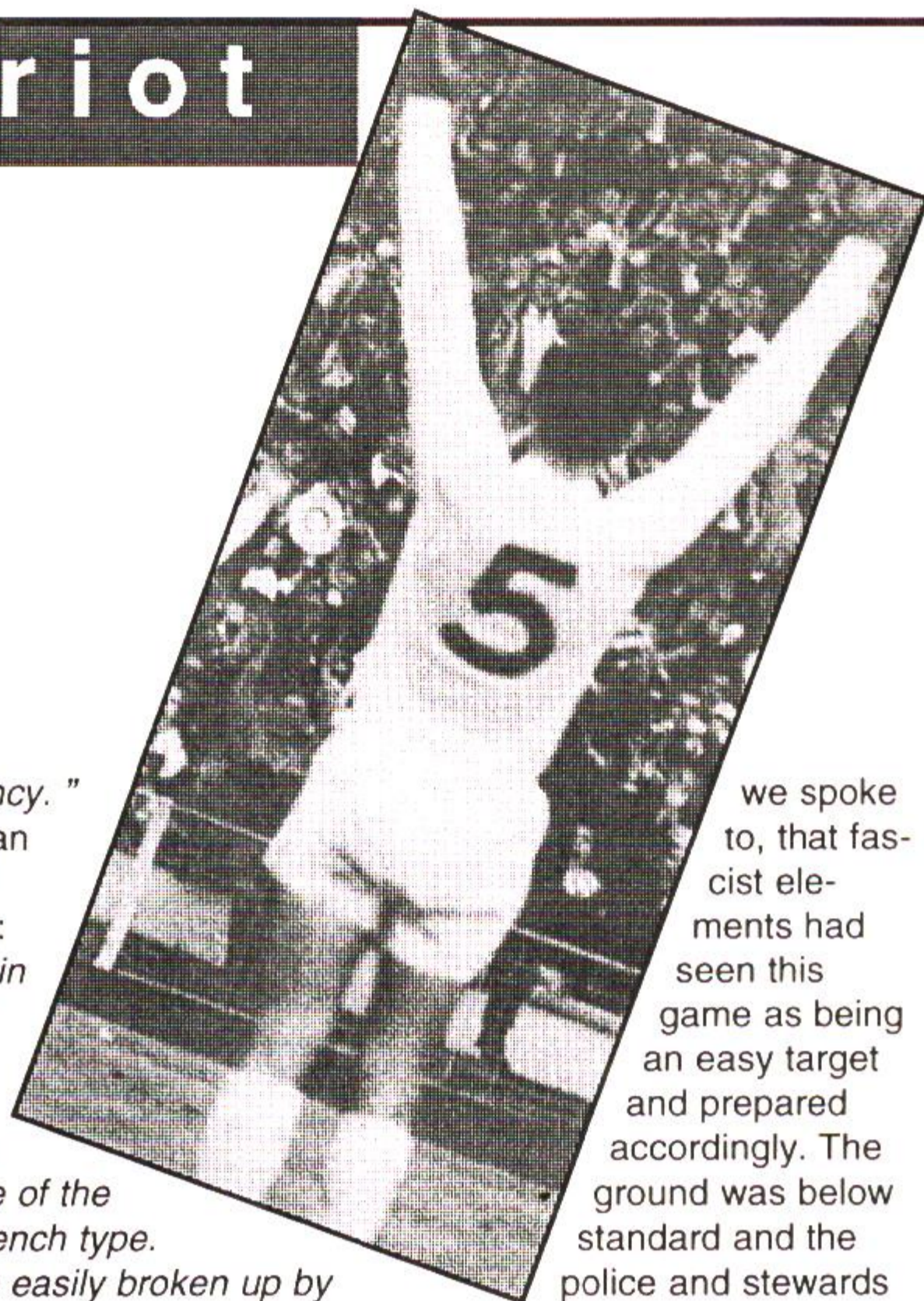
complacency."

Another fan added his comments:

"We were in the Upper West Stand where the seats were of the wooden bench type. They were easily broken up by these thugs. Individual seats on the benches were divided up by metal bars which were thrown indiscriminately onto the fans below and into the areas occupied by Irish supporters."

"We had come to the ground on the last available train, already fearing the worst. Touts were selling fistfulls of tickets and as you entered the ground, no checks whatsoever were being carried out. Some fans didn't even have to show their tickets. Inside the ground we were shocked to see Nazi scum standing and 'seigheil-ing' at Irish fans. There was no segregation whatsoever and returned English tickets had obviously been sold on to Irish fans. The police were nowhere to be seen in the stand."

It is clear from the stories told by these fans, and others that



we spoke to, that fascist elements had seen this game as being an easy target and prepared accordingly. The ground was below standard and the police and stewards totally unprepared.

The cancellation of the International is just the latest in a series of incidents which have shown the dangers of assuming that the fascists have gone away.

Cantona

The Cantona incident has been widely attacked by those in the game but it is worth noting that the attacked 'fan' was subsequently revealed to be a racist thug who had travelled half the length of the stadium to shout his offensive abuse.

In countries such as Sweden, Holland, Belgium and Germany racist gangs have been active at matches causing serious trouble. Fascist eagle insignias have been seen on banners at games in Spain. In France and



Just another Saturday

Italy incidents have occurred where fans have been killed, resulting in league games being called off as a mark of anger against these acts of violence. One reason for UEFA deciding to keep EURO 96 in England is that no one can say that holding it anywhere else will be any safer. The truth is that clubs and the authorities have swept the racist problem under the carpet.

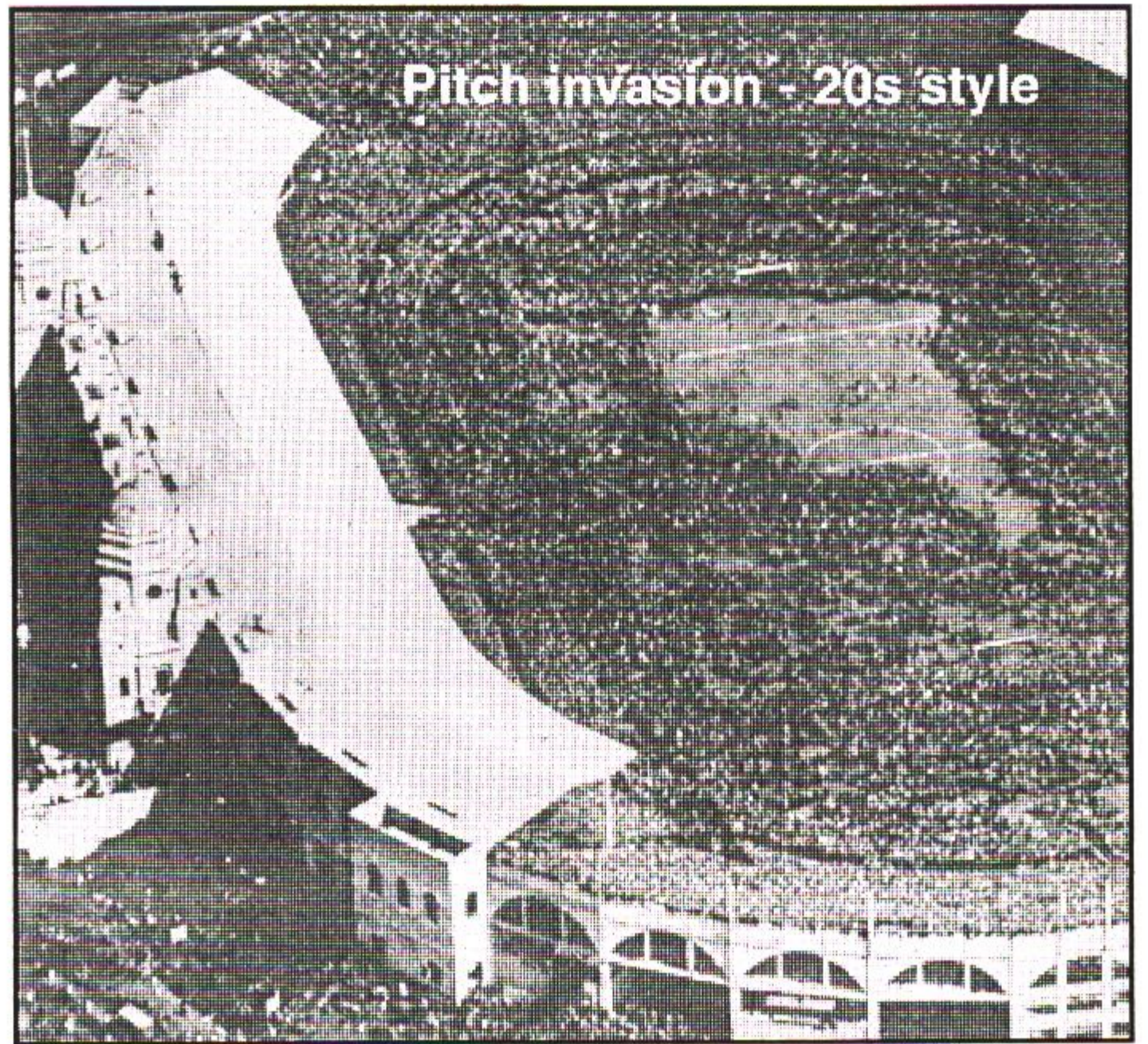
Money

They are more concerned at making money through such scams as endless new kits than ensuring that grounds are safe and welcoming for all supporters whatever their colour and nationality. The reality in 1995 is that many black and Asian supporters still do not feel safe in going to games. A report in "When Saturday Comes" revealed that many Asians prefer to organise their own teams and leagues rather than play in the existing structures where they do not feel welcome. Although black players are becoming more famil-

iar, Asian players are still virtually unknown even in league teams which exist in areas with a large Asian population. How many times have we seen incidents where black players have been told to keep their heads down rather than stand up to racist jibes and comments both from supporters and other players?

These fascist thugs, like those we saw in Ireland, are not a problem of football but a problem for football. Take football away, as some have suggested, and they will still be there—attacking Asians in East London or organising attacks on Jewish cemeteries and so on. In calling on those involved with football to act against these elements we also see the need for action on a wider scale by the labour movement. Racist acts may well be illegal but this illegality hasn't stopped anything. We can only rely on our own forces to defeat these scum. Football fans must take the lead, through their own organisations, in tackling this issue.

Let the final word be from one



of the supporters who went to Ireland: "The fascist elements, such as we saw in Ireland, are the enemy of all football supporters, working class people and the labour movement. I am confident that they can be pushed back into the sewers where they belong if the organisations of the class act. We

need a Labour government committed to socialist policies to put an end to poverty, unemployment, homelessness and all the other problems which can allow fascist ideas to breed."

Steve Jones

In Defence of Marxism

The first title in our *In Defence of Marxism* series, *Marxism in Our Time*, answers those "experts" who, after the collapse of Stalinism, pronounced Marxism dead. With a major new introduction by Alan Woods and Ted Grant the pamphlet represents a brief but brilliant exposition of Marxism and its burning relevance to the struggles of workers today.

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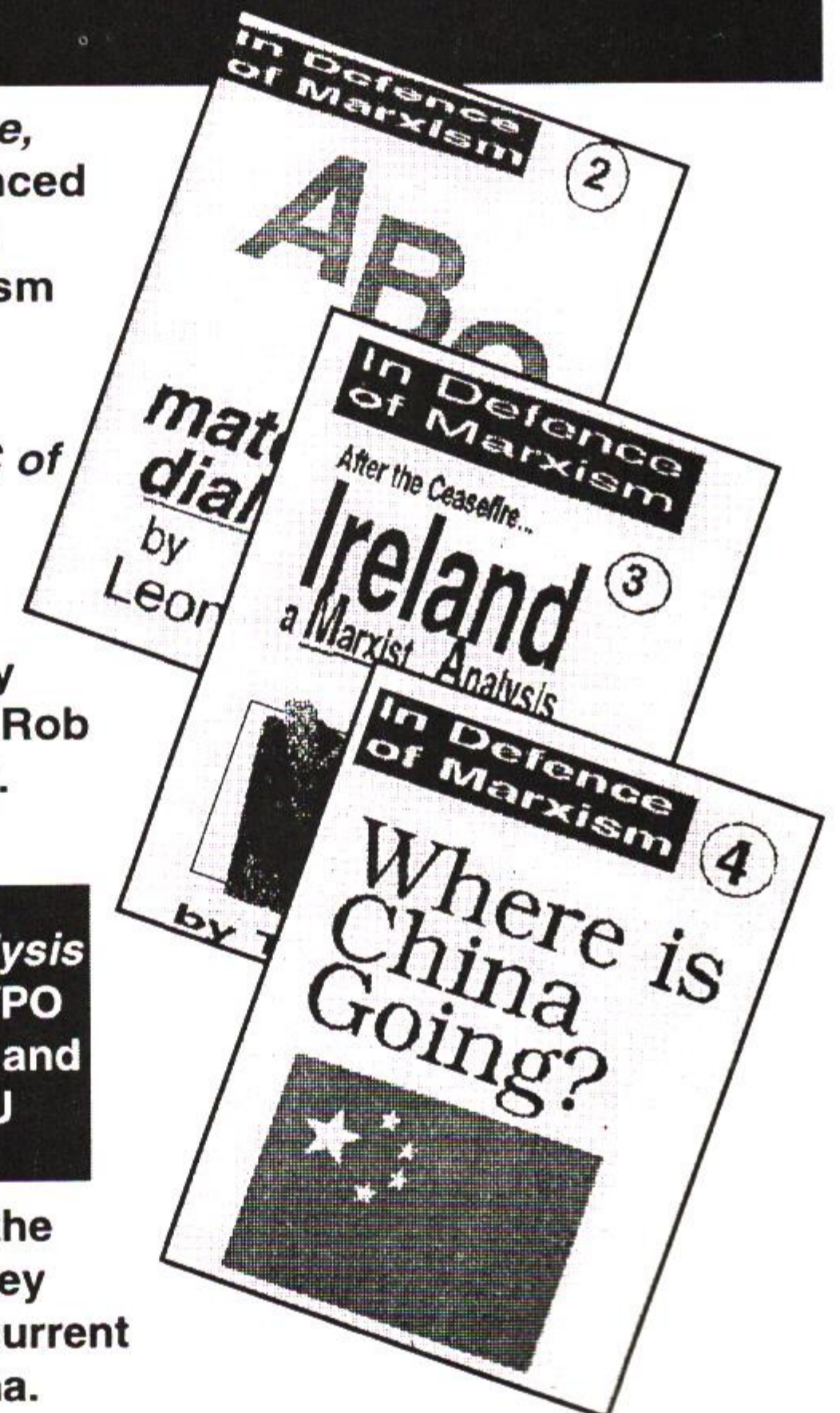
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Rob Sewell looks at what lies behind the economic statistics...

Boom for whom?

With the threat of public sector strikes and protests, what ever happened to the 'feel good' factor? After all, isn't the economy growing by leaps and bounds. But wait a minute. "Britain's economy has been growing so fast in recent months that inflationary fears are starting to take hold", says the Economist. "Any statistics suggesting that the brakes are being applied are thus very good news indeed. So figures published on January 11th showing unexpected falls in both total industrial output (down by 1%) and the narrower measure of output in manufacturing sector (0.7%) in November compared with October were just the ticket!"

So according to our financial 'strategists' the boom must be curtailed. Even more incredible, according to the 25th anniversary edition of the government's "Social Trends", published in January, the facts show we are in a land following with milk and honey compared to 1970. "Yet are people more cheerful?" asks the Economist. "They are not. More than half of Britons say they are just managing to make ends meet, according to a Gallup poll in December. And according to Eurobarometer, a poll of European opinion, 31% of Britons felt 'very satisfied with their lives' in 1988-92, barely changed from the 30% who felt that way in 1973-77. Politicians sense the hot breath of popular discontent on their necks." (28th January)

Even the big business paper, the *Financial Times*, realises: "The combination of steady growth

and low inflation is not enough for most families to wipe out the cost of the recession and of the biggest tax increases since the second world war. For the average Tory voter, living standards, as Mr. Maples admits, have been falling not rising." (26.11.94)

Added to this is the high levels of mass unemployment, which has added to job insecurity. In layman's language, the working class and also the middle class have been squeezed under the Tories. In the factories and offices, the employers have waged an onslaught against wages and conditions. The introduction of personal contracts, part-time working, compulsory competitive tendering, performance-related pay, and greater job 'flexibility' have increased stress, undermining working conditions and health. Even the traditional lunch hour has become a thing of the past; a recent survey found that half of British workers now take less than 30 minutes.

Overtime

Out of the seven million European male workers that work more than 48 hours overtime, four million live in Britain. Another recent survey shows that Britain is the only country in the European Union in which working hours have increased over the last decade. British workers worked a 43.4 hour week in 1992 compared with 42.3 hours in 1983. Despite the boom in banking profits, the bosses are putting in the boot. The past five years have seen bank jobs slashed by a quarter and hundreds of branches closed down. Since

1981, Barclays have cut more than 18,000 jobs through reorganisation and new technology. This year the bank intends to extend its opening hours and introduce further flexible working. According to BIFU, this has brought about "low morale and disillusionment". The British Bankers' Association insists that many banks are "still under competitive pressures to cut their costs" (ie jobs). The Clydesdale Bank just imposed a performance-related pay offer on its 4,000 staff. They are taking strike action over this. In National

an increase of 75% to £475,000, the privatised bosses announced new harsher terms of employment, job cuts, and pay reductions for its workforce. As the *Observer* reported: "Several large employers plan to introduce changes similar to the scheme which British Gas put to show-room staff last week. These employees stand to lose about 16% of their basic pay and other benefits including some holiday entitlement." It concludes "Many employers have already forced their workers to take cuts on their basics - but British Gas will encourage other businesses to follow suit. Large companies will probably have to set up incentive-related schemes but many smaller employers have simply cut salaries, holidays, sick pay and other benefits without introducing other arrangements." (18.12.94)

Boom time

As far as the bosses are concerned it is certainly 'boom time' for them. Profits are rising, and with them huge dividend and salary rises. Bosses of the 10 privatised water companies have had pay rises of up to 517% and shared an astonishing £20 million in perks since leaving the public sector. The "part-time" chairman of Midlands Electricity is getting £100,000 more a year than he did before he retired as



Feeling good?

Westminster many worker will receive no increase. Martin Gray, NatWest's chief executive, has warned staff that 1995 will be a "tough year" with intensive pressures on costs. Meanwhile, Lloyds Bank announced a 26% increase in pre-tax profits of £1.3 billion.

While awarding Cedric Brown, the chief executive of British Gas

full-time chief executive! He receives about £125,000 as well as a salary of £165,000. "Eleven directors made £1 million plus share deals in the last quarter including one of over £32m, according to our quarterly trawl of share deals notified to the Stock Exchange. There were a further 11 deals worth between

£500,000 and £1 million. The top deal of £32,214,143 was made by Deverok Pritchard, who was recently moved from managing director to a non-executive position at nursing home group Takare. Dan Doyle, chief executive of office equipment group Danka, sold 1.6 million shares for £5,520,000 while chairman of the group weighed in with a £1,107,200 deal." (Labour Research, 14.7.94).

In contrast, the conditions of shop workers have deteriorated sharply. Gateway Foodmarkets Ltd. have substituted part-time work for full time jobs. The same in the Burton Group, where zero hour contracts were introduced. These are also operating at the Storehouse and Kingfisher company. British Home Store made a third of its full-time workforce redundant in February 1993, replacing them with workers on flexible contracts.

Intensification

This intensification is what Marx described as increased absolute and relative surplus value from the labour of the working class. It is a process of squeezing every last ounce of energy and labour out of the workers. The more surplus value that can be obtained, the greater are the profits accrued to the bosses. These conditions have stoked up enormous resentment. The latest British Social Attitudes Survey reveals an anxious workforce increasingly concerned about widening pay differentials, matched by fears about job security. In the first 18 months of the government's public sector wage freeze, 420,000 jobs alone have disappeared in this sector.

With the freeze on funds, the recent awards by the public sector pay review bodies has met with an angry response and threats of industrial action. This whole mood is characterised by the rash of unofficial strikes in the post office (over 80 disputes in the last year), due to the increased pressure of work arising from the restructuring that the bosses are attempting to carry through.

The current settlement covering teachers, doctors, nurses and dentists has been the catalyst for growing discontent, particularly over working conditions. Given that past cuts have devastated many sectors, any increase can only be met by turning the screw even more. The Tories have rubbed salt into the wounds of the low paid with the favourable treatment doled out to senior civil servants, judges and top military officers. Their total pay bill will rise to £5.5 million compared with a £5.2 m improvement last year. The bill for every other group covered by the review bodies has fallen this year.

John Monks was correct when he said: "Teachers, nurses and other vital public service workers are to be sacrificed as the government tries to build up a pot of cash to pay for what it hopes will be election winning tax cuts." But these protests must be translated into action. Unofficial action has already taken place. The TUC should coordinate the struggle of the public sector workers to force the government to retreat. Given the utter disarray in the Tory party and the open splits in the government, there is not a better time for the

Labour movement to launch its own counter offensive. The Tories are in a desperate situation. The employers' offensive has created additional toil and insecurity for the working class. The middle classes are also affected by the crisis, where job losses have affected many layers that had previously thought themselves immune. "The old-style certainties are fast disappearing. The new flexible labour market means employees must be prepared to change jobs, industries, working hours and pay structures", states the *Financial Times*. And concludes "in such an uncertain world it is no surprise that the feel-good factors is elusive."

Doom

This will doom the Tories. Whatever they do it will not fundamentally alter their plight. The TUC and Labour leaders must take up the gauntlet and drive the Tories from office. Millions of workers are looking to a Labour government to solve its problems. This is not only recorded in the opinion polls, but is increasingly reflected in the real votes cast in local council by-elections. Last December, Labour won 50.2% of the votes in seats contested by Tories and Liberals. This is the first time that Labour has won more than half the vote since results were compiled in 1981. It is symptomatic of the situation. **The Tories are facing an electoral disaster. However, only with a bold Socialist programme can the aspirations of working people be fulfilled.**

Rob Sewell

Boom for whom?

"We shall soon see the first generation since the war to have the doubtful privilege of becoming poorer than their parents."

Stephane Garelli, head of the World Competitiveness Project, International Institute for Management Development

The average lunch break for white collar workers in Britain is now 20 minutes.

In a recent survey 84% of office workers reported that greater demands were being made on their time than two years ago and 37% said pressures had "greatly increased."

"If anyone has a right to be worried it is not the angst-ridden middle classes but the unskilled poor. They are more likely to spend their lives drifting between short-term jobs, or to drop out of formal work entirely."

The Economist, 11.2.95



GMB on the march

Alastair Wilson looks at what economic growth means for millions of US workers

US economy: the boom that hurts

Since the US economy emerged from its last recession it has been outstripping that of Japan - hailed once again as the most "competitive" economy in the world. Productivity, output, employment - all are growing we are told, but what is it all based on? What is the truth behind the statistics?

The last few years has seen wave after wave of "downsizing" layoffs, limited or no wage rises, increases in part time and temporary working and long hours of overtime - this is what the "recovery" in the US economy is based upon. Just like in Britain, 2 to 3 years of economic "growth" has failed to bring back any of the "feelgood" factor of the 1980's boom.

In a recent survey in Time magazine, only 9% of those questioned thought the national economy was in recession, but 54% thought recession was continuing in their own area. 81% thought their family finances were doing fine, yet only 37% felt personally better off as a result of recent economic improvements. In other words economic recovery is not materialising any real benefits for the mass of US citizens. We might have an economic "boom" - but not many people realise it!

The car industry is indicative. Now only \$42 out of every \$100 in product goes on wages at General Motors' Fisher Plant in Flint, Michigan - one third less than at Toyota or Mercedes-Benz. And, of course, GM's profits are booming. From a \$4.9 billion loss in 1991 to a \$2.5 billion profit in 1993. Average weekly overtime in the US car industry is now ten hours. Average throughout the economy is 4.6 hours. Labour economist, Audrey Freeman, describes Americans as "the workingest people in the world."

General Motors has not done any significant hiring since 1986. It has squeezed as much out of its existing workforce as it possibly can, and when it has no option it has turned to the flourishing "temp" agencies which supply not only office staff, but increasing numbers of blue collar workers. The reason for this is pretty simple. At the Ford Motor plant in St. Louis a full time employee will earn around \$57,000 per annum with overtime, but the temps earn as little as \$20,000. Across the economy the number of temps has doubled in the last year. Since the end of the last recession 6 million new jobs have been created - but this is 2 million short of the pace of previous expansions. Allen Sinai, of investment firm Lehman Brothers, has even stated, "we are generating 278,000 jobs a month... the character of those jobs really is questionable." This means in the main temps and low paying service jobs. There has been an explosion of people holding down two or more jobs, 6.1% of the workforce. More than the unemployment rate!

Joseph Kelterborn, aged 44, works for NYNEX telephone company in New York installing fibre optic networks. His department has been reduced from 27 down to 20. His responsibilities now combine that of three separate jobs. he now works up to 4 extra hours a day and one weekend in three. "by the time I get home," he says, "all I have time for is a shower, dinner and a little sleep; then it's time to turn around and do it all over again."

In 1993 the top 100 US electronic companies, the supposed leaders of the new technological revolution, shed nearly half a million jobs between them. Compaq, the worlds biggest maker of computers, laid off 20% of its workforce between

1991 and 1992, leaving around 9,000 staff. Now with "selective" recruitment it is more than 14,000.

Corporate "downsizing" has become a fetish for many companies. Head of American Express, Harvey Golub, told the Wall Street Journal, "You can either cut costs when there is a clear and present danger, or you can do it when people feel good about the way things are going."

In reality, the bosses are pushing the labour market their way - increasing the rate of exploitation. Downsizing, massive overtime, increased temporary and part time contracts, new management techniques, ending "rigid" wage structures - all are part of the bosses' arsenal and are being promoted heavily both in the US and British economies.

But how long can it go on? Unlimited pressure cannot be put on the workforce continuously: "You don't get real productivity by simply ramping up the line speed..." according to Alex Trotman, chairman of Ford Motor Company, "...In the beginning everyone enjoys the extra pay, but we all get tired, pressures build up, people get edgy

and tensions break out."

And, in fact, at GM's Buick City autoplant the workers went out on strike last September. Local 599 of the United Auto Workers called out the workforce to try and get GM to hire some new permanent staff to relieve the overtime burden. One assembly line worker, a mother of four school-aged kids, said, "I never thought I'd see the day when I welcomed a strike for a few days off." GM settled after three days with a promise to hire 779 more regular workers.

So the economic recovery since 1991 has not resulted in increases in living standards for the average American. Despite more growth, there are less jobs, more overtime, more stress, greater exploitation and less real income. Average real household income fell by \$312 in 1993, while one million more people joined the 15.1% of the US population who now live in poverty. Time magazine called these statistics, "astonishing developments for the fourth year of a business recovery that is steadily gaining strength." This is the real face of the US economic recovery. Boom for whom?



Buick City strike

Socialist Appeal's economic correspondent, *Michael Roberts* asks the question...

When will the boom end?

The world capitalist economy has slowly recovered from the longest recession or slump in production since the 1930s. It lasted from the summer of 1990 (earlier for the US) until the summer of 1993 (for most of Europe and even later in Japan, although it finished earlier for the US). Last year the world grew about 2.5-3.0%. But that average growth hid wide disparities between the tigers of East Asia which grew at 8-10% (even higher in China) and Japan which hardly grew at all, or the US which grew over 4% while Germany managed less than 2%. This year and next world capitalism may expand again, at the relatively snail's pace of 3%.

This boom will come to an end. It is notoriously difficult to predict anything with any degree of accuracy, even in the natural and physical sciences, because there are so many factors to bring into any prediction. That is doubly so when trying to measure the behaviour of human beings and the social organisation. But we can be almost certain that this boom will end. Why? Not because of some blind faith in the 'collapse of capitalism'. But if there is one thing that is well documented in the analysis and history of capitalism it is that the world capitalist economy does not grow steadily and surely. On the contrary, investment spending and production leap forward and then crash in convulsive jerks. As Nigel Lawson, former Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer under Thatcher in the 1980s recently remarked, "booms and slumps are endem-

ic to capitalism". This boom will end just as surely as the last 1980s boom collapsed (if later than expected). The bankers and governments of the world are trying to keep inflation low, reduce government spending to save taxes on profits, and create a world order for international trade to ensure markets. But nothing they do will avoid another crash (in fact, by holding down spending and raising interest rates they are promoting another slump by squeezing profits and lowering demand for capitalist production).

But it is one thing to predict that something will eventually happen, it is another to say when? That is almost impossible with any degree of accuracy. However, a scientific approach should be able to identify key characteristics in the capitalist economy, which, if monitored closely, would provide some guide to its health and the likelihood of an oncoming illness. There are three key measures of the health of capitalism at any one time. Monitoring them can help in judging when a boom will come to an end. First, there is the rate of profit on capital invested. That is key to the whole mode of social production under capitalism. Investment in new technology and the production of goods needed by people and industry only takes place under capitalism if there is a profit in it. However, any return on investment in technology or production does not all go to the investor. If the manufacturer has borrowed money to invest he must pay interest on that money out of the profits from his investment. So the return to the manufacturer will be less

than the overall return on the investment. The finance capitalist gets a cut from the manufacturing capitalist's profits. As the decision to invest still depends on the manufacturer, so the second key measure becomes the rate of profit after deducting the rate of interest. The rate of overall profit may rise, but if the rate of interest rises more, then the manufacturing rate of profit would be lower and investment would fall



off. Also, there is inflation. What decides an investment for a manufacturer is not just the rate of return after paying off the banker, it is also the real purchasing power of the profit made. Finally, in a capitalist economy, a key factor is the growth of world markets. If the rate of profit is falling in domestic markets, but world trade is growing, then investment abroad may provide some salvation. But not for capitalism as a whole, because if everybody tried to gain profits from abroad when they were falling at home, that would soon exhaust the growth of trade.

If we measure the first two fac-

tors: the rate of profit and the rate of interest (after taking into account inflation in different economies), we can create what could be called the "real incentive rate of profit". This is the level of incentive in real terms that could induce capitalists to invest and so raise production. If the incentive rate of profit starts rising, then we can expect investment and production to follow. And the opposite if the incentive rate of profit starts falling. What's the evidence?

Looking at three key capitalist economies: the US, Japan and Germany (and also at the UK for the sake of those who still think Britain is an important capitalist state), the data shows that the movement up and down in production seems to follow the rise and fall of the incentive rate of profit by about one year. Looking ahead, if the incentive rate of profit is forecast to fall in 1996, then we can expect production to slump in 1997. And that is just what the forecasts for profit, interest and inflation suggest.

Will world trade growth help to avoid a slump in 1997? World

trade seems to lag behind the movement of the profit rate. Thus it picks up after profit rates have risen. It is picking up now from a low of 3% in 1993, two years after profit rates reached a low. Thus we can expect trade to grow quite fast up to 1997. That may help some big trading economies like Germany, Holland and Japan. But the US will already be well into slump by then and it only trades 12% of its GNP. So if these measures are any guide, then the next slump will be in 1997. But don't forget timing is almost impossible to get right!

Get well red

Each month in our book reviews we seek to bring to our readers attention both important new books on issues of relevance to socialists as well as reminding you from time to time of the great socialist classics which are around. Of course many left books are not exactly cheap, however there are some good bargains available for those on a limited budget. We stock all the main classics of Marx, Engels and Lenin in the cheap Chinese editions which although rather basic in design have the advantage of being very well priced. Engels' *Origin Of The Family, Private Property And The State* costs only £1.20 and *Anti-Dühring* will set you back only £2. Some of the pamphlets are very cheap—Lenin on *The State* costs 25p and his *3 Sources And 3 Component Parts Of Marxism* is 35p a copy! We also stock the main writings of Trotsky and one bargain to consider is the 3 vols of writings on Britain at £12 the set. Away from the classics we have some very good other bargains available. The "Lives of the left" series include titles on *Karl Kautsky* (£2), *James Maxton* (£2), *A.J. Cook* (£1) and *Big Bill Haywood* (£1). These are not socialist books as such but are all written in a reasonably sympathetic way. Also worth a read is Alfred

Rosmer's "*Lenin's Moscow*" which now costs only £1.99 and is a very interesting account of events in Russia after the revolution. We also stock some of the works of Victor Serge including *Year One Of The Revolution* (£3.99) and his novels *Conquered City*, *Birth Of Our Power* and *Men In Prison* (all at the bargain price of £3 each). We also have two particularly valuable titles on English history which I would recommend. The first is A.L. Morton's *A People's History Of England* (£9.99) which still remains the best introduction to the subject and a splendid antidote to all the official histories which we all had to endure at one time or another. The other book is Christopher Hill's short book on the background to the English Civil War called *The English Revolution 1640*. This classic serves as a most clear and concise overview of the subject and an excellent preparation for his other writings of the subject including the classic *World Turned Upside Down*. It is important to have a clear understanding of history as a

struggle of classes rather than as a procession of Kings, Queens, Generals and Prime Ministers. Trade unionists should get hold of *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs (£10.95). Several generations of Socialists have cut their teeth on this classic account of the struggle of the Teamsters union in Minneapolis USA during the Thirties. We will review this work in depth in a future issue of *Socialist Appeal* but don't wait until then to get a copy. A full book list is available on request. To order any of the books we have write to us at PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU. Cheques/PO's should be made payable to Well Red Books and you should add 10% to cover postage and packaging unless the total order comes to more than £20 in which case the postage is free. Ring us on 0171 251 1094 to check if something is in stock or for more information.

Steve Jones

Sell Socialist Appeal

A number of readers have rung us to comment favourably on the new cover design of *Socialist Appeal*. We have taken the opportunity presented by the new design (which was possible following the purchase of the scanner, new laser printer and computer upgrades) to have a special push on sales of the journal. Up and down the country supporters have been selling *Socialist Appeal* at labour movement events, trade union and LP branches and meetings called on the question of Clause IV. *Socialist Appeal* has been an invaluable aid to raising the question of the need for socialism and public ownership. Why not become a *Socialist Appeal* seller yourself—write or ring us (on 0171 251 1094) to find out how you can raise the sales of *Socialist Appeal*. A sellers pack containing useful material on selling, introduction letters, subscription forms, sales log cards and so on is available. The supporters of 'market forces' and the 'mixed economy' (ie capitalism!) have the support of the forces of the mass media to assist them. Socialism needs a voice such as *Socialist Appeal*. Only you can make that possible. Help us by selling *Socialist Appeal* and/or by making a donation to our Press Fund. Join us in the fight for socialism.

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Arif Shah

Brutal assassination of workers leader

The recent assassination of Arif Shah, the President of the Punjab Labour Federation, by hired agents of the employers opens up a new chapter for organised labour. After taking action to block the main Lahore-Karachi highway for more than five hours, 20,000 workers attended Arif Shah's funeral the following day and pledged themselves to carry on the struggle.

This brutal act highlights the harsh situation faced by the trade union movement in Pakistan. A situation that can no longer be tolerated. It arises from the increased repression of the employers in their drive for increased profits and the general break-down of society. In Karachi alone, 700 people have been killed in the last two months in growing ethnic and communal violence. The national question, and the oppression of national minorities has become a burning question, with horrific consequences throughout Pakistan. Crime, murder, arson and bloodshed have become a common sight as the social fabric of society is progressively undermined.

A week before the murder of Arif Shah, the President and General Secretary of the Steel Union (PRU) at the Ittefaq Foundry in Lahore, Mahmood Butt and Ghulam Miran Shah, were attacked and beaten by hired thugs. Their only crime was the organisation of an independent trade union that directly challenged the bosses and their company unions. The Ittefaq Foundry is owned by right-wing leader and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The conditions of the workers are miserable. Food prices are

soaring and inflation is running at over 25% (the false official figure is 14.3%, which is even ridiculed in the newspapers). According to conservative estimates unemployment is 10 million - and rising by 10% annually. There is no unemployment benefit or welfare state. The literacy rate is a mere 14%. Child mortality rates and the death of women during child birth are one of the highest in the world. According to the United Nations "Education for All summit" in New Delhi, only 29% of Pakistani children were enrolled in schools (the figure for girls was below 20%), compared to the next worst level which was Nigeria with 59%.

Brutal exploitation is rife. Over one million children work in the carpet industry, 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. Added to this must be added the many street sellers, rag-pickers and beggars.

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. Workers 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. In the last 10 years the population increased by 33%, while the basic infrastructure and services, like roads, communications, health, education, electricity and sewage etc.

increased by less than 6%. Meanwhile, more than 90% of the GDP is spent on debt servicing and the armed forces. The mass of Pakistani workers, ever since the revolutionary wave of 1968/9, have looked to the Pakistan Peoples Party for salvation. The hopes and aspirations of the masses are bound up with its name.

IMF

Unfortunately, the present PPP government of Benazir Bhutto, in its search for economic aid, has succumbed to the pressures of the IMF and World Bank. It has therefore embarked upon a programme of privatisation, cuts in subsidies, and is opening up the economy to the exploitation of the international monopolies. This goes directly counter to the founding programme and principles of the PPP, and the ideas that Benazir's father stood for.

This has produced great ferment in the rank and file of the party as well as its supporters throughout the country. There is growing widespread resentment against these attacks on living standards within the trade union movement, and also within the PPP Labour wing itself. The opposition faction headed by her brother, Murtaza Bhutto, is calling Benazir's actions "an outright betrayal of the founding principles and ideals of the party". Her mother has also been forced into opposition, after being removed from the PPP leadership. At the same time, a strong left opposition ('The Struggle') is developing in the PPP. This left has taken up the struggle against fundamentalism and the capitalist and landlord elements that have hijacked the party. Arif Shah was one of the main trade

union leaders of this left wing which holds allegiance to Marxist ideas.

As a result of the assassination of Arif Shah, leading trade union activists have established the 'Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign', sponsored by the Punjab Labour Federation, the United Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers Alliance, the Railway Workers Union, the Nation Union of Postal Employees, Manzoor Ahmed [Information Secretary, PPP Labour Bureau (Punjab)], and many others. Our programme is the following:

- 1) Defence of our trade unions from the physical attacks of the employers. Defend our right to organise!**
 - 2) Stop the privatisation and plunder of state industries. Renationalise those privatised firms under workers' control.**
 - 3) For a minimum living wage for all, linked to the cost of living.**
 - 4) The abolition of child labour. For free education and health.**
- We are appealing internationally for sponsorship for this campaign. We believe there is a particular bond between the workers movement in Britain and Pakistan, given the terrible role that British imperialism played in the Indian sub-continent. We do not appeal for charity. We appeal for solidarity!**

Shahida Jabeen (National Secretary, PPP Women's Organisation, and Secretary, Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign)

On Wednesday the 15th February, a nation-wide protest at the murder of Arif Shah was launched in Pakistan. Despite the difficulties caused by the period of Ramadan, the comrades of *The Struggle* produced a special issue of the paper and a very good poster, in English and Urdu, 10,000 of which were put up all over the country.

On the day of the demonstration, a large number of workers from 25 to 30 trade unions converged on Lahore in buses, trolleys, and different vehicles, with banners and flags. For three hours, the 8,000 strong demonstration blocked the main road from Nasir Bagh to the Parliament (Assembly Chowk). Then all the workers gathered in a rally opposite the Punjab Assembly (Provincial Parliament House)

Banners

The unions carried different banners, with slogans such as "Arif's blood means revolution". "Arif Shah, we promise that we will continue your fight". "Arif Shah's way is our way". "Death to Arif Shah's murderers". "Arif, we promise we will continue the fight against privatisation". "Stop child labour. Stop bonded labour". "End cruel laws against women", and "Down with the state government of Sheikhpura". 250 marchers carried *The Struggle's* poster. The main speakers at the rally were Shahida Jabeen, Manzor Ahmed, Mahmood Butt, Sajida, Dastagir Mahboob, Arif Shah's brother Anwar Shah, Abdul Qadir Shaheen (president People's Labour Bureau, PPP Punjab), Aslam Wafi (trade union leader from Faisalabad),

Pakistan workers protest against murder

Shafi (trade union leader from Fauji Sugar Mill). The entire protest was organised and led by *The Struggle*. The signs of rage could be clearly seen in the faces of the workers, who were determined to take revenge for the brutal murder of their leader. They were in very aggressive mood as they shouted slogans with one voice and shook their fists. Also important was the role of women in this demonstration. The police tried to manhandle the demonstrators, to clear the road. But the women workers in the front ranks pushed the police back. The attempts of the police to keep the traffic running were frustrated by the sheer volume of demonstrators. The demonstration was highly disciplined, the leaders marching at the head, and a line of motor-bikes on either side to protect the marchers.

Rallies

Although the main demonstration was in Lahore, there were also smaller rallies and protest actions in other areas - Hyderabad, Karachi and Thata (Sind), Rawalpindi, Sadiqabad (Punjab), Peshawar (Northwest Frontier), and Quetta (Baluchistan). 250 trade unionists attended the rally in Sadiqabad. In Quetta, the workers held a demonstration during working hours, starting at 11am.

It is particularly important to point out that there were protests by the trade unions amongst the oppressed nationalities (Baluchistan, Sind, Northwest Frontier) against the assassination of a Punjabi workers leader. This is the first time in decades that such solidarity between the workers of all Pakistan has been achieved. From this fact alone, we can see that Arif's death was not in vain. We can also be proud of the genuine spirit of revolutionary internationalism is being built in Pakistan, establishing a new tradition, capable of uniting Baluchis, Sindis, Punjabis and Pushtoons in struggle. The demonstrations on the 15th was only the first shot in the campaign. A new protest has been called for Wednesday the

22nd of February. This will take the form of a massive demonstration in Arif Shah's home town, Sheikhpura. This was announced at the rallies on the 15th, and the workers are preparing for a big turn-out. Murtaza Bhutto (leader of the PPP opposition) has promised to attend.

Socialist Revolution

After Ramadan, the comrades plan to organise a seminar in the Alhambra, where we previously organised the presentation of the book *Socialist Revolution in Pakistan*. At this seminar, a video will be shown of Arif Shah's intervention in that meeting, and his life and work as a workers leader and revolutionary will be discussed.



Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign

Sponsored by the Punjab Labour Federation, the United Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers Alliance, the National Railway workers Union and the National Union of postal Employees.

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Address.....

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All correspondence and donations to: Shahida Jabeen, Secretary, Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, PO Box 6977, London N1 3JN. All cheques payable to Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign.

FUNDAMENTALIST RESURGENCE

CAUSES AND PROSPECTS

by Lal Khan

The collapse of the Soviet Union has resulted in one of the most turbulent and disturbed periods in human history. Instead of being the precursor to "the end of history," capitalism is enmeshed in an endless crisis. There is not a single region of the world which is not engulfed in social, economic or political crisis. Capitalism on a world scale has proved to be incapable of resolving this crisis, and developing society further.

As a reaction to these crises new, and some not so new, phenomenon have emerged on the political horizons of most countries. In most of the "third world" "Islamic" countries there is the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism. From the possibility of the fundamentalists (FIS) taking power in Algeria, to the funda-

minority. The response of Western capitalism is both hypocritical and deceptive. In some ways the Western media is blowing the threat of Islamic fundamentalism out of proportion. Firstly, because their fear of a fundamentalist rise to power especially in Algeria sends a shiver down the spines of imperialist rulers. The experience in Iran, Lebanon and elsewhere in the recent past gave them a bloody nose. In most of the poor Islamic countries the imperialist sponsored bourgeois (capitalist) democracies and quasi-democracies are failing to deliver the goods. The economies are in a mess and further deteriorating mainly because of the super exploitation of imperialism. In a vacuum created by the collapse of the Stalinist left and the failure of reformism, fundamentalists have a fertile breeding ground. The coming to power of the

the current media blitz is also meant for domestic purposes by the Western ruling classes. Given these motives, the whole image of fundamentalism is not only exaggerated but also distorted and misinterpreted by US and world imperialism.

Dulles

Modern Islamic fundamentalism was actually the brainchild of US secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. In the wake of the defeat of the British and French imperialists in the Suez Canal dispute in 1956, imperialism was alarmed. The rise of Nasser in Egypt and other left populist leaders in the Middle East and other Islamic countries posed a direct threat to imperialist interests in regard to the flow of oil. For almost three to four decades Islamic fundamentalism was nurtured, sponsored and promoted by US imperialism. Although there are exceptions like the Shias in Iran, in most countries these fundamentalist organisations served as offshoots of American sponsored dictatorships and other repressive regimes. In Indonesia, Sarakat-Islam played the role of informers and state agents in the brutal execution of about one million communists by the Suharto dictatorship in 1965. In Egypt, Syria and a number of other countries; the Islamic fundamentalist organisations like Akhwan-ul-Muslimeen were used to destabilise the left-wing regimes. In Afghanistan they played the most vicious role. For fourteen years the Jihad (Holy War) in Afghanistan was fought as a proxy war of US imperialism and the reactionary Arab regimes. In Pakistan the main fundamentalist party Jamaat-a-Islami was the main tool of imperialism and the state to curb left-

wing forces. During the martial law regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, it acted as a B-team of the state in carrying out the persecution of activists struggling against the dictatorship. They organised neo-fascist armed gangs with the sponsorship of the state to disrupt and breakup anti-Zia demonstrations, rallies and public gatherings. Similar examples could be cited in most Islamic countries with US backed regimes, throughout the post Second World War period. At the same time it would be a mistake to define Islamic fundamentalism as a homogeneous force. Both from the point of view of their theological foundations to their practice in politics and society, there are various strands of Islamic fundamentalism.

Sects

The various sects have basic differences of a historical, regional and nationalistic nature. The sectarian conflict and dissension of Islamic theology started from the very early days of Islam. The main sects have been the Shias and the Sunnis. But this is merely the tip of the iceberg. Islam was one of the main revolutionary movements against slavery in the last millennium. But with the rise of state power, most of the nomadic tribes turned into new ruling elites. It was this struggle for power which gave rise to various theological tendencies, which later took the form of the present day sects. In the initial days of the advent of Islam, great advances were made in the field of science, art, architecture and other fields. The deep penetration of Islamic rule into Europe played a major role in the renaissance in Europe in later centuries. At the same time, the ruling elites, to retain their power and privileges, resorted to



mentalist whipping up terror to assassinate Taslima Nasreen in Bangladesh. There is hardly an Islamic country where this revivalism has not become a mainstream political tendency. Its reverberations are being felt in China and it has become a spectre even in the United States where the Muslims are in a small

Mullahs gives the Western imperialists much less leverage in controlling these countries due to the fanaticism and unpredictability of these fundamentalists. Secondly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the "external fear" which imperialism played upon was also obliterated. Hence the bogey of fundamentalism in

repression and conservatism. Thus retarding the development of science and technique unleashed by the Islamic revolution. Hence the whole process was turned into its opposite. Today the domination of finance capital in most of these societies failed to develop the social and physical infrastructure of modern industry and society. This uneven and combined development of capitalism under the yoke of world imperialism created a society very different from those in the West. While there was an enormous industrialisation in these poor countries in the '50s and '60s, there was not a corresponding development of the basic facilities of clean drinking water, sewerage, electricity, proper housing, education, health facilities and other utilities. For example between 1982 and 1992, the population in Pakistan grew by 33%, while the basic facilities grew by 6.9%. On the other hand, the influx of capital had a devastating effect in the agrarian sector. As a result of this a mass exodus of population started from the countryside to the cities. But instead of the proper absorption into industry and urban society, the lack of social development created the phenomenon of a widespread expansion of shanty towns with horrific living conditions. The stark contradictions created by the brutal conditions as a result of the unevenness of capitalist development led to massive explosions. In the '50s, '60s and '70s, in relatively favourable international conditions, there were massive movements of the newly emerging proletariat. But, due mainly to the betrayal of the "left" trade unions and political leadership, the failure of these movements to transform society on a socialist basis led to disastrous consequences. Religious, national, ethnic, communal, linguistic, caste and other reactionary prejudices came to the forefront. Most of these shanty towns became cesspools of dirt, disease, poverty, drudgery and prostitution. Lumpenisation, crime and gangsterism became social epidemics. Life in these urban shanty towns was worse than that of the villages. Mass crime and lumpenisation created a feeling of insecurity and alienation. In the absence of a clear revolutionary alternative, this led to distress and demoralisation in certain sections of this newly urbanised population and the petty bourgeoisie. A wide section of youth from rural areas

which came to study in the cities was also infected by this crisis. With society giving little room to develop and move forward, the suffocation led them to move back—into the nostalgia for a fabricated Islamic glory. The lust for power, perks and privilege are an integral part of the petty bourgeois mentality. In Pakistan, the fundamentalists, led by Jamaat-a-Islami, provided all these prerequisites. Hence initially they started from students of a semi-peasant/feudal psychology. In the mid seventies, when the PPP Government of that period failed to deliver the goods, the Jamaat-a-Islami further expanded its tentacles in the trade unions and peasantry. Since then, Islamic fundamentalism has had an impact on a minor but vital section of the urban population. Hence they became a motive force which was backed up by imperialism to repress revolution. The ideology of these fundamentalist is mainly to install an Islamic state on the basis of theology. The main stream of this ideology is based more on nostalgic examples of a nomadic society, where the highest form of economy was mercantile capitalism. Various Islamic scholars have tried to interpret the basic Koranic theology into the prevalent societies and economies throughout the last 1400 years. Although there are sharp differences of approach and interpretations belonging to various sects, there is no clear-cut alternative to the capitalist system. A theology of more than a millennium ago can be interpreted in any direction.

Reactionary

The capitalists and landlords have used the reactionary Mullahs to utilise Islamic theology for their class benefits. Some clerics, who were radicalised during the anti-imperialist struggle in the Indian subcontinent presented a leftist interpretation of Islam. The impact of the Bolshevik revolution, even in the Indian subcontinent was enormous. During the early years of revolution Maulana Obaid-u-Allah Sindhi travelled to the Soviet Union to see Lenin. In 1924, another cleric Maulana Hasrat Mohane became the general secretary of the Communist Party of India. Similarly the right-wing Islamic/Nationalist poet Iqbal wrote long poems praising Lenin and the Bolsheviks. But any Islamic interpretation of modern economy and politics



remains incomplete because of the materialistic nature of social, economic and political relations of society. The right of private ownership, individual enterprise and right of profit are accepted in the basic tenets of Islam. Paradoxically it also calls for equality and brotherhood. In present-day economic relations, these are insoluble contradictions. In Iran where the Islamic state was formed after a forceful, bloody, "Islamic" revolution, the situation has not been very different. After 15 years of the Islamic (Shias) revolution, the economy is in a mess. The oil exports of \$18 billion in 1992, which constituted 90% of hard currency exports, now dropped to 12%. Despite continuous subsidies of basic foods, such as wheat and rice, inflation is running at some 60% a year. The burden of foreign debt is heavy. It is estimated that something between \$15-30 billion. It is not clear whether the Iranian government has enough resources to pay the re-scheduled debt of \$8 billion to European and Japanese banks later this year. Rafsanjani and his clique are trying to abide by the IMF conditions of privatisation, deregulation, opening-up to foreign investment and trade liberalisation. However the cutting of subsidies has faced a tough resistance from the hard-line Mullahs led by Khameni. This would mean stringent measures to cut imports, which have halved during the last year. This has meant shortages of imported raw materials for Iranian factories, and items like toothpaste and antibiotics have become a luxury. Iranian society as a consequence is in turmoil. After a prolonged "external" war with Iraq and other external diversions, now the chickens have come home to roost. In the recent uprising in Qazvin, a city in

Northern Iran, the armed forces were ordered to bomb the city mercilessly by air and land. This action has provoked dissension within the armed forces, which can explode in the next period. A higher repetition of the rebellion against the brutalities of the Shah is possible in the not so distant future. But above all this reflects the growing resentment and the disillusionment in society because of its socioeconomic impasse.

Experiment

The experiment in Iran shows the glaring contradiction of modern economy and theological metaphysical myths. Above all the fundamental contradiction is of the crushing domination of imperialism through the forces of the world market. Khomeini once said that "we would live on goat's milk to maintain our independence." This is easier said than done. This rhetoric is quashed by the realities of present-day life. Even in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other Islamic countries, electricity, toothpaste, antibiotics, running tap water, etc. have become an integral part of the lives of a vast majority of the population. Most of the products are produced by modern industry dominated by imperialism. About 500 imperialist corporations dominate 85% of world production directly or indirectly. A vast majority of these multinationals are owned by the big imperialist powers. The conditions imposed by the IMF, World Bank and other imperialist institutions are mainly aimed to further squeeze the economies of these poor countries to benefit world imperialism. The pain of this super exploitation is being felt by the poorer sections of these societies. Without an irreconcilable scientific ideology of a social transformation of the relations of ownership—every economic doctrine will end-up in propping up

capitalism and imperialism. In the last few years the fundamentalists in order to gain a more expanded mass base, have tried to use the 'stick and the carrot' method. They have tried to combine neo-fascist methods with populist demagogy. For example, in the past, they used to prohibit musical functions and other entertainment activities. In recent times, they have themselves, used music and entertainment with an Islamic tinge in their own functions and mass meetings to give a more sort of liberal and populist image. In Pakistan, they have created youth front organisations to enhance this populist image. Although this tactical drift varies with different streams of Islamic fundamentalists, a generalised shift to various degrees is very evident. Their youth and other front organisations have adopted a strategy to build agitation around the day-to-day issues faced by the mass of the population. One of these main issues is the rampant crime in Pakistan. They would, for example resort to murder, dacoity, rape or any other major crime. Publicise the consolation act with the bereaved family members or friends and then launch a major agitation around the funeral or other religious custom. They do get an instant response when they agitate against the police and other agencies of state repression. Similarly on a wider-scale they use the rhetoric of anti-capitalist, anti-landlord slogans. To this they have now added anti-imperialist rhetoric. At the same time they use the issues of social deprivation, like water, electricity, health, education, transport, housing and sewerage.

In the 1993 elections in Pakistan: the electoral front of Jamaat-a-Islami, the PIF (Pakistan Islamic

Front, formed in relation to the FIS in Algeria), used this semi-socialist rhetoric to boost their election campaign. But with the presence of the PPP in opposition and the ideological contrast between their populist tactic, socioeconomic rhetoric and theological foundations, most fundamentalist parties including the Jamat-a-Islami were trounced in these elections. However a large number of fundamentalist's votes went to Sharif's Muslim League. These tactical changes have caused splits and breaches in the Jamaat-a-Islami itself and an aggravation of the sectarian strife between different fundamentalist tendencies. However because of the deep intrusion of drug money and corruption in society, the fundamentalists could hardly remain aloof from its impact. Hence most of these groupings have become sectarian mafias.

Indoctrination

The leadership and hard core using the mosques as indoctrination centres instil religious and sectarian prejudices into the minds of very young children. During the Zia dictatorship in '80s, the influx of heroin money gave a substantial financial backing to this practise of the Mullahs. The entry of these sectarian organisations into the Afghan Jihad (Holy War) gave them unprecedented access to weapons and armoury. One of the most resurgent groups is the Sipah-a-Sihabah Pakistan, representing Sunni fundamentalism. Its "cadres" are mainly the product of the Madraisah (mosque school) and the aftermath of the Afghan war. With the intensification of socioeconomic crisis and a lull in the class movement, the terrorists in these organisations have become more and more fanatical. This has led to splits of about 20 splinter groups in

Punjab from their parent organisations. Their tactics became more vicious and indulgence in crime deeper.

According to a report by the Punjab Home Department, the weaponry possessed by these groups, was more than that contained in the arsenals of the Punjab Police. The Sipah-a-Sihabah spends about Rupees 2.5 million on literature inciting religious hatred every month. The expenditure on arms is much more. The transformation of these organisations into criminal mafias became inevitable. Soaring unemployment and social distress gave these sectarian mafias access to a wide layer of the youth for recruitment. The emergence of Sipah-a-Muhammad represented the same process amongst the Shia fundamentalists. The rise in sectarian clashes also represents the conflict in crime, as these mafias are now involved in murder and kidnapping for ransom. In reality, religion is being used as a cover for the justification of the criminal activities of these groupings.

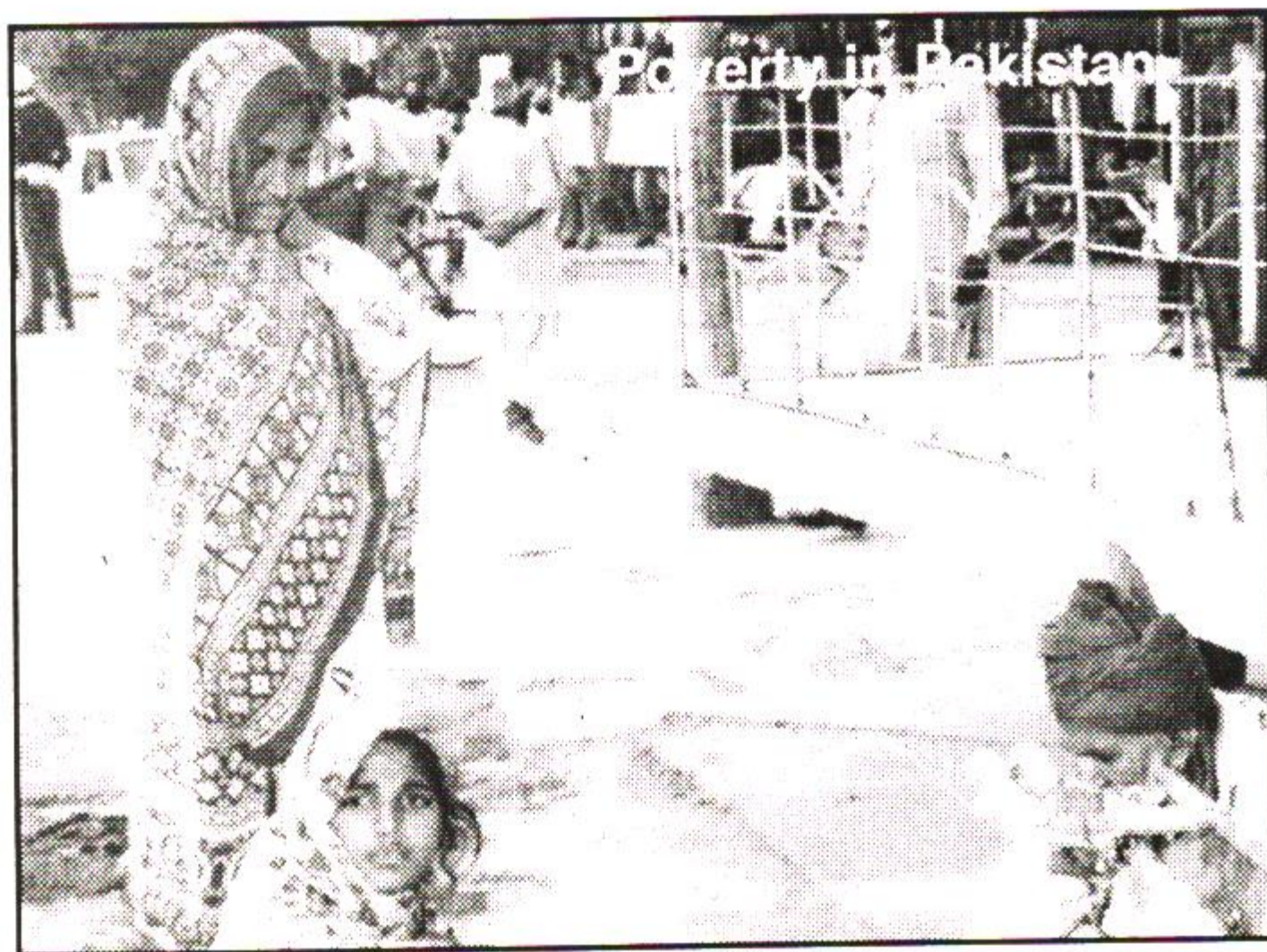
In the recent period, the bourgeois media is giving more and more attention to the "menace" of fundamentalism. Large sections of the ruling classes in most third world countries are raising a hue and cry against the rising threat of fundamentalism. But in reality, the fundamentalist resurgence is the by-product of the failure of the capitalist class to carry-out its historical tasks. If we take the case of India, after almost 50 years of having one of the largest capitalist markets in the world, the capitalist class was not able to carry-out a single task of the national democratic revolution to its completion. This class was termed progressive nationalist etc. by the Stalinist left for decades. Yet after all that period, the secular liberal nationalist democratic and progressive Indian capitalist class has plunged India into a cesspool of religious violence and fundamentalist resurgence. Not only that, this historically atheist class has resorted to using fundamentalism for its own vested interests. Large sections of the Indian ruling class now subscribe to fundamentalism and are supporting and sponsoring BJP (Bhartia Janata Party—the main Hindu revivalist party) for political, financial and economic gains. But this is nothing new. The ruling capitalist class in most ex-colonial countries have a history of using the fundamentalists

and other reactionary forces to undermine the class struggle and preserve their system of exploitation. In most ex-colonial countries, after so-called independence the ruling classes tried to ape the rulers of the West to carry through the national democratic revolution. Given the delay in their emergence in the historical arena, the peculiar distorted shape of the development of these economies and the crushing domination of imperialist exploitation prevented this course. In the post Second World War period, in spite of a certain lull in the advanced capitalist countries, a revolutionary wave raged throughout the colonial world. In some countries, like China, Vietnam, Cuba, Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia, etc. these movements resulted in the overthrow of landlordism and capitalism. These developments in fact cut across the Stalinist theory of two stages. This theory called for the support of the so-called national, liberal, secular bourgeoisie to carry out the national democratic revolution and then at a later stage a proletarian revolution could be envisaged.

Marxist

But with the absence of a genuine Marxist leadership, these revolutions took a distorted shape. They based themselves on the model of Moscow, not that of Lenin but that of Stalin. In spite of unprecedented development in these societies on a national basis a total socioeconomic transformation was not possible. However big steps were taken by the proletarian bonapartist regimes in these countries. These included rapid land reforms and other steps to break the shackles of the past and the crushing domination of imperialism. This provoked a sharp reaction from imperialism, landlords and the Mullahs (in Islamic countries). The most striking example is that of Afghanistan.

In the spring of 1978 the left-wing officers, organised in the Khalq Party, took power through a coup against the reactionary regime of Daud. They carried through this coup without the consent, information and approval of the Russian bureaucracy. It was forced to accept the new left-wing proletarian bonapartist regime as an established fact. The new left-wing regime under the leadership of Tarakai abolished the trade in women,



landed estates and other reactionary traits prevalent in society. The so-called "democratic" American imperialism formed an unholy alliance with the Mullahs, landlords and other reactionary elements to start an insurgency against the left-wing regime in Afghanistan. Military and financial aid worth billions of dollars was pumped into Afghanistan to organise the fundamentalist counter-revolution. After fourteen years the regime collapsed more from its internal contradictions than from the Jihad (Holy War) by the Mullahs. In a spin off effect of the collapse of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, most of the other proletarian bonapartist regimes collapsed in a more or less similar fashion. However, Afghanistan developed into a bastion of Islamic fundamentalism in this process. The accumulation of arms, money and drug trafficking gave the fundamentalists their strong financial basis. However, the present situation in Afghanistan shows the reactionary potential of fundamentalism. More people have been killed in the last 4 years in sectarian clashes between various fundamentalist groups than the deaths which took place in the war between the Mullahs and the ex-Stalinist regime in Kabul. These fundamentalists have turned back Afghanistan into the mediaeval ages, on the verge of the twenty first century. More than 80% of the buildings of Kabul—once a beautiful city, have been destroyed. A vast majority of Afghanistan's population lives in caves. Now this "bastion" of the Mullahs is exporting fundamentalist mercenaries to other countries of the region. This ranges from Southern China and Kashmir to the countries of the Magreb (North Africa). A large number of religious fanatics had come from various Arab and Muslim countries to Afghanistan to participate in the Jihad (Holy War) against the infidels (communists). Now they are being sent back especially from Pakistan. But the situation in the North-Western areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan is far from any real control by the Pakistani state. The only force which can deter the threat of fundamentalism is the revolutionary movement of the working class. In Pakistan at every turning point in history, whenever the class struggle emerged, the fundamentalists were cornered both in the political and social arena. During the 1970 elections in Pakistan, which

were held in the aftermath of a mass revolutionary movement, the fundamentalists were trounced. This happened in spite of the fact that all the right-wing parties were in a united alliance; and the context was made into a match between infidelity and Islam. All the leading 'Ulema' from the Imam; leading clerics of Kaaba (Mecca, Saudi Arabia) to

the military establishment is already creating a tension between certain sections of the top brass of the army and US imperialism. The Benazir government can lose its popularity and mass support quite rapidly. The Right and the fundamentalists can build a mass movement at a certain stage, which could be quite reactionary in character.

other. On the other hand some army generals can ape Saddam and Zia to base their dictatorship regimes on primitive sections of society using Islamic rhetoric. But the example of Afghanistan shows that such a development would be catastrophic for the whole region. Such a prospect also depends on a number of factors, and the direction of events in the next period. Hence in order to combat fundamentalism, it is necessary to attack and destroy those socioeconomic conditions in which it breeds. In a capitalist landlord set-up, it is impossible to develop economic and social foundations which can eliminate poverty, misery crime and disease. The present system can in no way provide such an economic basis which can provide water, electricity, health care, education, transport, housing and other facilities needed to transform the lives of ordinary people.

"The only force which can deter the threat of fundamentalism is the revolutionary movement of the working class. In Pakistan, at every turning point in history, whenever the class struggle emerged, the fundamentalists were cornered both in the political and social arena."

the leading cleric of the oldest Islamic University, Al-Azar in Cairo gave their official blessing to the "anti-socialist" Islamic alliance, but still the masses voted for the PPP which was contesting the election on a revolutionary programme. In the present situation the fundamentalists are harping on their new found anti-American and anti-imperialist rhetoric. The masses are aware of the severe exploitation being carried out by the imperialist states under the auspices of the IMF, and the World Bank. At the same time, most of the "secular," "liberal" and nationalist forces are subscribing to the democratic (bourgeois) system being pursued by US imperialism on a world scale. If fundamentalism is a menace for the masses, US imperialism is no less an evil either. Hence to pose "democratic," "liberal" and secularist policies with the existing socioeconomic foundations as an antidote against Islamic fundamentalism is meaningless.

Exploiting

The oppressed masses must face the brunt of this imperialist exploitation and not the pundits of "Democracy," "Secularism" and "Liberalism" who themselves belong to the exploiting classes, hence in the final analysis, become stooges of imperialism. A fundamentalist accession of power for example, in Algeria, will give it the status of a serious option for certain sections of the state and the ruling class. In Pakistan the increasing pressure of the US to cut down the size of

Although the possibilities of fundamentalists coming to power as a cohesive force through a popular election victory are remote, still they will continue to stir violence and work to destabilise the Benazir government. On a capitalist road, the Benazir led PPP coalition government can not do much about fundamentalism. Their social weight is mainly due to the under-development and the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, which Benazir can't retrieve with her present policies. It is this weakness of Benazir's democratic liberalism, which forces her to appease the Mullahs. Her desperate attempts at Islamic gestures in fact show the weakness of her policies against the forces of black reaction. The further increase in turbulence and the increased size of the army developed by the PPP government, to control the situation can make things worse. In a conflagratory situation, if the army is used for greater repression, it can result in greater cracks in the military establishment. This can ultimately back-fire and the sections opting for a military dictatorship can gain greater support within the officer caste of the army. On the other hand, with a further enhancement of conflict between US imperialism and the army, more officers of the reactionary officer caste can move in the direction of fundamentalism. This can precipitate a bloody anti-imperialist, pro-fundamentalist coup. Such a development can also lead to a civil war—with sections of the army fighting each

Exploitation

Similarly a political programme attacking imperialist exploitation and the drudgery of landlordism and capitalism, is necessary to seriously combat fundamentalism. Without such a thoroughly worked-out programme and a perspective for the overthrow of capitalism, a movement against such horrors, as fundamentalism, can't be built. At the same time such a movement can only be built on a class basis under the leadership of the proletariat. As it is the only class, which can unite all nationalities, religious groups, and other stratum of society into a unified movement. But the ultimate destination of such a movement has to be a social transformation of society. Otherwise it would mean nothing. Hence in the final analysis, humanity can only be salvaged from the menace of fundamentalism through a socialist revolution. Such movements have emerged in the past, they will re-emerge in the not too distant future. What we have learned from recent history is that, the divergence of such movements, in a rotten system, on the lines of bourgeois "liberalism," bourgeois "democracy" and bourgeois "secularism" in the explosive times ahead would spell disaster. Learning the lessons of the past and the present, the historical task of today is to transform society on the lines of democratic socialism, which is the only way forward for mankind today.

Alejandro Arevalo in Mexico describes the repression launched by the Zedillo government...

Stop war and repression in Mexico!

Zedillo's statement on the supposed unmasking of Marcos (the main leader of EZLN) and other EZLN leaders and the army offensive in Chiapas is a war declaration not only against the Zapatistas but also against city and land workers, the youth, poor peasants, tenants, women, professionals and pensioners.

They are sinking us deeper into misery every day, imposing on us starvation wages, 1 million more unemployed in the last quarter of 1994 and 2 million more forecast by August 1995, and now they want to turn the country into a blood bath and kill us with their bullets of repression. The PRI-PAN government, while talking about peace and dialogue to the national and international mass media, has been preparing war and greater repression. We can no longer trust their lies. With this wave of repression they are trying to threaten and behead trade union organisations in the cities and in the countryside, PRD, students organisations, tenants associations, the National Democratic Convention and the National Liberation Movement. The PRD General Secretary, was accused of knowing and of having studied with the supposed unmasked Marcos (EZLN leader). Just a few hours before Cuahutemoc Cardenas went to visit PRD members occupying Yanga town hall (Veracruz), in protest against electoral fraud, a supposed armoury was discovered, and the authorities tried to frame Cardenas.

There is harassment with threatening phone calls and the open following of trade union and PRD activists and the paper Militante by the political police. They are trying to frame the San de Cristobal Las Casas (Chiapas) catholic bishop, Samuel Ruiz; critical journalists, non-government human rights organisations; sections of the catholic church,... the centre of the Peace Organisations Co-ordinating Committee has been surrounded. We demand the end of harassment and witch-hunt.

In Chiapas a state of emergency has been declared in the Los Altos area. The danger of its extension to other areas of the state and the whole country is still there. The government is preparing the ground with statements in the press and in Parliament to attack the right to strike, to meet, to demonstrate and the freedom of expression, and they want to pass anti-terrorist laws to allow 72 hour long detentions without giving reasons.

Witch hunt

This witch hunt is also being used by the employers to sack trade union activists. Teachers have been sacked in the National History and Anthropology School, accused of organising 'subversive' groups; lecturers and teachers and the Autonomous Mexican University Workers Union (SITUAM) have protested against the harassment of the education community in this University where the supposed unmasked Marcos used to study. In Cuernavaca

(Morelos State), Gerardo Santana, and Alejandro Arevalo, shop stewards, members of the PRD and supporters of the paper of the PRD leftwing, Militante, have been sacked by the employer Fernando Covarrubias allegedly for links with the EZLN. We demand the end of all sackings.

Genocide

We also denounce the genocide in Chiapas by the army. Amnesty International has denounced bombings in Morelia, Ocosingo and Altamirano. In La Garrucha, 9 dead men were found after the army offensive. The house of the rebellious Chiapas governor, Amando Avendano was ransacked and a computer, money, notes for a book, a radio, and some documents were stolen. From the 8th of February there were detentions all over the country of supposed

'Zapatistas' linking them with two 'armouries' composed of two guns and four bombs (!). We denounce this as a manoeuvre by the Home Office Ministry, as were the bombs in a shopping centre in Mexico City at the beginning of 1994.

The detained are:

*Ramiro Arciga Martiner, Lecturer. Detained on Saturday 11 February in Tehuacan (Puebla State). There have been four demonstrations in Puebla demanding his release, called by the National Union of Education Workers and the National Co-ordination of Education Workers.

*Hermelinda Garcia. Detained in Yanga (Veracruz State) on 8 February. Beaten on the head and legs. Was stripped and given electric shocks all over her body. Was beaten again in jail.

*Alvaro Castillo Granados. Detained in Yanga (Veracruz). Was blindfolded and kept incommunicado. They almost suffocated him with a plastic bag. He was beaten on the genitals. He received electric shocks all over his body.

*Rosa Hernandez Hernandez, 20 years old, detained in Yanga on 8 February. When detained she was chained and blindfolded. Was thrown in a car. She was almost suffocated with a blanket. Received electric shocks.

*Ricardo Hernandez Lopez. Also detained in Yanga. Was blindfolded and beaten. The policemen did not identify themselves. He was not told the reasons for his detention. They did not show him an



Demonstrators in Mexico City

arrest or search warrant. He was forced by severe beating to sign a declaration he was not allowed to read.

*Maria Gloria Benavides. Detained in Mexico City, 8 February. They knocked her door pretending to be friends of her father-in-law. She opened and was immediately surrounded, beaten and thrown to the floor. They told her they were going to kill her son.

*Gonzalo Sanchez Navarrete, 17 years old. Detained in Cacalomacan, Mexico State.

*Fenando Martinez Paredes, 40 years old. Detained in Cacalomacan, Mexico State.

*Joel Martinez Gonzalez Severely beaten.

*Gerardo Lopez Lopez Wounded on his legs after his detention. Now disappeared.

*Ofelia Hernandez, also detained in Cacalomacan. Gerardo's wife, saw how they arrested and shot him.

*Celia Martinez Guerrero, Patricia Jimenez, Jorge Javier Elorrega Berdegue, Brenda Rodriguez Acosta and Hilario Martinez Hernandez.

We demand the Mexican government immediately account for all those disappeared and release all those detained.

Freedom for political prisoners!

Stop war and repression in Mexico!

Withdraw the army from Chiapas and Veracruz!

**Alejandro Arevalo
(Press and Propaganda
Secretary, Rivetex
Union, PRD member
in Morelos)**

**Send protest telegrams
and letters to: Ernesto
Zedillo Ponce de Leon
Presidencia de la
Republica
Residencia Oficial de
Los Pinos
Mexico DF
MEXICO**

**and copies to
Apartado Postal 165
Mexico DF
MEXICO**

Mexico: a crisis for global capitalism

The recent decision by new Mexican President Zedillo to launch the forces of the Mexican army against the peasant guerrilla Zapatista movement in Chiapas state is the inevitable result of the momentous shipwreck of the Mexican economy last January.

Then the Mexican peso fell 40% in value, the stock market crashed, and interest rates rocketed. The government announced draconian new austerity measures raising taxes, particularly on key essential consumer goods and petrol, and cutting government spending on important services. In addition, it hinted at selling off its main asset, the nationalised oil industry, the one single gain left from the struggles of the Mexican labour movement in the 1930s, in order to pay its bills.

Why did Mexico crash? Throughout the early 1990s, Mexico had become the darling of world capitalism. The economy grew very fast, boosted by huge inflows of money capital from the US and other capitalist states. These investors had found that investment in Europe and the US produced very low returns. Industry there was in slump and interest rates were very low, so there was no point in keeping the money at home in a bank. The super-exploitation of the so-called developing world, in particular Mexico, looked an attractive alternative. Mexico had a very cheap labour force, it had an authoritarian one-party state to keep the labour movement in order, and its government had agreed to join the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) with the US and Canada. That meant that its markets, industries and labour force were open to plunder by the big US multinationals. The result was wall of money into Mexico. The stock market was the fastest growing in the world from 1990 to 1993. Greed triumphed. But trouble was brewing. First, investors into Mexico wanted to be sure that if they changed their dollars into pesos to buy Mexican state bonds (called

tesobonos), shares in Mexican companies or new factories, that the peso would not fall in value and make their investment worthless. So the Mexican government agreed to a plan that ensured that the peso did not fall in value more than 1% a month. But to do that, it had to cut government spending and keep interest rates very high. Mexican businessmen could not invest and peasants and workers faced huge debt payments. Peasants in Chiapas finally had enough and revolted, threatening the authority of the 'secure' Mexican state.

Even more important, because the peso was relatively strong, imports of goods from abroad stayed relatively cheap. They flooded in, while Mexican exports could not keep up. Mexico began to buy more abroad that it sold, and in mega amounts. This growing debt went unnoticed throughout 1993 and most of 1994. That's because the Mexican government financed the country's deficit by running down its reserves of dollars (from \$29bn to \$4bn in one year). But eventually it became obvious that Mexico could no longer finance the peso. At the same time, interest rates in the US were much higher at the end of 1994, after over 18 months of steady rises. The big global investment funds could get better returns in the US and saw the writing on the wall for the Mexican peso. Also the new government did not look so politically secure as global investors at first thought. So it was time to get out of Mexico. They sold their shares, their Mexican government bonds and shifted their capital out. Mexico's fragile capitalist 'success' dissolved. But somebody has to pay for this collapse. It won't be the global capitalist investors. Those who got out late were left with huge losses: their Mexican bonds were worth much less in dollars and so were their Mexican shares when the peso fell 40%. But no worry, along came the governments of the world to bail them out. After much panic, President Clinton arranged with the IMF and other cen-

tral banks of Europe to provide \$50bn in support to shore up the peso and 'restore confidence'. Global investors will get their money back, because the taxpayers of the West have provided the money. The banks and capitalist governments have decided to invest in the peso on their behalf. So don't believe that argument that capitalist money should be rewarded with profit or interest because capitalists take the risks. The risk has been removed for capitalist investors in Mexico by American and British taxpayers.

Also paying are the Mexican people: in massively rising inflation, interest rates, cuts and increased taxes. And huge job losses are on the way as foreign investors pull out of projects and domestic businesses go bankrupt. The Mexican government officially accepts that the economy has come to a standstill. But bolstered by international government money, it is now trying to settle the incipient revolt of Zapatistas once and for all, to restore the confidence of international capital (the Mexican stock market rose on the news of the government action against Chiapas). It may be biting off more than it can chew. Global investors in Mexico have been bailed out because those running world capitalism feared that if they were not, then real investment in their own countries would fail as the Mexican market disappeared. Also, they feared that investors might decide that there are other countries which could also suffer Mexico's fate and so start to withdraw their money there. That danger still exists. Above all, the crisis shows that the great boom in so-called emerging markets of the ex-colonial world is ephemeral. It depends on the whims and greed of a few major global capitalist investors, who can just as easily take their money out as quickly as they put it in. There is no salvation for the world's suffering masses through the benevolence of foreign investors.

Michael Roberts

Spain: More than 2 million students go on strike called by the Students' Union

All out to force government retreat

by Barbara Areal, Gen. Sec. Sindicato de Estudiantes

On February 9 more than 2 million school students went on strike all over Spain. More than 100,000 participated on the 50 demonstrations organised by the Students' Union: in Madrid (10,000), Barcelona (12,000), Valencia (6,000), Bilbao (1,000), Malaga (2,000), Sevilla (1,000), Jerez (3,000), Puerto Real (2,000), Valladolid (2,000).

The main reason for the strike is to force the Ministry of Education to withdraw a proposal to reform the Students' Rights Act. This 'reform' is intended to put an end to the students' democratic rights and give the head teachers full powers to:

- expel students from the school without giving them the possibility of defence in the

School Council.

- sanction students for things happening outside the school. -not allow the right to hold meetings where they do not think it is appropriate

The Ministry of Education wants to put an end to the right to strike, which we achieved after the 1986 historic struggle, introducing an article saying that the acts of collective protest could receive the most grave sanction.

In fact during the preparation of the strike we have suffered several attacks in the schools—trying to forbid general meetings, posters being torn off by head teachers, letters sent by us to the students' representatives in the schools being kept by the head teachers. Even in schools like IB Ausias March

(Valencia) the head teacher called the police to prevent a general meeting taking place. Despite this all the strikes have been a great success. We, the Marxists in the Students' Union defending the ideas of *El Militante*, think that this mood is a reflection of the growing discontent that exists in broad layers of the youth.

Without doubt the trade union leaders attitude, accepting the government attack on labour laws and giving no answer to the attacks of the employers, created a certain mood of frustration. But the lack of big movements of the working class is due to trade union leaders demoralising policy however there is a general discontent in society.

Over exploitation, new apprenticeship contracts (called "rub-

bish contracts"), redundancies, wage freeze,... all this draws a very bleak future for millions of young people. Economic boom—or to be more accurate recovery of employers' profit rate—does not mean an improvement in working people lives.

Education budget's are suffering severe cuts. At the end of January the government passed a £175 million cut in education expenditure; this kind of policy will provoke new conflicts.

Until now the government has not retreated. But the bourgeoisie fears that the students' movement could spread towards the workers movement.

Therefore an editorial statement in *El Pais* on February 11 defended students' demands and urged the government to negotiate to "prevent what could happen in the future."

The Students' Union has decided to hold general strikes again on February 22 and March 9. We can achieve a victory and this would have important effects in the working class movement. The students have shown our strength once again and the Students' Union, armed with a socialist programme has been the leadership.

If the government does not retreat, all out on general strike on February 22 and March 9.



French Students Victory!

Thousands of IUT (University Technical Schools) students took strike action and demonstrated on the streets all over France in the first week of February - 10,000 in Paris, 4,000 in Grenoble, 1,200 in Aix-Marseille, 600 in Dijon,... The main slogans: "to study is a right not a privilege" and "we are on the streets to prevent being forced to live in the streets".

The reason was a government circular proposing not to allow students with technical diplomas to go to IUP (University Professional Schools) to get a degree (at present 40% of IUT graduates go to IUP). After one week of struggle the Balladour government retreated, suspending the application of the circular. They are afraid of the effect of a big students movement similar to last year's. In fact the IUT students were at the forefront of last year's student demonstrations.

But this is only a partial retreat as Pouria Amirashi (general secretary of the French students' union UNEF-ID) says: "suspension does not mean withdrawal. There's no point in demobilising the students".

A new national day of action with demonstrations in the main cities has already been planned for 16th February by the two students' unions and the teachers' unions.

Jordi Martorell

ENGELS CENTENARY

Engels and the state

by Phil Mitchison

In Britain today, the ruling Tory Party is openly split and facing its biggest crisis for over a century, we have a crisis in the monarchy, in the church, and even, according to the Sunday Times (12/2/95), a crisis of morale in the army.

All these institutions, as Engels explained over 100 years ago, are not handed down ready made from on high, but undergo all kinds of convulsions and revolutions, reflecting the changing conditions in society. Today's crises reflect the deep splits within the ruling class over how best to defend their privileged position. At the same time, it is this same state apparatus, which stands like a Berlin wall between the working class and the socialist transformation of society. To remove it we must first understand it.

In capitalist society, politics, economics, for that matter art and science, are wrapped up in all kinds of mysticism in an attempt to make them inaccessible. Throughout his life Frederick Engels made it his business to demystify these questions, for that we owe him a great debt. No study of the immeasurable contribution made to the international workers movement by Engels would be complete without reference to his writings on the state. Along with his comrade Karl Marx, he set out to conquer the idea that the state is some kind of eternal being, in order to tear away the magical shroud in which capitalism has cloaked it.

Like an exercise in George Orwell's *Doublethink*, the bosses attack our rights, the right to strike etc., in the name of the Law, or Democracy. When a scab breaks a strike, he is defended by the police and the government in the name of his

"democratic right to work". When every conceivable obstacle is placed in the path of workers taking action, it is in the name of Legality. As if the law or democracy, the courts or the police, are independent entities removed from the issues involved. Indeed, that is precisely what they would have us believe.

Law

In reality, the law isn't simply the rules of the game which we must all obey, but as we are all aware from our own experience, there is one law for the rich and another for the rest of us. By performing bizarre rituals, dressed up in frocks and wigs, judges ("Black Rod" and co. in Parliament too) spout a few phrases in Latin, call it the Law, and expect us to respectfully stand aside, awestruck, fearing to break the natural order of things, God's word or some such mystical nonsense.

Yet the law wasn't written in heaven, it was written on earth, and for a purpose. In whose interest is it to limit the number of pickets allowed at a factory gate, or since the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act, to ban pickets and demonstrations altogether.

The law isn't a system of "fair rules", but just like any other aspect of the state, it is a means of coercion by which one class in society, the ruling class, the minority, maintains its rule over the majority, the working class. To begin with, Engels took up the idea that the state has always existed, in order to show that for nine-tenths of mankind's existence on the planet there was no state.

There is a vulgar view of history which states that things are as they always have been and always will be. This is reflected

in the current claims of the Labour leaders about the eternal life of the "free market." Capitalism has always existed, and so has the state, the impartial observer and referee in society.

In truth, as Engels explains, capitalism is an historically recent stage in our development, and the state, although older, was certainly unknown in early tribal society.

For society to advance from those primitive communist, tribal beginnings, to a rational and harmonious self organisation of society, ie, socialism, it has already been necessary to pass through all kinds of revolutions and upheavals, in order to lay the economic, cultural and scientific basis for a really classless society, and we haven't got there yet.

In those earlier, genuinely classless societies, there couldn't be

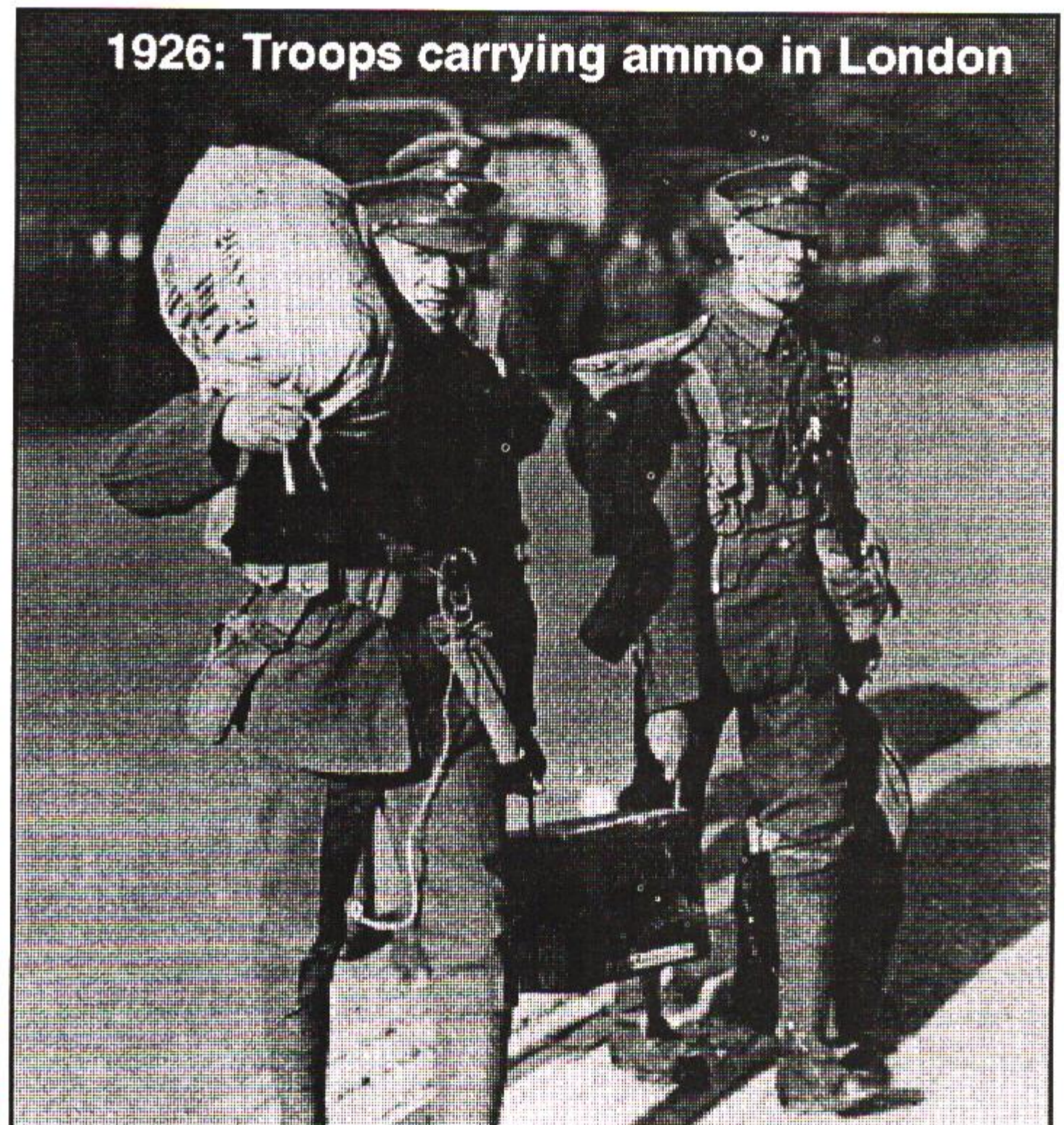
a state, there couldn't even be "civilisation" because man lived on a nomadic basis, an armed people with no need for a special coercive force or state to hold one section of the population down.

This was not lawless anarchy, crimes were dealt with by the community, democratically, and of course there were "leaders" as in all human societies, people with authority, but based on a voluntary respect for the elders, without a special force to impose their will.

Authority

As Engels wrote in his "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State", *"The shabbiest police servant of the civilised state has more "authority" than all the organs of gentile society put together; but the mightiest prince and the greatest statesman or general of civilisation might envy the humblest of the gentile chiefs the unforced and unquestioned respect accorded to him. The one stands in the midst of society; the other is forced to pose as something outside and above it."*

Here Engels explains how man began to settle in specific territories and how it was then possible to develop the productivity of his labour, not just by taking what nature provided, but by planning, the sowing of seed, by developing tools and technique. As a result they began to produce a surplus above their own immediate needs. For the first time a section of the population



was freed from the daily struggle for existence, a "class" was created which could "employ" the labour of others to sustain it. Now there could be accumulation, the manufacture of tools, primitive agricultural techniques could be developed, and of course the military means for defending the settled areas against nomadic tribes.

For the first time society was divided into classes, and there developed the "haves" and the "have nots", in the first instance, the slaveowners and the slaves.

This new ruling class of slaveowners was free to devote its time to an enormous flourishing of human achievement in art, science, architecture, philosophy and mathematics. This was the basis for the development of the ancient societies of Greece and Rome which Engels describes.

Slaveowners

These slaveowners were, of course, a minority and as such required "special bodies of armed men" as Engels called them, to keep their slaves in chains, and so the state was born of the division of society into classes.

The new state was distinguished from the old gentile order in that it was no longer held together by blood ties but divided its subjects on a territorial basis. Citizens were now required to carry out their public rights and duties according to where they lived regardless of their tribe or 'gens'. Another new feature was the creation of a public power which no longer coincided with the population organising itself as an armed force. "Special bodies of armed men" came into being because an armed population divided into opposing classes, would have led to interminable conflict.

Again, in his Origin of the Family, Engels describes the state as "a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable opposites which it is powerless to exorcise. But in order that these opposites, classes with conflicting economic interests, shall not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that would moderate the conflict and

keep it within the bounds of "order".

So this system of police, courts, army, civil service etc, haven't always been here protecting us from anti-social behaviour, but were created in their basic, crude form as a special machine for the suppression of the majority by the minority - the slaves by the slaveowners.

With each succeeding form of class society, this state machine was taken over and perfected as the instrument of the new ruling class - the feudal state was the organ of the nobility for holding down the peasant serfs, and the modern representative state is an instrument for the exploitation of labour by capital. Many of the elements of the old state were taken over and perfected for use by the new rulers. In Britain, even the monarchy was taken over and adapted to defend the new system. Although widely ridiculed today, tainted by sleaze and scandal, the monarchy has a far more important role than just as a tourist attraction. The Queen retains the right to dissolve Parliament, and anyone who thinks this is just a ceremonial right should study the sacking of Gough Whitlam's Australian Labour government in the 1970s. Unfortunately there is no room for that here. In all the bourgeois revolutions which brought the capitalists to power, in Britain in 1649 or France 1789, the new ruling class took over the old state apparatus and perfected it as an instrument for the suppression of the new exploited class, the working class.

Paranoia

But this is just Marxist paranoia, cry the bosses, and unfortunately many in the labour movement even on the left join in the chorus. Do we really believe the bankers and directors of big monopolies sit around in their gentlemens clubs inventing this colossal machine to keep us in line. Leaving aside the question of what these gentlemen discuss in their clubs, they certainly could not have dreamed up, such a scheme as the modern state, they wouldn't have the imagination. No, as Engels demonstrates, it evolved through revolutions and changing social conditions over centuries. In all these earlier revolutions, the state machine was seen as the principal spoils of the victor. Marx and Engels, however, explained that the task of social-

ism would be entirely different. And here we see, as in all their writings, there is not one ounce of utopianism. They didn't dream up the tasks of the workers in relation to the state, but drew instead on the practical conclusions of the events of the Paris Commune of 1871. In fact, the only correction Marx felt it necessary to make to the Communist Manifesto was on the basis of that revolutionary experience.

Antiquated

In the preface to the June 1872 edition Marx and Engels say that the programme "has in places become antiquated" and go on to quote from Marx's book "The Civil War in France", "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for their own purposes."

These words must rank amongst the most widely and crudely misinterpreted statements of all time, claimed by many labour leaders to be an argument in favour of slow, gradual change, by which the state could be improved in the interests of the workers. The leaders of the German labour movement, for example, demanded a "free people's state". This is a contradiction in terms, as Engels explained many times, the state in so far as it is a state will be there to suppress the people, and in so far as it becomes an instrument of the people it ceases to be a state. Lenin also advanced this idea when the leaders of the European socialist and Labour parties held up their hands in horror at the Russian Revolution, prattling on about abstract democracy, "There is no such thing as "democracy", he said "there is bourgeois democracy or there is workers democracy...Bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with mediaevalism, always remains..restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical and a snare and a deception for the exploited and the poor." Even our own Parliament is just such a snare of course, where we choose every few years which members of the ruling class will represent us for the next few years, while all the real decisions are taken in the boardrooms and in those same gentlemens clubs. What Marx actually meant in saying "the workers can't simply lay hold of the ready made state

machine" he explained many times. In a letter to Kugelmann, for example, he writes, "If you look at the last chapter of my Eighteenth Brumaire, you will find that I declare that the next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to the other, but to **smash** it (Marx's emphasis), and this is the preliminary precondition for every real people's revolution on the continent."

In Britain today, where Parliamentary traditions go back furthest, who really makes the decisions? Not the government, but the bosses of the banks and the big monopolies, the currency speculators and the stockbrokers - and who elected them. For that matter who elected the judges, to whom are the police commissioners, or the press barons accountable?

Defend

Of course Marxists are the first to defend all the democratic rights which the workers have conquered through struggle, and fight to extend them, the right to strike, to organise, to free speech, many rights which even now are being stolen away. More than that, Marxists would argue to use Parliament, the council chamber, even the courts where possible to defend or advance our rights - but these elements of the state machine are not the goal itself, they are a means to an end.

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels explain that the democratic gains of the workers are "just a certain amount of rights, for the exploited class to go some way towards the goal of fighting for a change in the class system for a new society, but that is all."

"The state" Engels added later "is a machine for the oppression of one class by another and indeed in a democratic republic no less than in a monarchy...In a democratic republic wealth exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely, by means of the direct corruption of officials; second by means of an alliance between the government and the stock exchange." In spite of his foresight, even Engels would have been amazed by the level of that corruption today, both the legalised corruption of the quangos, and the murkier dealings of Tory politicians, and their big business

friends.

The capitalists themselves prefer "democracy" not on any moral grounds, but as the cheapest and most manageable system. However, as the ex-Tory MP Ian Gilmour once explained, for the bosses too it is only a means to an end, if it threatened the continuation of capitalism the ruling class would not hesitate to end it. In the early 1970s Brigadier Kitson and co. prepared a coup, involving sections of the monarchy, in case the Labour government attempted to implement the socialist measures in their programme. More recently we have the Gladio conspiracy of the security forces throughout Europe preparing for future military takeovers.

Coups

If we look at the military coups throughout Latin America and Africa in the 70s and 80s, or the way the South African state built up the reactionary Inkatha movement, or the way every tentacle of the state machine was employed against the miners in the strike of 84-85, the courts sequestering funds, the police and the army on picket lines and demonstrations, the blatant lies and distortions of the media, then how could the workers possibly "lay hold of" and use this state machine. Surely this nails the arguments

of reformism, the idea that society can be changed gradually over generations. Capitalism hasn't perfected this colossal machine in order to allow itself to be reformed out of existence.

Truth

The task of Marxism is to lay bare the truth about the state and the danger it represents to the working class, but also to explain what should replace it and how. Firstly, although Marxism has nothing in common with pacifism, nor does it have anything to do with the blood-thirsty "student revolutionism" of the sects. We are the vast majority of society, and in reality power lies at our fingertips, nothing moves without our labour. In France in 1968 for example, the whole of society was brought to a standstill by a general strike of 10 million workers but as in Portugal in 1974, although the state was powerless to oppose such a mighty force, the movement was betrayed as so often by our own leaders. It is not enough to know how to wrest power from the capitalists, it is necessary also to know what to do with it. In this respect, Marxism has nothing in common either with anarchism which preaches that all authority and organisation is inherently evil - this is just mysticism. Without some form of state how could the trains run on time, how could

the harmonious development of the economy, of society that socialism represents be planned.

While the capitalists need a state to maintain class rule, the workers need one precisely to end it. On the basis of modern science and technique, the life of such a state would be short-lived as the workers lead the whole of society towards socialism.

The first task of such a regime would be to appeal to workers throughout Europe and internationally to join forces in putting an end to the anarchy of capitalism and begin building a socialist society. Its first act should be the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy, taking the ownership of the means of production out of private hands and converting them into state property, under the democratic control and management of the workers themselves.

A Labour government with such a programme would be sabotaged from the beginning by the state. That is after all what it's there for. Equally such a programme could inspire millions of workers to come to its defence and carry its programme out in practice, taking over the factories and the banks.

In so doing, the workers begin to do away with themselves as a class, to do away with all class division in society, to do away with the state as a state. As Engels wrote, "*The first act in which the state really comes forward as the representative of the whole of society - the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society - is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then dies away of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production.*" Again there is not a single ounce of utopianism here. Engels didn't invent some new perfect social order in his head, but studied the birth of a new society from within the old. The aim of the socialist transformation is to put an end to class divisions, to create a society where Marx's aphorism "*from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs*" could become a reality. That

requires the development of an economy of superabundance, entirely possible on the basis of modern science and technique, once we've done away with the anarchy of the market. The building of such an economy requires the conscious planning and organisation of "production, distribution and exchange" as Labour's Clause 4 puts it.

The government of people must be replaced by the administration of things. This would be the remit of the new workers state, which from the beginning would be only a semi-state, withering away of its own accord in one sphere after another, it would as Engels put it "die away of itself."

Working week

The introduction of a shorter working week would allow everyone the necessary time to participate in the running of all aspects of society, and, when everyone runs the state, there is no longer a state as such. The waste of state functionalism could be done away with as such administrative tasks would be reduced to what they really are bookkeepers and technicians, paid workers wages. Similarly, the enormous waste of resources on the "special bodies of armed men" to keep us in our place would rapidly become unnecessary.

The state, then, has not existed for all eternity. Earlier, classless societies had no need of it. At a certain stage of economic development which necessarily involved the split of society into classes, the state arose because of that split. Today this class division in society is not only no longer a necessity, it has become a hindrance to the further development of humanity. It is the task of the socialist transformation of society, to lift this burden from our backs. Then as Engels explained, "*Society, which will reorganise production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, will put the whole state machinery where it will then belong - into the museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe.*" Before Marxism can conquer the state, however, it must first conquer the labour movement. What greater weapon could there be in that ideological struggle than a thorough study of the writings of Frederick Engels.

Further reading by Frederick Engels

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The Big Bang never happened

The Big bang Never Happened
by Eric J. Lerner:
A remarkable refutation of the Dominant Theory of the Origin of the Universe is reviewed by Alan Woods.

The Big Bang is really a creation myth (just like the first book of Genesis) which states that the universe came into being about 15 billion years ago. Before that, according to this theory, there was no universe, no matter, no space, and no time.

At that time all the matter in the universe is alleged to have been concentrated at a single point. How big? Well, let's just say that it would be too small to be seen by even the most powerful of microscopes. This invisible dot, known to big bang aficionados as a singularity, then exploded, with such a force that it instantly filled the entire universe, which is still expanding as a result. Oh, by the way, this was the moment when "time began."

In case you are wondering whether this is some kind of joke, forget it. This is precisely what the Big bang theory states. This is what the great majority of university professors actually believe. But not all of them, thankfully. In his book *The Big Bang Never Happened*, Eric J. Lerner pro-

vides a comprehensive examination of the Big Bang theory. From any point of view, it is a devastating critique. The author presents an impressive array of scientific data, which shows how observation after observation has contradicted the predictions of the Big Bang model. But what is more interesting is that he does not restrict himself to science, but also examines the philosophical implications of the Big Bang theory. This is absolutely necessary, given the increasingly evident drift towards mysticism and religion which is implicit (and even explicit) in the writings of a section of the scientific community today.

Mutually exclusive

What emerges very clearly in Eric Lerner's book is the age-long struggle between two mutually exclusive ways of looking at the world—on the one side, philosophical materialism, on the other, idealism in its various guises. Materialism takes its starting-point as the material world, as an infinite, endlessly moving, changing, dynamic universe. All ideas and theories are ultimately derived from this reality, and their truth, in the last analysis, is shown by practically applying them to the same material reality. Idealism, on the contrary, tries to assert the primacy of ideas, or of the Idea over "crude matter." All idealism ultimately leads to religion—the idea that this sinful material world was created by some supreme being. The world thus has a beginning in time, and, according to the *Book of Revelations*, an end as well! The observations of Edwin

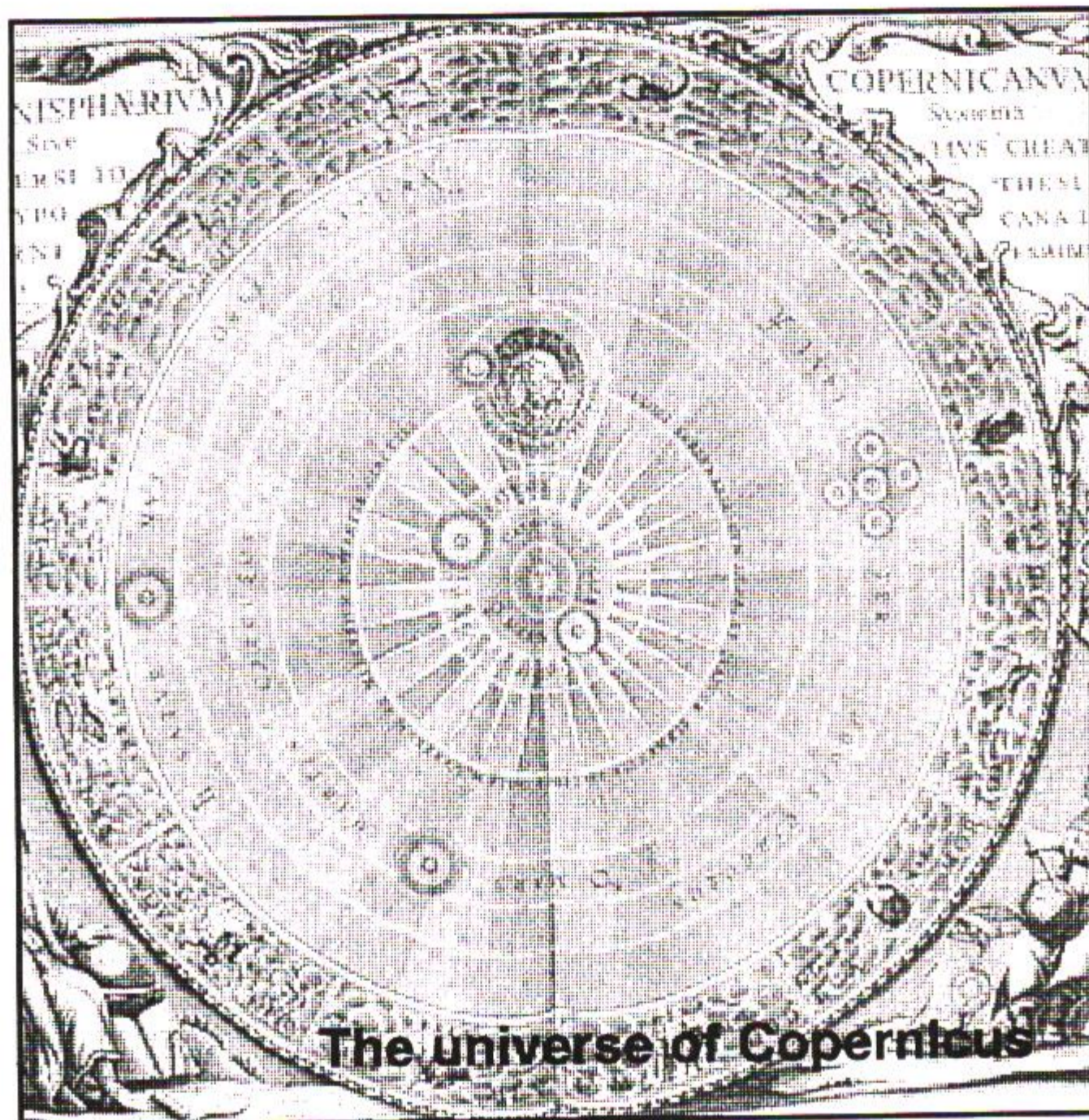
Hubble in the 1920s appeared to indicate that the universe, or at least the part of it we can observe, was expanding. This was seized upon by Georges Lemaître, a Belgian priest, who attempted to prove that if the universe was finite in space it must also be finite in time—it must have had a beginning. The usefulness of such a theory to the Catholic Church is beyond all doubt. It leaves the door wide open to the idea of a creator. Lemaître was later rewarded by being made director of the Pontifical Academy of Science. The Big

trouble. The first, as we have seen, was put forward in 1927 by Lemaître. This was soon refuted on a number of different grounds. After the Second World War, the discredited theory was revived by George Gamow and others, in a new form. A number of calculations were advanced by Gamow, (incidentally, not without a certain amount of scientific "creative accountancy") to explain the different phenomena which would flow from the Big Bang - density of matter, temperature, radiation levels, and so on.

Imagination

George Gamow's brilliant style of writing ensured that the Big Bang captured the popular imagination. Nevertheless, a whole number of discrepancies were found which invalidated Gamow's model. But Gamow had made one important prediction - that such an immense explosion would leave behind evidence in the form of "background radiation," a kind of echo of the big bang in space. This was used to revive the theory some years later.

In 1964, the theory received a new boost with the discovery by two young astronomers in the USA, Arnas Penzias and Robert Wilson of background radiation in space. This was



Bang has now been officially accepted by the Vatican as part of Church dogma. It is not actually correct to refer to "the Big Bang theory." In fact, there have been at least five different theories, each of which has run into

immediately taken to be the "after-echo" of the Big Bang, predicted by Gamow. Even so, there were inconsistencies. The temperature of the radiation was found to be only 3.5°K, not the 30°K predicted. This result is even worse than

it looks. Since the amount of energy in a field is proportional to its temperature, the energy of the observed radiation was actually several thousand times less than that predicted by Gamow and others.

None of this constitutes conclusive proof for the big bang. How does it come about that bits of matter flying in opposite directions all managed to reach the same temperature, and all at the same time (the "horizon" problem)? The partisans of the theory present the alleged origins of the universe as a model of mathematical perfection, all perfectly regular, a regular "Eden of symmetry whose characteristics conform to pure reason," as Lerner puts it. But the present universe is anything but perfectly symmetrical. It is irregular, contradictory, "lumpy." Why did not the original simple material and energy just spread out evenly in space as an immense haze of dust and gas? Where did all these galaxies and stars come from? So how did we get from A to B? How did the pure symmetry of the early universe give rise to the present irregular one we see before our eyes?

To get round this and other problems, Alan Guth, the American physicist, advanced his theory of the "inflationary universe."

Whereas the earlier versions of the "standard model" envisaged the whole of the universe squashed to the size of a grapefruit, Guth went one better. He calculated that the universe did not begin as a grapefruit, but instead, it would be a billion times smaller than the nucleus of a hydrogen atom. Then it expanded at an incredible speed—many times the speed of light, which is 186,000 miles per second - until it reached a size 10^{90} times its initial volume—that is, 1 with 90 zeroes after it!

Dialectical materialism conceives the universe as infinite, but not static or in a permanent state of "equilibrium," as both Einstein and Newton did. Matter and energy cannot be created or destroyed, but are in a continual process of movement and change, which involves periodic explosions, expansion and contraction, attraction and repulsion, life and death. There is nothing intrinsically improbable about the idea of one, or many, great explosions. The problem here is a different one—a mystical interpretation of certain observed phenomena, such as the Hubble expanding universe, and an attempt to smuggle the religious idea of the Creation of the uni-

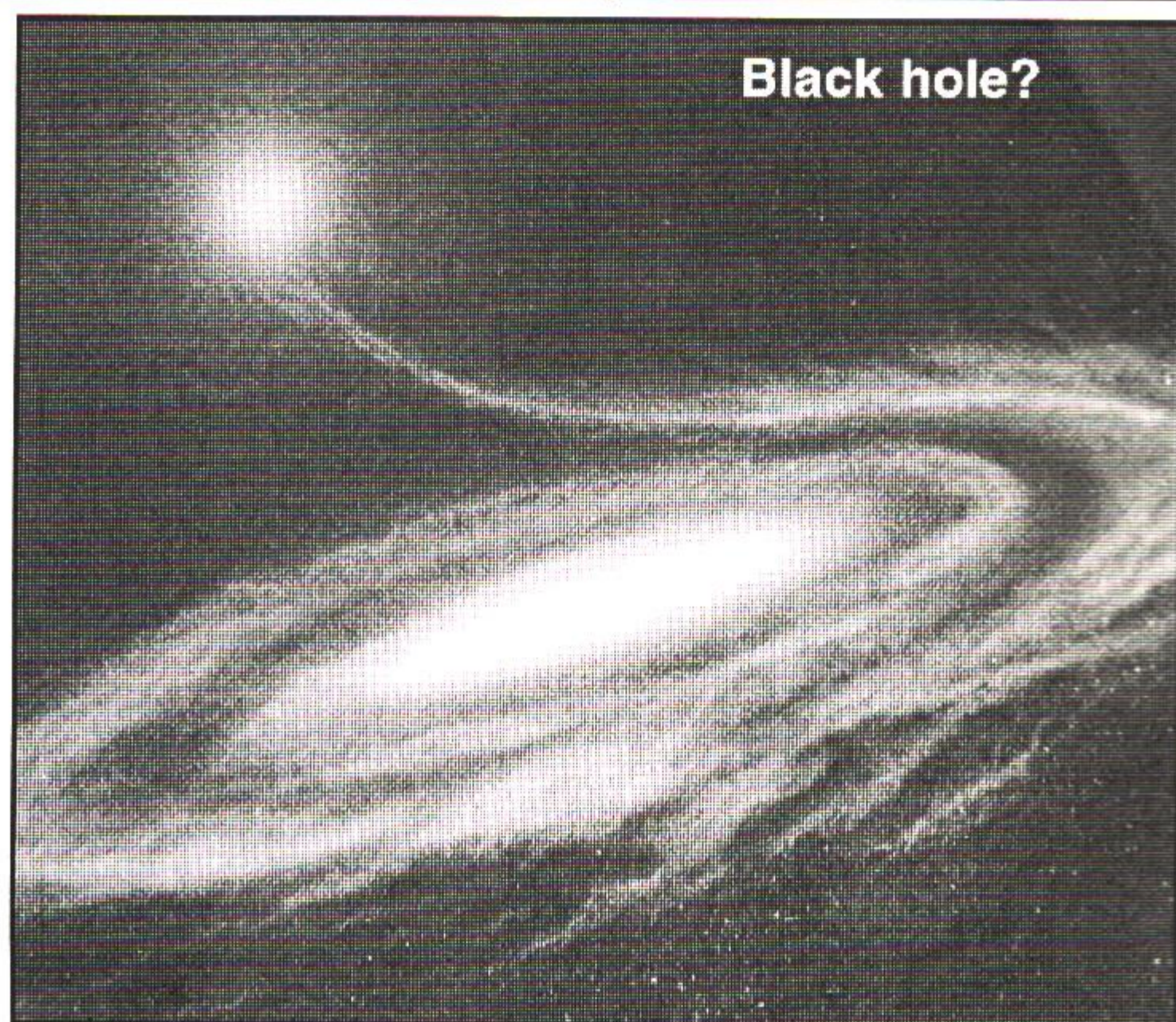
verse into science by the back door.

Infinite density?

To begin with, it is unthinkable that all the matter in the universe should be concentrated in a single point "of infinite density." Let us be clear what this means. Firstly, it is impossible to place an infinite amount of matter and energy in a finite space. Just to pose the question is sufficient to answer it. "Ah!" say the big bangers, "but the universe is not infinite, but finite, according to Einstein's General Theory of Relativity." In his book, Eric Lerner points out that an infinite number of different universes are allowed by Einstein's equations. By no means all of them imply a state of "singularity" (i.e., that the entire universe was reduced to a single point). Yet this is the one variant which is dogmatically advanced by Guth and co. Even if we accept that the universe is finite, the notion of "singularity" leads us to conclusions of a clearly fantastic character. If we take the tiny corner of the universe which we are able to see as being the whole universe—an arbitrary assumption with no logical or scientific basis whatsoever—then we are talking about more than 100 billion galaxies, each containing about 100 billion main sequence stars (like our own sun). According to Guth, all this matter was concentrated in a space smaller than a single proton (i.e., much smaller than an atom). When it had existed for a millionth of a trillionth of a trillionth, of a trillionth of a second with a temperature of trillions of trillions of degrees, there was only one field and only one kind of particle interaction. As the universe expanded and the temperature fell, the different fields are supposed to have "condensed" out of the original state of simplicity.

Expansion

The question arises where all the energy came from to propel such an unprecedented expansion. In order to solve this riddle, Guth resorted to a hypothetical omnipresent force field (a "Higgs field") the existence of which is predicted by some theoretical physicists, but for which there is not a shred of empirical evidence. "In Guth's theory," comments Eric Lerner, "the Higgs field which exists in a vacuum generates all the needed energy from nothing—*ex nihilo*. The universe, is one big 'free lunch,' courtesy of the Higgs field." The underlying mysticism



becomes clear when the question is asked, "what happened before the Big Bang?" Here, the partisans of the Big Bang begin to fall all over the place. Some have argued that the "cosmic egg" was formed out of nothing; others that there is a multiplicity of different universes; still others, that, since there was no time or space before the Big Bang, we cannot know what happened, and should, therefore not even ask the question.

Every time the Big Bang hypothesis runs into trouble, instead of abandoning it, its supporters just move the goalposts, introducing new and ever more arbitrary assumptions, in order to shore it up. For example, the theory requires a certain amount of matter in the universe. If the universe was created 15 billion years ago, as the model predicts, there has simply not been enough time for the matter we observe to have congealed into galaxies like the Milky Way, without the help of invisible "dark matter."

Fortunately, it is possible to work out quite accurately the amount of matter in the observable universe. It is about one atom for every ten cubic metre of space. This is a hundred times less than the amount required by the Big Bang theory. But, as the journalists like to say, don't let the facts spoil a good story! If there is not enough matter in the universe to square with the theory, then there must be an awful lot of matter there which we can't see. Thus was born the theory of "cold dark matter"—invisible stuff which is supposed to make up 99% of all the matter in the universe! At this stage, the defenders of the Big Bang decided to call on the aid of the Seventh Cavalry, in the person of particle physicists. The mission they were

called upon to carry out puts all the exploits of John Wayne completely in the shade. When the cosmologists called in their colleagues who were busy investigating the mysteries of "inner space," their request was a trifle more ambitious. They wanted them to find the 99% of the universe which had inconsiderately "gone missing." Unless they could find this missing matter, their equations would just not add up, and the standard theory of the origin of the universe would be in trouble!

Eric Lerner details a whole series of observations, the results of which have been published in scientific journals, which completely refute the idea of dark matter. Yet, in the teeth of all the evidence, the advocates of the Big Bang continue to behave like the learned professor who refused to look through the telescope to test the correctness of Galileo's theories. Dark matter must exist - because our theory demands it!

Somersaults

The determination with which they cling to their positions frequently leads them to perform the most amusing somersaults. Having searched in vain for the 99% of missing "cold dark matter," they failed to find anything like the quantities required by the theory, to prevent the universe from expanding forever. On the 18th of December 1993, The New Scientist published an article entitled Universe Will Expand Forever. Here it was admitted that "a group of galaxies in the constellation of Cepheus contains far less invisible matter than had been thought a few months ago," and that the claims made earlier by American astronomers was

"based on faulty analysis." A lot of scientific reputations are at stake, not to mention hundreds of millions of dollars in research grants. Could this fact have some connection with the fanaticism with which the big bang is defended? As usual, they saw what they wanted to see. The evident failure to find the "cold dark matter," the existence of which is essential to the survival of the theory, was causing unease in the more thinking sections of the scientific community. An editorial of *New Scientist*, published on the 4th of June 1994 with the suggestive title *A folly of our time?* compared the idea of "dark matter" with the discredited Victorian concept of the "ether," an invisible medium, by which light waves were believed to travel through space: "It was invisible, ubiquitous, and, in the late 19th century, every physicist believed in it. It was, of course, the aether, the medium in which they thought light propagated, and it turned out to be a phantom. Light does not need a medium in which to propagate, unlike sound."

"Now, at the close of the 20th century, physicists find themselves in a curiously similar situation to their Victorian counterparts. Once again they are putting their faith in something which is invisible and ubiquitous. This time it is dark matter."

In the same way they cannot agree on the origin of the universe, so they also disagree on how it is all supposed to end up - except that they all agree that it will end badly! According to one school of thought, the expanding universe will eventually be brought to a halt by the force of gravity, whereupon the whole thing will collapse in on itself, leading to a "big crunch," where we will all end up just where we started, back inside the cosmic egg. Not so! exclaims another school of Big Bangers. Gravity is not strong enough to do this. The universe will simply keep on expanding indefinitely, getting thinner and thinner, like Augustus who would not have any soup, until eventually it fades away into the black night of nothingness. The fundamental mistake here is to imagine that the universe is equal to the observable universe, and that it is possible to reconstruct the entire history of the universe, as a linear process, without taking into account all the different phases, transitions, and different states through which matter passes.

From the standpoint of dialectical materialism, it is arrant nonsense

to talk about the "beginning of time," or the "creation of matter." Time, space, and motion are the mode of existence of matter, which can neither be created nor destroyed. The universe has existed for all time, as constantly changing, moving, evolving matter and (which is the same thing) energy. All attempts to find a "beginning" or an "end" to the material universe will inevitably fail.

Dispute

At present there is a fierce dispute among the supporters of the Big Bang concerning the supposed age of the universe. In fact, the entire "standard model" is in crisis. We are treated to the spectacle of respectable men of science attacking each other in public with the most ungentlemanly language. And all over something called the Hubble Constant. This is the formula which measures the speed at which things are moving in the universe. This is of great importance for those who wish to discover the age and size of the universe. The trouble is that nobody knows what it is!

In order to measure this, we need to know two things: the speed and distance away of a particular galaxy. The speed can be calculated. But the distance between galaxies cannot be measured with a slide-rule. In fact, no reliable instruments exist for measuring such immense distances. The experts cannot agree on the real value of the Hubble Constant, as was comically revealed in a recent Channel Four programme:

The importance of this is that the higher the "Hubble," the faster things are moving, and the sooner in the past was the moment when the big bang was supposed to have occurred. In recent years, new techniques of measuring the distance of galaxies have been applied, which have led astronomers to revise earlier estimates drastically. This has provoked consternation in the scientific community, since the estimates for the Hubble Constant have been getting higher all the time. The latest estimate puts the age of the universe at just 8 billion years. This would mean that there are stars which are older than the universe itself! This is a glaring contradiction - not a dialectical one, but simply nonsense.

"Well, if it turns out that the ages of the stars are greater than the expansion time of the Universe, as inferred by the measurement

of the Hubble Constant and the measurement of the density of the Universe, then there is a genuine crisis. You only have one option: you have to drop the basic assumptions upon which the model of the Universe is based. In this case, you have to drop some, perhaps all, of the basic assumptions on which the Big Bang theory is based." (*The Rubber Universe*)

The latest developments in relation to the Hubble Constant have taken place several years after the first appearance of *The Big Bang Never Happened*. But they are in complete agreement with Eric Lerner's central thesis—that the "Big Bang" is Big Bunk. What is particularly refreshing about this book is that it stands with its feet firmly on the ground. The author is not afraid to underline the link between the crisis in science and the general crisis of capitalist society in the last decade of the twentieth century. In his last chapter, *Cosmos and Society*, the link is explicitly made, and in terms which are consistent with the analysis of Marxism.

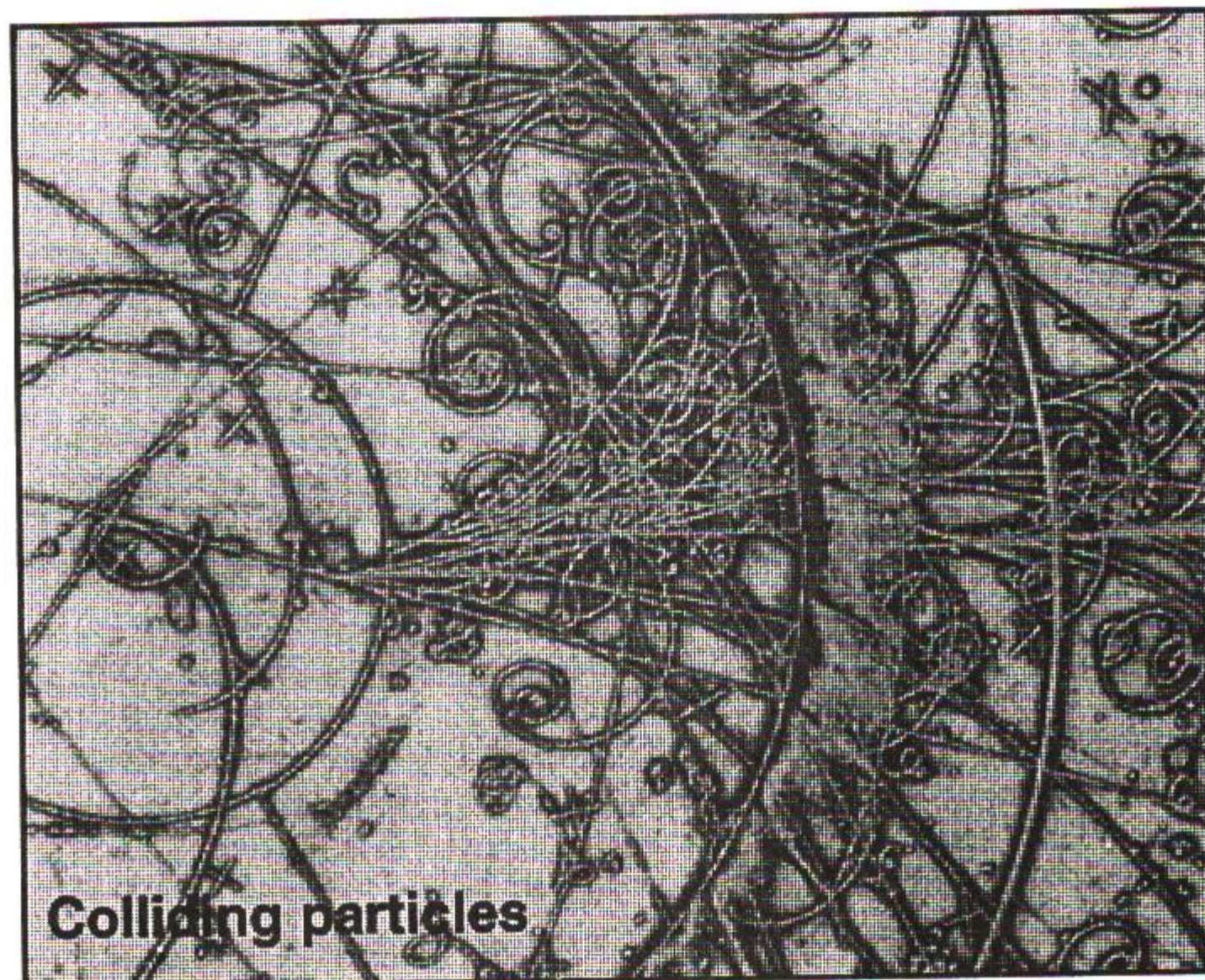
Impasse

Here we find some extremely telling examples of the impasse of society, and how it affects science and technology. Particularly interesting is his observation that: "The advance of science and technology has radically slowed too. While biology remains vibrant, physical technology has been limited to mere quantitative advance for nearly thirty years, again a situation unprecedented in over two hundred years. 'This halt in the material advance, which progressed so rapidly during the nineteenth century, cannot be considered an inevitable phenomenon, an ultimate limit to human achievement."

As is the case with any system, as was the case with the European society of the sixteenth century, modern capitalist countries have reached the limits of expansion. Ancient Rome needed new slaves and feudal kingdoms new lands—capitalism has always required new markets. At the turn of the century the limits of the market expansion were first reached as the entire globe was incorporated into the various colonial empires. The global economy stooped growing and stumbled headlong into the catastrophes of World War I, the Depression, and World War II. After a generation of recovery, the same limits were encountered again in the early seventies. Once more, in the past twenty years, we have been faced with the paradox of a gigantic unfulfilled need for goods, for food, clothing, and housing, side by side with a 'lack of markets,' a saturation of the market for goods that can be sold at a profit. While children in Latin America lack clothing, clothing manufacturers are closing in the United States. While cities fall into decay and millions go homeless, steel mills are dismantled as unprofitable."

The publication of this well written and highly instructive book represents a firm rebuff to the pernicious trend that tries to smuggle in religious and mystical ideas in scientific disguise. It is an implicit justification of the scientific world outlook of Marxism, and deserves to be read by all socialists.

The Big Bang Never Happened by Eric J. Lerner is published by Simon and Schuster, and available from Well Red Books, price £10.99.



Colliding particles

This year has seen the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Hitler's death camps. Eleven million perished in the killing factories of the Third Reich—six million Jews, along with Communists, Socialists, trade unionists, religious and civic leaders, Gypsies, Gays, Slavs, Poles, Russians; anyone who dared question the brutal fascist regime whether through action or racial grouping.

The current anniversary has well documented this mechanised slaughter, in particular the annihilation of Europe's Jewish population.

But all perpetuate what has become a modern post war myth, that the victims—in particular the Jews—went 'quietly to their deaths', that they blindly co-operated with the Holocaust. The underlying, demoralising message is that nothing can be done when fascism and reaction are on the march.

Of course, it was some time before Jewish workers could organise effective resistance; two and a half million Jews died, not in the Gas Chambers, but in their own villages such as the lightning speed of the Nazi assault. Nazi 'Einsatz' groups carried out deadly pogroms in the wake of the German Blitzkrieg as it advanced into Russia in 1941. The unarmed Jewish peasants and farmers were no match for the highly efficient butchers of the Nazi regime.

Cautious

But the Nazis were more cautious with the industrialised cities, such as Warsaw. They had had a taste of the organised muscle of Jewish workers in the 1930s, when they held boycotts of German goods in retaliation for the treatment of German Jews.

Different tactics were therefore employed. artificial ghettos were created (resurrected from Mediaeval times), shutting off Jewish workers from their Polish and Russian counterparts with whom they had previously lived—and struggled—side by side.

The Nazis then drove thousands of Jewish peasants and farmers off the surrounding countryside into the alien environment of the city ghettos. For example, in 1940 25,000

a story of Resistance

Jewish peasants from the Cracow region were forcefully repatriated into the Warsaw Ghetto. They were followed by 70,000 villagers from the areas south and west of Warsaw in 1941, pushing up the ghetto's population to a heaving quarter of a million. On average a family of 12 shared one room. The lower political consciousness of these disorientated peasants and farmers—unused to the experience of collectivised industrial society—caused confusion and chaos in the Ghetto. The paramount fight became one against starvation and for survival, rather than resistance.



But there was a fight back. despite these appalling obstacles, resistance was organised. The most famous example is the heroic uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943, where Jewish workers fought Tiger Tanks with petrol bombs, and artillery with home made rifles. There were also revolts in the 'heart of the beast'—mutinies in the death camps of Treblinka and Sobibor saw mass escapes and revenge enacted on the inmates' tormentors. That resistance can be organised within the very jaws of death itself is testimony to the human spirit of rebellion. There were numerous other rebellions in villages and towns

across Eastern Europe, all against overwhelming odds and quickly suppressed, but rebellions just the same.

It must also be remembered that Jews were the backbone of many Partisan groups operating behind German lines.

Thousands more fled to the Soviet Union to join the Red Army, making up whole battalions of the toughest frontline troops.

They were of course used in a cynical manner by Stalin, who also sent thousands of Jewish refugees to the Gulags, reflecting the bureaucracy's paranoia of all national and racial groups. But those Jews who slipped

the General Strike by Dutch trade unionists which at least limited the Nazis genocidal drive in Holland in the 1940s. The other 'myth' perpetuated in the post war period is that the Holocaust was some kind of 'historical aberration', a product of the 'evil of mankind'. In reality, the ruling class in the 1930s, not only in Germany but worldwide, tolerated the Hitler regime as they saw it as a bulwark against the Soviet Union and the threat of workers' revolution. Nazi Germany was not some isolated historical accident, but the product of capitalism in crisis. That is why we have seen echoes of such tyranny throughout the post war period: the slaughter of 30,000 trade unionists in the Santiago football stadium in Chile 1973; the 'pacification' of Vietnamese villages in the 1960's; ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia; genocide in Rwanda.

Never again

Those world leaders who gathered at Auschwitz in January to commemorate the Holocaust declared "Never Again". Yet they are the heirs of the system that created it, and can create such horrors again in the future. They should save their platitudes and instead remember the words of Bertold Brecht who wrote, on the fall of Hitler:

"Don't rejoice in his defeat, you men, For though the world stood up and stopped the bastard, The bitch that bore him is in heat again."

Brian Watford

Beatrice Windsor is having a well-earned break in the Lake District. The Great British Tradition will be back next month.

socialist appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Fight school cuts

Nowhere has the severity of the proposed cuts in council expenditure been more sharply revealed than in the field of education. Over 20 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) facing having to make up to 1,000 redundancies each.

Other LEAs are facing making cuts involving figures such as 400 job losses in Oxfordshire, 200 sackings in Lambeth and 300 to go in Devon. In Shropshire, 36 school governors are threatening to resign rather than impose cuts (see article inside). At Queenswood primary school in Telford, the governors have already resigned forcing the local county council to take over and impose redundancies. According to the government education spending is set to rise by 1.1% this year, however if you allow for inflation alone this represents in reality a cut which it is estimated will amount to "£200 for every secondary pupil and 350 for each primary pupil" (Independent 11/2/95).

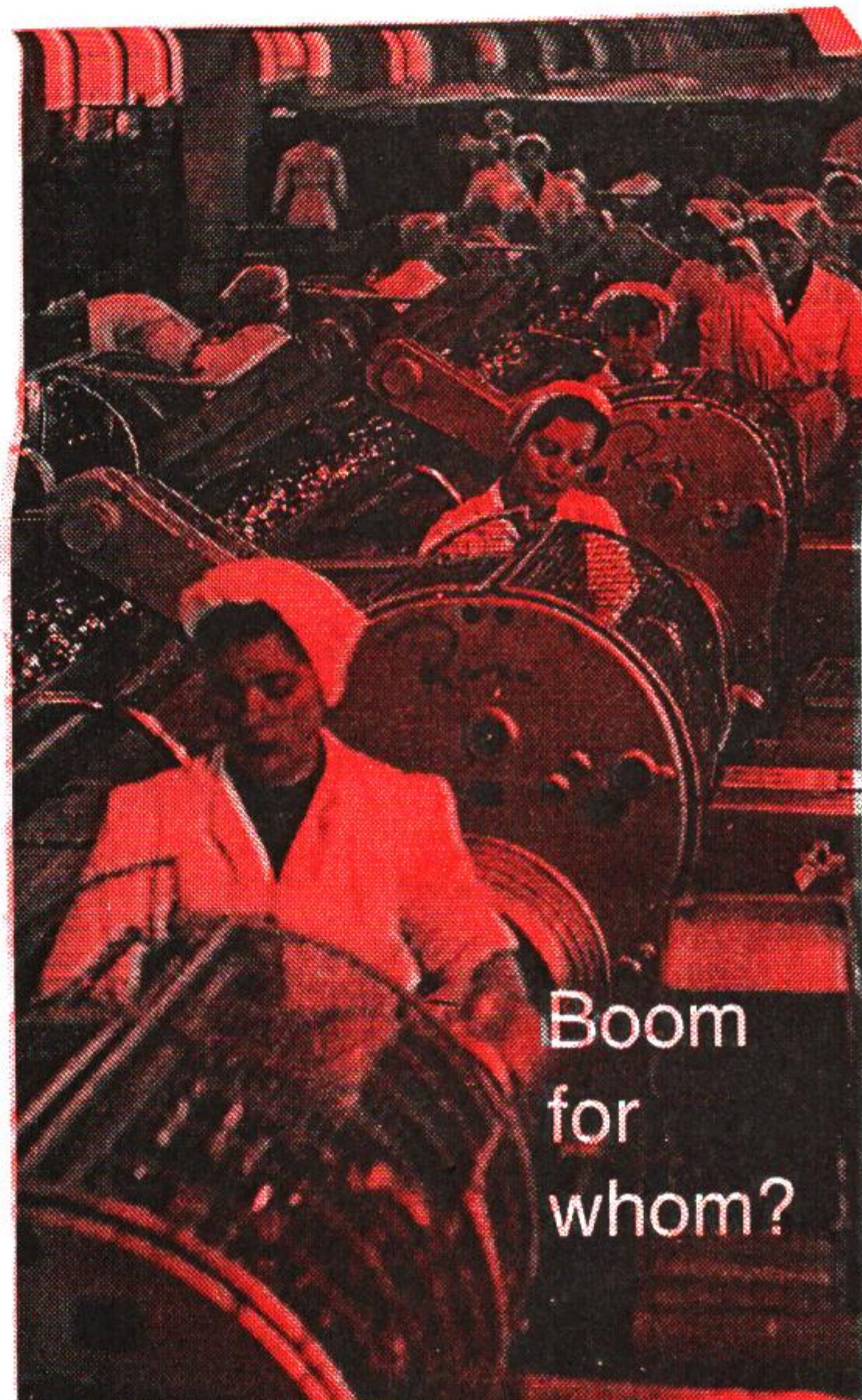
The same article in the Independent also reports the case of a head teacher in Swanwick, Derbyshire who has had his budget already cut by £150,000 and is facing a deficit of at least £30,000 in March. He is warning that children may have to be sent home and other heads have confirmed that they may have to do the same. Throughout the whole of Derbyshire 400 teachers could go.

The cuts crisis has been further fuelled by the Tories reluctance to pay for the teachers

pay increase determined by the Teachers' Pay Review Body (itself designed to avoid collective bargaining) which has left local authorities to cover the shortfall. Gillian Shepherd, Tory Secretary of State for Education, has warned the Cabinet that 10,000 teachers' jobs are at risk. Publicly the Tories are saying that there is no problem—a position that has been greeted with derision by parents, teachers and governors. Their position is that 'natural wastage' and increas-

"Labour councils should stand up and fight and refuse to implement the cuts. The Labour leadership should not sit on the sidelines on this one."

ing the size of classes (itself detrimental to education standards in any case) will allow the schools to get by. The reality is that the education sector is facing an upheaval both from the teachers and education staff on the one hand and parents on the other. Even Tory supporters are concerned and are warning of the effects which these cuts could have on the Conservative vote at the next election—if things do not look bad enough already for them! Some have even formed campaigns such as the Oxford based 'Conservative Parents Fighting Against Cuts'.



Boom
for
whom?

Gloucestershire county Council, run by the Tories and Liberals, has felt the pressure so much that they are going to set an 'illegal' deficit budget.

In Leamington Spa (hardly a centre of class struggle) over 700 turned up to a meeting to protest against the education cuts. A half day strike of teachers has already taken place in Oxford following on from a demo of 2,000. Action has also taken place in Newcastle and Leicestershire. With the threat of schools opt-

ing out to try and escape the cuts and the prospect of class sizes of 40 plus with cutbacks in facilities and increases in the cost of things such as music education fees and school meals, the mood is there for a fight.

Labour councils should stand up and fight and refuse to implement the cuts. The Labour leadership should not sit on the sidelines on this one. They have already done enough damage with their support for league tables, testing and Blair's disgraceful decision to use his privileged position to send his kid to a

grant-maintained school. The unions should not rely on this however and should organise a programme of action without delay to build on the basis of support that already exists. The NUT should call a national demonstration to unite all those affected—both staff and parents. However this should be supplemented by a programme of one day national strikes to drive the message home. There is nothing more important than a decent education—that is under threat from the Tories in their drive for profit and greed. The time has come to fight!

Fight for Socialism