

socialist *appeal*

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The Marxist voice of the labour movement

no. 70
July
1999

Blairism trounced: Socialist policies now

Harold Wilson once said that a week was a long time in politics. Over the last few months there has been a political sea change. All the manufactured infallibility that surrounded the Blair government has come crashing down. After the latest round of election results in May and June, the political landscape suddenly looks very different.

Two years ago, the Blairites were confidently pronouncing that they would rule well into the new millennium. On the basis of PR and consensus, they were set to become, in alliance with the Liberal Democrats, the "natural party of government". Now, after a string of disastrous election results, things are beginning to come apart at the seams. We have entered a period, as *Socialist Appeal* has explained, of sharp and sudden changes, politically, economically and socially.

Despite the cultivated image of Blair as the "great war leader", and the boasts about the successes of government policy, the gains of May 1997 have quickly evaporated. Blairism has hit the rocks with an almighty crash.

Heartlands

New Labour received a drubbing in the European elections. In broad terms, it was the worst election result for Labour since the 1920s. In Wales, where Plaid Cymru took 30% of the vote and, once again, outpolled Labour in its heartlands, it was the worst result for generations. You would have to go back as far as 1910 for a similar result. In Scotland, the Tories captured two Euro seats while Labour's tally was halved to three. The SNP came within 1.5% of overtaking Labour. On a national level, the Tories overtook Labour by 36% to 28%, and by 36 seats to 29. On the basis of these results, the Tories would have won a general election.

Eleven out of 12 of those eligible to vote stayed at home. It was an abysmal turnout of only 25%. In fact, this was the lowest turnout ever in a national election, and the lowest in the EU. Those who stayed away were, in the main, Labour voters voting with their feet. Labour only managed to win 6% of the electorate.

The same was true of the Leeds Central by election held on the same day. Labour's victor, Hilary Benn won the seat with just 6,361 votes - a figure more asso-

ciated with a local council election. Only 19.6% voted, making it the lowest turnout in any parliamentary election since the second world war. The swing against Labour was 20.5%.

This dismal performance was primarily due to the growing disillusionment with government policies. Traditional Labour voters simply stayed away in protest. As one senior backbencher lamented: "We never gave our own supporters a reason to vote for us." (*Guardian*, 15/6/99).

The Blair government has largely carried on where the Tories left off. While Labour voters looked to the government to carry through a fundamental change, they got more of the same. The Iron Chancellor continued with the Tory spending restraints, school children went without books, the sick died waiting for treatment, fees were imposed on students, disability allowance was cut. How can working people be enthusiastic about this state of affairs?

In Sunderland, where turnout at the European elections was only 16%, disillusioned Labour supporters graphically explained their feelings. One woman, Doreen, explained "My father and mother would always vote, rain, hail or snow. But what's the point?"

"This government has sickened everybody. We all voted Labour but we're worse off than under the Tories."

Her friend Margaret, who voted Labour, wondered why she bothered. "Nothing seems to change our lives." This now sums up the mood of millions of working class people.

Dave Hardy, who also voted Labour, said: "I thought it was important.

"But the government should sort this place out, stop factories shutting down the local brewery is about to close, with the loss of 600 jobs."

This flies in the face of all the rubbish put forward by the right wing about "us all being middle class". For the majority nothing has changed.

All we are offered are Tory values. These were summed up by Gordon Brown in his speech to the CBI (where else?): "I believe my own party failed in the 1980s to show that enterprise and fairness depend upon each other and how extending opportunity to work, to work your way up, to start a business promoted both enterprise and fairness. Now, I believe we are all ready to leave behind the old divi-

sions and build a modern culture of enterprise, open to all and benefiting all."

What Brown is preaching is class collaboration: everybody is on the same side, class interest no longer applies, and employers should be nice to workers, who in turn, should give up old-fashioned ideas, such as struggling for better pay and conditions. These Thatcherite views have no attraction in Sunderland or amongst working people generally.

No amount of sugary phrases will eliminate classes under capitalism. They are a product of the system, where the interests of capital are directly opposed to the interests of the working class. The class struggle exists when every day employers and employees battle with each other for a bigger share of the cake. Over the last 20 years there has been an employers' offensive. They have launched a counterrevolution on the shop floor, with speed-ups, flexibility, and downsizing. Insecurity has reached record levels across the board. Things are not getting better, they are getting worse.

It was these conditions that undermined the Tories and prepared the way for their massive defeat. But rather than solving them, Blair has championed the cause of the market economy and flexibility. He has become the mouthpiece of big business. That is why he is continuing with Tory policies.

But this has now caused a backlash. The landslide victory for Labour has been completely undermined. Labour supporters are turning their back on the government. This is no mid-term blues, but a profound change in attitudes towards the government. It is a deep-seated revolt amongst big layers of the working class against Blair's pro-capitalist policies.

Mandelson

To add insult to injury, Blair is hoping to bring the disgraced Peter Mandelson back into the cabinet as election campaign manager. Apparently, this would improve the party's communication skills! This view was supported at the PLP by Lindsay Hoyle, MP for Chorley, who said "We are in a mess. This ship is on the rocks."

The leadership is to set up a task force to investigate the party's disastrous loss of support in its working class heartlands. Ian McCartney, the trade and industry minister, has been given respon-

sibility for reclaiming the lost ground. According to reports he stressed there was no panic - the party's core support simply stayed at home! Other ministers have argued that the low turn-out was due to voter "contentment" with government policies!

Those who argue on these lines are clearly living on another planet. You don't need a task force or to be a genius to understand why traditional Labour supporters abstained in droves. Any working class person will give you the answer. Just ask Doreen, Margaret or Dave.

Opposition

This growing disillusionment has fed through into opposition within the ranks of the Labour Party. Not only is the membership disheartened by Blairism, divisions are beginning to open up even at the top. At a recent PLP meeting, MPs demanded more measures that address the needs of the party's traditional voters. More alarmingly for the Blair leadership, a usually loyal new-intake backbencher complained of the "Stalinist approach" of Labour's Millbank organisers, saying that local party workers were resentful of the top-down approach. Without party democracy, the rank and file will rightly feel alienated and bitter towards the antics of the Blairites. This has clearly become widespread throughout the party, resulting in little if any campaign on the ground. The problem is, that without the activists, there is little chance of winning elections. But Blair is looking in another direction. For him, elections are not won or lost through campaigns involving the grass roots, but through his business friends in the media. However, Blair will discover these are fair-weather friends. They will back Labour for as long as it suits them. They will change allegiances just as easily.

Short-sighted

On the basis of the Euro elections, the Tories are hoping to revive their failing image. Hague, who was so close to being removed as leader, has had a stay of execution. Utterly short-sighted and inept, he has stumbled on the idea of defending the Pound as a way to win the next election. This will certainly serve to further alienate the pro-European wing, and lead to deeper conflicts within their ranks. The shadow cabinet reshuffle will do little to rescue the Tories, especially with the sorceress, Ann Widdecombe, being promoted to shadow home secretary. The only hope they have of reviving their electoral fortunes is through disillusionment

with the Blair government. That, after all, was the reason for their successes in the European elections.

For Labour activists and trade unionists the past few months have provided a series of warnings. In order to appease big business, Blair has repeatedly attacked Labour's natural supporters. While the rich are encouraged to develop their "enterprise", the single parents, the disabled and the unemployed are harassed. Means testing has become the watch word of the government.

The present pro-capitalist policies are preparing a disaster. Activists in the Labour and trade union movement must learn the lessons of the recent election debacles. Working people voted Labour to bring about a fundamental change in their lives. Such change can not be introduced by the market economy. On the contrary, it is capitalism that is the cause of working class misery. Promoting or tinkering with the capitalist system offers no way forward. The Labour Party was formed almost 100 years ago to represent the interests of working people.

Careerists

Unfortunately, the party has been hijacked by careerists. Working people have no alternative but to take it back. We must fight to regenerate the Labour and trade union movement. We must fight to arm it with a socialist programme which including a 32 hour week with no loss of pay, a minimum wage of at least two-thirds of average wages, voluntary retirement at 55 with a decent pension, a guaranteed job for all, and renationalise all those industries privatised, with no compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.

However, only by taking over the 150 major monopolies, banks and insurance companies, under democratic workers' control and management, can the economy be run in the interests of the majority. The blind laws of the jungle that operate in the market economy - together with the profit motive - must be abolished, and replaced by rational democratic planning. There is no "third way".

With a drastic reduction in the working day, not only can unemployment be abolished over night, but the working class would have the necessary time to be involved in the democratic running of society. The talent that is squandered under capitalism could be used to the full. Production could be dramatically increased, allowing us to enormously raise the standard of living of the majority. ■

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Socialist Appeal

Published by
SA Publications,
PO Box 2626,
London N1 7SQ
tel 020 7251 1094
fax 020 7251 1095

socappeal@easynet.co.uk
www.socialist.net

editor: Alan Woods
design: Alastair Wilson
business manager:
Steve Jones

Assembly stitch-up

"You've heard of the Stepford Wives, now meet the Stepford Candidates!" That was the comment of one Labour Party member after seeing the details of the approved nominees for the Greater London Assembly.

by Steve Jones

Local Labour Parties will only be able to select candidates to stand for election to the Assembly from the vetted list of nominees. Left Wingers (and even some Right Wingers whose faces did not fit) have been weeded out from the final list. One rejected nominee from the Left was told that he was not suitable because he didn't have enough "life experience." This has left party members with very little real choice such as the similarity between all the candidates, many of whom have produced suspiciously expensive glossy leaflets to support their nominations.

A trip through the nominees' CVs throws up some alarming trends of what the vetting body evidently thought makes a suitable candidate. Most of the people selected are middle class (or working class 'made good') and have professional jobs; lawyers, company directors, etc. Their labour movement experience involves sitting on quangos, being local councillors or, in some cases, full time employees of trade unions. In other words, people who see the labour movement as being a good career opportunity. Their politics seems to consist of having 'visions' mixed with a lot of talk about

diversity, regeneration and renewal—only one candidate even mentions socialism and most are too frightened even to raise the question of the old GLC.

It is a disgrace that this vetting procedure has been used to curtail the rights of CLPs to nominate who they like. Fears are also being expressed that a similar lack of choice will be offered when it comes to the position of Labour candidate for London Mayor. There is a clear danger here. Such a cynical approach on the part of the Labour bureaucracy could act as a dampener on the enthusiasm of party activists to work in this election. There is also clear evidence that voters will be turned off by such an attitude, quite apart from the lack of clear socialist policies—the sort of policies that are actually needed to solve the problems of London. Left to the whims and strategies of the Millbank spin doctors there is every danger that the previously unthinkable could now happen and that the Tories could win a majority on the London Assembly and/or take the mayoral position when elections take place in May 2000. The Euro elections in London only just gave Labour a majority over the Tories in the popular vote. A repeat performance in 2000, especially if the economy has slipped, could prove disastrous both for Londoners and nationally. The demand should be made now for the right to freely select candidates for both the assembly and the Mayor, who will stand on the side of the working class and fight as socialists to defend the people who elected them. ■

University staff take strike action

Lecturers and academic related staff in the "old" universities took part in a one day strike on May 25th in a dispute over pay. The union, the Association of University Teachers, called the industrial action after a ballot of members rejected the employers' 3.5% offer. The employers failed to address the union's claim for a 10% rise in pay to compensate lecturers for a decline in salaries relative to other comparable professions over the last 20 years. The union also lodged claims to end casualisation in the universities and gender discrimination, and for improved London weighting.

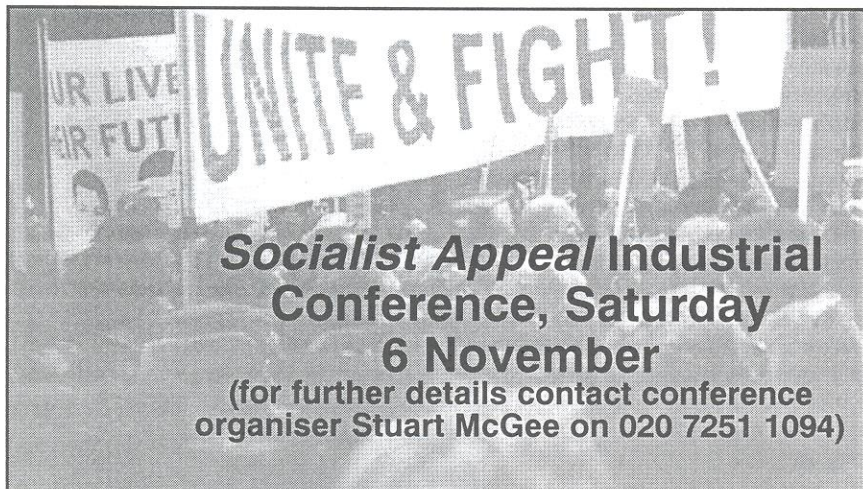
The extent of casualisation (short-term contracts) amongst women academics is currently over 50%. Lecturing is now far from a "job for life". The use of short-term contracts also means that more staff are paid at the lower end of the scale.

The Independent Review Committee on Higher Education, Pay and Conditions, chaired by Sir Michael Bett is due to report at the end of June and is expected to recommend substantial increases for some university staff. The AUT however is not holding out much hope of this being implemented as the Labour Government is intending to continue with the same policies on higher education as its Tory predecessors. They want a further expansion of higher education on the cheap, with massive productivity increases yet again from university staff and little improvement in pay.

As students now leave higher education with large debts from loans, having had to pay their own fees it is difficult to see who will be able to afford to go into a career in university lecturing. A university lecturer is usually expected to have a first degree and a doctorate, and subsequently faces a very long "apprenticeship" even to get on to the bottom of the pay scales!

In the meantime the dispute goes on with action such as boycott of admissions and examination procedures. Staff from the new universities have also rejected a 3.5% offer and are set to join the dispute, which may well last into the new academic year.

By an AUT member



Socialist Appeal Industrial Conference, Saturday 6 November
(for further details contact conference organiser Stuart McGee on 020 7251 1094)

unison: 'scrap PFI'

There were clear signs at this year's annual Unison conference of growing concern over the continuing failure of the Labour government to deliver.

by our industrial correspondent

This changing mood has reflected itself both on the conference floor and at fringe meetings at a number of union conferences already. The union leaderships may shift to the left in words, but they make strenuous efforts to suppress any serious attempts to build opposition to the government's continuation of Tory policies. Although the issues may vary from union to union, the overall trend is clear—opposition is starting to grow.

For Unison, the privatisation of public services has always been a major issue. Resolutions calling for the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to be scrapped, and to take existing PFI schemes back under public control, were presented to conference and duly passed. Resolutions were also presented critical of the Best Value project, which was originally intended to replace compulsory tendering. The stated intention of Best Value was to provide cost effective quality services to the public but, as delegates explained, the emphasis is being put on cost effectiveness. The resolution passed made it clear that whilst Unison is still committed to negotiation, should—or rather when—that breaks down, or fails 'full backing would be given to branches that embarked on official action.'

On the issue of the minimum wage, it was established that Unison would campaign for £5 an hour for all, with adequate uprating and enforcement mechanisms. Significantly, conference agreed unanimously to call for a national demonstration on this issue to be

held in the spring of next year. This demonstration should get the support of the whole trade union movement.

Conference passed a resolution supporting protection of employment rights regardless of length of service, hours, and also demanding the right to reinstatement or compensation for any employees dismissed for taking part in 'lawful industrial action.' A much better resolution from Paddington Health branch was also passed despite opposition from the NEC. This called for employment rights from day one of employment, no discrimination against those working for small employers, the right to take solidarity action and dropping the 40% threshold in recognition ballots. In the debate on these resolutions delegates clearly saw the fault lines between a leadership just talking left and conference delegates actually pushing for a fighting position. The Paddington resolution made it clear that these positions should not just be agreed but actually campaigned for by the union. In addition, there were a number of other campaigning resolutions which were either defeated or manipulated off the agenda.

Owing to the nature of Unison's political structures (there is a separate affiliated political structure to deal with 'party political matters') clear direction on how to channel this opposition into the party was sadly lacking. We certainly need to see a repeat in Unison of the drives being carried out by the likes of the AEEU, TGWU and USDAW to get members into the Labour Party. Many delegates will have left Brighton having expressed their anger at the way this government has acted towards the public sector. They need to get into the Labour Party and start defending working class aims. ■

Support Sefton Workers

Unison members in Sefton have been locked out without pay since May 13th by management acting on behalf of Labour-led Sefton Council. The members had been taking legal properly balloted action, short of striking, in a dispute over grading. The branch is now conducting a ballot of all members in the finance department for strike action to defeat the lock-out. A march and rally has been called in Liverpool on Saturday 3rd July starting from Bootle Town Hall, Oriol Road at 11.00 am. This is an opportunity for trade unionists to show their opposition to the actions of the council and their support for the locked-out members. Messages of support, donations and requests for speakers, etc. can be got from Sefton Unison, 209 Linacre Lane, Bootle L20 6AD: Phone 0151 934 4760 or fax 0151 934 4763

Capital Idea



Capitalism's pound of flesh

There are long queues of unemployed outside the Iran Kidney Foundation. They are selling their kidneys for cash. For £725 to be exact. The press is full of reports. One man sold a kidney and a vein from his left leg, and was prepared to surrender the cornea of an eye. Another legally married four wives and ordered each to sell a kidney. As Hojatollah Asadi, 26, said: "if I make 10m rials (£725), I will be able to support my family." According to officials, black market sales account for 80% of all kidney donations. "They (donors) should be respected even if they are doing this for money, because they could have earned this money through other means, like robbery or forgery," said one official. But Nader, 28, waiting in the queue said: "This has become a capitalist country. If you have money your life is okay. If not, you must die."

What's up doc?

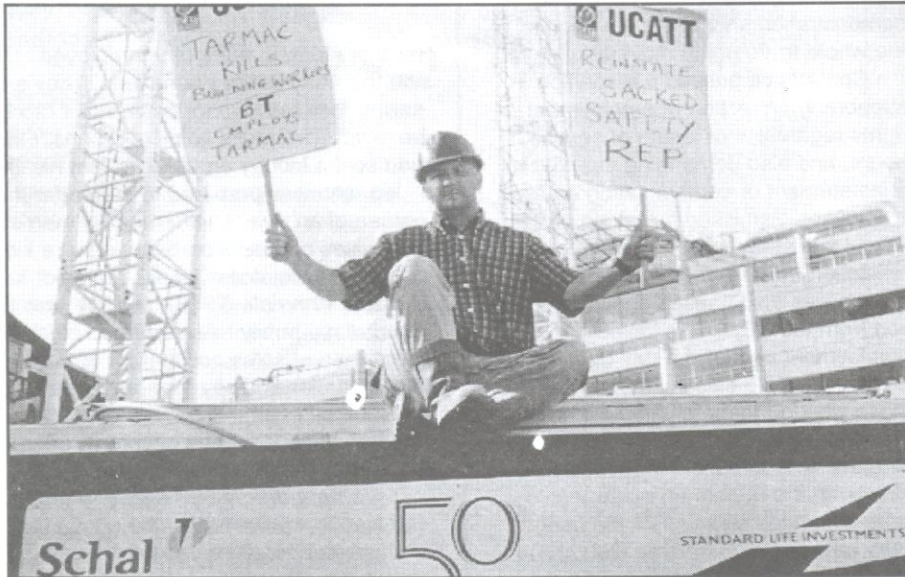
Despite the boasts of the billions being pumped into the health service, Britain has fewer doctors per head than almost any other developed country. While Britain has 1.6 per 1,000, Switzerland has 6.1, Italy 5.5, Spain 4.2, Greece 3.4 and USA 2.6. Only Korea and Turkey have fewer doctors! Britain needs 60,000 more doctors, at a cost of £5 billion, to bring it up to the western average. Professor Brian Jarman, of Imperial College School of Medicine, in London, has warned that the UK doctor shortage was costing up to 46,000 lives a year.

Closet Liberal?

In a farewell open letter, the Liberal Democrat leader and former marine, Paddy Ashdown, revealed an astonishing fact. Tony Blair, he says, is a closet Liberal. Blair likes to call his political approach the third way, but, says our former marine, "actually it is liberalism." This is why, he says, some in the cabinet secretly call Blair "the Liberal".

In reality, Liberalism and Toryism are two sides of the same coin. For many in the rank and file of the Labour Party, Blair is more like a closet or not-so-closet Tory. After all, he admires Margaret Thatcher and her achievements. How can you get more Tory than that?

Murder on the building sites



The building company Tarmac have been exposed by the Channel 4 TV *Dispatches* documentary as the employer with the worst safety record in the entire country. They have thirteen deaths and 75 criminal convictions to their name. This is murder. In any just society, Neville Simms, the managing director, together with the rest of the board, would be behind bars.

by a construction worker

British Telecom are employing Schal (a 100% Tarmac owned company) to build their new offices around the M25. With clients such as BT, the Royal Opera House and the Tate Gallery, Schal try to present themselves as the prestige end of the construction industry. But they more than live up to the traditions of Tarmac.

On the Brentwood BT 2000 office development, built by Schal, a union safety rep, Dave Smith, was sacked for complaining about safety conditions on the site. There have been six serious reportable incidents since Christmas. The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) have confirmed that the site is the subject of at least two ongoing investigations. The victimised building worker, who is employed by ground works contractors Cinnamond, has worked on the site for nine months and only became the safety rep six weeks ago. He handed in a safety inspection report to Schal. And the response? Straight away his money was cut by £150

a week. He then organised a six page petition about the state of the toilet and welfare facilities on the site. The following day he was sacked.

The building workers union UCATT, safety campaigners and the London Joint Sites Committee have all complained to the HSE and are demanding his immediate re-instatement. A picket is taking place outside the Brentwood building site every day until he gets his job back. After

three weeks protest outside the gate, there have been two walk-outs by the site workers in support of the reinstatement. Protests have also taken place outside BT headquarters at St. Paul's, the Royal Opera House and the Tate. The dispute is now being spread to other Schal sites.

A mass protest picket was held outside the Schal building site at Finsbury Square in Central London on June 17th. Lorries were turned back as security guards called the police to eject the pickets. "You're covering up our hoarding, and you're trespassing", they bleated. All in all it was a successful event which will be repeated at other sites.

"It was a case of blatant victimisation by the employers. They have a pathetic attitude to safety on the sites. All they are interested in is boosting their profits, even if it means risking workers' lives", said Dave. "They are a pack of bastards and we can't let them get away with it. Tarmac have announced profits of £131million. They are fleecing their workers. At the same time, there were 76 fatalities in the building industry last year. It's time we put an end to this scandal." ■

For further info contact the Joint Sites Committee: 0181 427 8480 (Brickies) 0976 762040 (Sparks) 07957 708237

Millennium Dome Sweatshop Scandal

According to the Minimum Wage legislation, workers like Dave Lockwood working on building sites etc., are entitled to be paid the minimum rate for the whole period that they are on call, minus sleep and rest breaks. This should have been good news for Dave whose case was highlighted by the BBC's *Panorama* programme (14/6/99). Working for Shaw Recoveries at the Millennium Dome site, this legislation promised Dave a sizable pay rise. However, on the 26th April he and his co-workers were taken to a meeting in a caravan on site and told that if they discussed their wages with anyone they would be dismissed. Shortly after, only 3 months into his 6 month contract, Dave was sacked. Now the company's boss, Mrs. Shaw is fighting a legal battle to show that workers are not strictly 'on call,' when like Dave they are 'at home' in the caravans, with no running water, which they are forced to stay in on site, sometimes hundreds of miles from home. It's amazing how such sweatshop employers claim to be unable to pay the minimum wage yet they can always afford to fight these expensive legal cases. Workers like Dave Lockwood need the unions to back them. Where these miserly employers claim they can't afford to pay the minimum they must be forced to open their books up for inspection.

CWU 'shapes' up for a fight

One of the biggest issues at this year's postal sector conference was the delivery of BNP election material. Management hide behind the Representation of the People Act to defend the delivery of this filth. They have announced that postal workers from ethnic minorities don't have to deliver this material, but someone else will have to do it for them.

As many workers pointed out not just those from ethnic minorities but all workers feel disgusted by the idea of delivering such leaflets. In response to the argument that postal workers could be attacked by local residents for delivering these leaflets, management even suggested delivering them simultaneously with Labour Party material! Leon Trotsky doesn't often get quoted from the floor of a union conference these days, but John Ireland referred to his position on dealing with fascists by "acquainting their heads with the pavement." The union's position now is to defend any postal worker disciplined for refusing to handle this filth.

For some time now CWU branches and members around the country have dealt with the anti-union laws in a model fashion, that is they have broken them when they have got in the way of defending the members. South East Wales branch secretary Steve Bell has been under threat of dismissal for his part in leading an unofficial strike nearly six months ago, despite the fact that the agreement that ended the strike included a no victimisation clause. Conference agreed unanimously to defend Steve if management carry out their threats.

Privatisation still hasn't gone away. Like a character from a nursery tale it keeps turning up at the door dressed in a new and not very convincing disguise. This time its called Shaping for Competitive Success. Management should be aware by now that any attempt to privatise or introduce team-working through the front door or the back will be met with the same response, and that was again confirmed by this year's conference.

On the political front conference voted to dump any sponsored MP who didn't defend union policy, news which

will undoubtedly worry former General Secretary Alan Johnson now a Labour MP, and the MP for Neath Peter Hain amongst others.

The CWU, at least at a local level, hasn't allowed the Tory anti-union laws to stand in the way of fighting to defend postal workers and this year the conference took a step forward in passing a motion calling on the union to campaign for their repeal, and for the restoration of workers right to strike, and the right to representation and recognition.

The industry sector conferences were quiet this year but the week livened up at the end with the disillusionment with the actions of the Blair government to date coming to the surface. 30 copies of Socialist Appeal were sold and £166 raised for our funds.■

Charlie Balch
Area Distribution Rep
South East Wales AMAL CWU
(personal capacity)

Update

On the 16th of June Steve Bell was informed that he had been awarded a two year suspended dismissal for supposed gross misconduct. Clearly the support shown by the branch and the annual conference forced management off their preferred path of dismissal. So even this award represents an important victory for the union. This award will now be subject to a national appeal.

"My thanks to all members who have expressed their support", says Steve Bell. "Although the decision is going to be challenged it is obvious that management have bowed down to the strength of members' conviction. We have kept our union branch effective despite management bullying."

In further developments, CWU members at the Porth branch in South Wales are balloting for strike action over the proposed closure of their office. Meanwhile in Bristol the morning shift walked out on the 16th over the imposition of an unagreed revision. This was supported by the afternoon and night shifts. A deal was negotiated by the morning shift on the 17th.

The class divide



War and peace

Lenin once answered those leaders who said war was terrible. "Yes" said Lenin.

"Terribly profitable." That was certainly the case for the arms manufacturers. But now big business is licking its lips at the profits that can be made from the wreckage caused by Nato bombers. In an article entitled "British? Geared up to win the Peace" in the *Evening Standard*, it says:

"Trade secretary Stephen Byers is expected to bow to industry pressure and announce by the weekend the formation of an industry/government Kosovo task force, one of whose first jobs will be to send out a scouting team to report back on opportunities for British business."

(10/6/99)

Alison Cotterell, of investment bankers PaineWebber, estimates the Kosovo reconstruction bill at nearly £20 billion for starters. The EU and World Bank have set up a special Kosovo website which lists "commercial opportunities" and invites bids. In war or peace, these big business vultures are always on the make.

Guinness book of records

Downsizing is back. According to all the papers the US economy is experiencing an unparalleled boom, the stock market enjoying neverending growth. Yet so far this year big US firms have announced a total of 336,000 job losses. Procter and

Gamble are the latest to unveil such plans designed to cut costs and boost profits. They've announced 15,000 job cuts. 1998 currently holds the downsizing record with 667,800 job losses compared with 434,350 in 1997. But with more than half the record figure achieved in the first four months of this year, it looks like 1999 will be a bumper year for redundancies. And this is a boom?

Gravy train

Operating profits of South West Trains reached an all-time record £34.4m - a leap of over 50%. While its parent company Stagecoach announced pre-tax profits of £219.9m - up from £158.3m last year.

Capitalism's green armageddon

Green issues are very much to the forefront with the heated debate of GM, and the recent election of two Green Party MEPs. How do socialists view the environment?

SARAH GLYNN takes a fresh look at the subject and the broader issues involved.

We are all environmentalists now. We profess our concern for the planet in newspapers, which we later try to remember to recycle, and if we can afford it, we may even buy organic vegetables and free-range chickens, while our children are taken for nursery school trips to the recycling centre. But how much difference can we as individuals - even committed individuals - make? Consumer power will win isolated battles, but on other fronts the attack on the environment is unrelenting. Our supermarkets may be persuaded, for sound financial reasons, that it is not at present in their interest to stock GM foods, but the development of those foods continues, driven by the desire for massive profits. Corporate power is set not only to change plant life irreversibly, and with unknown environmental consequences, but also to gain a controlling stake over the livelihoods of millions of farmers in developing countries, who will become dependent on its products.

We will not change the world by how we shop - particularly since environmen-

tally sensitive shopping is a luxury permitted to only the more well off members of affluent societies.

The Green Party manifesto identifies the symptoms of a society in crisis - the single minded pursuit of economic growth, public spending cuts, attacks on employment rights, unaccountable multinationals, intensive and destructive large scale agriculture, the transport of goods and components over large distances rather than using local production markets - but it refuses to identify the underlying cause, the capitalist system, and so cannot prescribe a cure. The best it can offer is a reformist programme, trying to reign in the destructive powers of capital with taxes, subsidies and controls. It hopes to bring about changes by "influencing" government.

Capitalist system

That this is not only woefully inadequate, but also, under a capitalist system, possibly actually destructive, is shown by two examples.

First, at a national level, there has been much talk of a carbon/energy tax, and recent increases of VAT on petrol have been justified by environmental arguments: but who is it who pays the price? This will not stop the well-paid executive using his Mercedes as much as ever before, but it could make life very much more difficult for the low-income family, isolated from what remains of public transport and dependent on their car for work, shopping and simply seeing other people. Plans for cutting congestion in towns through road pricing, would also serve merely to limit road use to the wealthy, for whom the lack of other cars would make driving more attractive. Internationally, we have already witnessed how developed, polluting countries can buy their way out of

global environmental legislation by paying for the share of potential pollution which the poorer countries have not yet reached. This creates a powerful lobby against further development of the poorer countries.

Second, greens emphasise the importance of small scale local industries, both in order to cut down on the transportation of goods and components, and also to return a measure of control to a local level. But an emphasis on regionalism in a capitalist society is calculated to destroy trade union power and the gains made over the decades in employment legislation. Class unity is cut across, as workers are encouraged to identify with their company and area at the expense of competitor companies and their workers in other regions.

The ultimate weapon in the environmentalist's arsenal is the population bomb and its fallout of over-development. The consequences of acting only on such theories without criticising the society which has created them have been well demonstrated by David Harvey, and much of the argument which follows has been taken from his chapter in *Radical Geography* (edited by Richard Peet). Although scientists today may use sophisticated theoretical models which can be played out on a computer, the concepts behind these models are not essentially different from those which inspired Malthus at the end of the eighteenth century.

Population

Backing up his logical deductions with empirical evidence, Malthus showed that the "power of population is indefinitely greater than the power of the earth to produce subsistence" and so by "natural law" human population would rise and its conditions worsen until, through means such as famine, the pressures of subsistence would create an unhappy equilibrium. Malthus argued that any interference in this "natural" process, such as poor relief, only worsened the problem by prolonging the inevitable agony and dragging down others, and so he advocated "benign neglect". It was inevitable that some people would suffer, and human progress demanded that these should be society's least valued members, the lower classes. Malthusian ideas were refined a century later by the social Darwinists, who compared the workings of society to





Darwinian natural selection and the survival of the fittest.

Two hundred years on, the "natural" laws of the population crisis increasingly take their toll, and in today's global economy the brunt of that toll is taken by the peoples of the developing countries. History appears to be bearing out Malthus's argument, but history does not operate in a vacuum.

It takes place through certain types of society, and the dominant type of society is capitalism. Malthus's arguments are presented as pure, apolitical science. Unlike Marx, he did not appreciate the dialectical relationship between human society and scientific theory, in which each informs the other, and so he, and others who followed him, failed to notice the influence which the society they lived in had on their thought. Malthus's theory assumes the continuance of the status quo, that is capitalist society.

Market Forces

What if we challenge that assumption? For an economy to be driven forward by market forces it must have a reserve army of labour; it must have under, rather than over, production of goods; it must continuously generate new markets and new "needs" for its products; and it will always create disparities of wealth which are reflected in overt consumption by the rich at the expense of the poor. If market forces are removed from their dominating role, then none of this is any longer necessary, and it becomes possible to conceive of a society where the same amount of wealth can go a lot further. Social Darwinist theories are still strongly argued today, but in comparing society with nature they omit a crucial difference. Animals cannot willingly change their natural characteristics, but society is made by and can be changed by man. Indeed man's ability to develop society is a crucial component of his fitness to survive.

It is an oft quoted fact that there is enough food to feed everyone on earth, if only it could be distributed. While there clearly are finite limits to the number of people the earth can sustain, we are nowhere near them yet. However the changes required of society are not simply those of the redistribution of existing wealth, but also of the redefinition of what we consider as wealth itself. In defining a

fairer society, socialists are perhaps too ready to take on unthinkingly the norms of the capitalist society we live in, and it is here that we may learn from a critical look at green theory, to help us to value those quality of life issues which cannot be measured in purely monetary terms.

Take, for example, the green nightmare, the private car. Most people in Western countries, including most socialists, aspire to own a car. Environmentalists point out, quite correctly, that if all the world's families were to own a car the pollution would be devastating. There is a technically based argument that alternatives could be developed to the combustion engine, especially if the industry was freed from the restraining hand of the powerful oil corporations, but the energy used in car manufacture itself is prohibitive and this would not solve problems of congestion.

However, the aspiration to private car ownership only comes out of capitalism. A really efficient subsidised public transport system, which did not have to share the roads with private cars, could prove more efficient in many cases, especially if supplemented by easy car hire. Such a system is only possible under workers' democracy.

Many changes in ways of living are recognised as desirable by environmentalists and appear, as things which should happen, in Green party manifestoes. But saying they should happen is not enough. They will not happen while we rely on market forces to drive and regulate society. Only when the land, the transport system, utilities and major industries are publicly owned and democratically run, can development be planned in the public good.

If we refuse to change the basic structures of society, then we are bound to be confronted by the population bomb. Harvey makes the dangers of following through the population bomb argument within a capitalist society frighteningly clear. In such a society, any cuts will be directed at its least powerful members: "if we accept a theory of overpopulation and

resource scarcity but insist upon keeping the capitalist mode of production intact, then the inevitable results are policies directed toward class or ethnic repression at home and policies of imperialism and neo-imperialism abroad." Environmentalists may even become unwitting propaganda tools in the hands of repressive governments: "If, for whatever reason, an elite group requires an argument to support policies of repression, then the overpopulation argument is most beautifully tailored to fit this purpose."

Stalinist Regime

Greens are wary of socialists. Not just libertarian greens, of which there is a sizeable contingent, but many "ordinary" members of the movement. No doubt there is a, perhaps subconscious, link made between socialism and the smoke-stack industries in which many socialists have worked. This conceptual link is strengthened by accounts of the pollution caused by Soviet industrialisation; accounts which not only omit to mention that the Soviet Union was a Stalinist regime, and not a workers' democracy but also that concepts of environmental protection were only in their infancy when Soviet development took place. In a blatant attempt to widen their appeal, many green groups deliberately eschew all mention of politics, but political systems will not disappear just because they are not discussed. A position which avoids politics is tantamount to the acceptance of the political status quo, which is at best naive, and at worst, because it diverts attention from the underlying issues, actually regressive. But while we can convincingly argue that the only true green path is a red one, we must ourselves demonstrate that green issues are an integral part of a socialist programme, and not just a side dish. We fight not only for a fairer world, but for a healthy one. ■

Oppose TUC class collaboration

Last month, at a TUC conference, the Labour prime minister Tony Blair endorsed the TUC's "Partnership for Progress" Plan. If asked what this was all about, the majority of trade unionists in Britain would be, in all probability, completely in the dark.

by Stuart McGee

In New Labour speak "partnership in progress" is all about 'new unionism', which, in turn, is all about co-operation between the unions, the bosses, and where necessary, the government. It is all part of the government's business-friendly strategy based on their so-called theory of 'the third way'.

In the words of a TUC spokesperson, the adoption of this 'new' approach would "mark a clear break with militant trade unionism and the 1980s-style macho management".

In reality this approach is nothing more than the tried, tested, and failed class collaborationist policies that right wing Labour and trade union leaders have attempted to pollute the Labour movement with since its inception.

In contemptible language, Blair confirmed the worst fears of genuine trade union activists by informing the conference that the concept of partnership with employers should not be used (by the unions) "as a disguise to get your foot in the door, or, to start rowing about recruit-

ment or to go back to your old behaviour in the bad old days of the 1960's and 1970's".

These fears were once again confirmed by a scandalous official TUC statement which stated that, "Britain could be on the verge of an end to the 'them and us' divide between workers and bosses".

The tops of the trade unions, most of whom have never done a real days work in their lives and have no concept of what it is like to be under the heel of the employers, have learned nothing from history and have virtually no knowledge of class relations in the real world. Their attempts to work completely within the confines of capitalism have made them champions of class collaboration.

As *Socialist Appeal* has pointed out many times, contradictions inherent in capitalism, above all, the fundamental class interests, make such a task impossible in the longer term. At best, the only unity that bosses and workers can achieve is the unity of the horse and its rider.

British trade union history is littered with failed attempts to reconcile the interests of capital and labour.

General Strike

One of the most graphic examples of the failed attempts to reconcile the interests capital and labour was Mondism, where, after the 1926 General Strike, the trade union leaders entered into negotia-

tions with key employers (see following article).

The talks broke down as the bosses turned to unemployment and lockouts to press home their interests.

However, there are more up-to-date examples of so-called partnership deals, most notably at Tesco, Nissan and Rover.

In terms of genuine workers' interests, these deals will continue to be abject failures. How could it be otherwise? In a market economy based on competition and greed, the net result of colluding with management in one firm simply means taking a share of the market from other firms and putting workers in rival companies on the dole. Some of these workers will inevitably be in the same union. How can this serve the interests of the working class. The whole concept of partnership between the bosses and workers in the context of a capitalist economy is a farce. Rather than building upon the solidarity of the workers, class collaboration attempts to bind them to the chariot of the bosses.

Trade unionism is about struggling to defend and improve the conditions of the working class (which is why most genuine trade unionists are socialists). This is only achievable through collective strength and collective activity and clearly has nothing to do with the idea of "partnership in progress" or class collaboration.

So why are a significant number of our trade union leaders pursuing such a course of action? Trade union membership has declined in the last two decades.

It is significant that last year was the first time in almost twenty years that there was not a fall. Trade union membership has now stabilised at 6.8 million members.

Trade union leaders, union stewards and activists alike, all want to see an increase in union membership. However, in all too many cases, for different reasons.

As activists are aware, strong trade union membership, coupled to effective organisation can redress the balance in the workplace and greatly assist in getting the workers a better deal. From the point of view of the union leaders, increased union membership is a source of extra funding, allowing them to pursue a very lucrative life-style, and act as "great statesmen" on the backs of the workers.

The only real way to rebuild the



Monks - promoting partnership with bosses

unions is for them to be transformed into fighting organisations. On the basis of events, more and more workers will be drawn into union activity, rebuilding the branches, taking on steward's positions and rebuilding the shop stewards movement itself. The further this process goes, the more workers will be inspired by the actions of the unions and see a relevance in becoming active in the trade union movement.

Many right wing trade union leaders pander to the lowest common denominator. They try to sell trade unionism on the basis of individual benefits as if the trade union were merely a friendly society. In an attempt to get growth in trade union membership without the struggle, they attempt to deceive workers that their best interests can be served by partnership deals. In reality, they are trying to build the unions on the basis of totally false concepts that cannot and will not work.

If we just scratch under the surface, the real intentions of the bosses and for that matter the government, are there for anyone to see.

Rolls Royce

For example, at the end of last year the chairman of Rolls Royce Sir Ralph Robins threatened to relocate some of the firms operations from Britain to the United States with the implicit threat to the jobs of 30,000 car workers. The real reason for this was to apply pressure on the government to water down the 'Fairness at Work' white paper, which has now become the Employment Bill, and to resist the implementation of 'European Labour Laws'.

A government spokesman commented that "the government was well aware of the need to balance social costs with employers needs".

The Employment Bill that is currently making its way through parliament does virtually nothing to repeal the anti-union legislation of the Tory years. As has been reported in *Socialist Appeal*, Blair has openly bragged that Britain still has some of the most draconian anti-union laws of any advanced industrialised country. Despite this fact, even the minuscule reforms proposed in this legislation appear too much for characters like Sir Ralph Robins. How will workers benefit from the European directives? In reality, only the most appalling employers in the country will be affected, and then only if the unions

organise to ensure that the minimal benefits inherent in the directives are implemented.

In relation to the European directives, Employment legislation and the minimum wage, pressure is currently being applied by business organisations to force the government to retreat. Unlike the TUC leaders, the bosses have a worked-out programme of demands on the government:

- 1) Not to implement any more employment legislation this parliament.
- 2) For a four month learning space prior to any legislation being implemented (presumably to give them time to work out ways around it.)
- 3) Financial recompense for alleged increased administrative costs related to the implementation of the new legislation.
- 4) Clarification, i.e. restrictions, on the right to time off for domestic incidents.
- 5) Most significantly of all, to raise the threshold for exemption from the employment legislation in relation to recognition, from 20 to 50 for the number of workers employed.

While some of these proposals are clearly negotiating gambits, the real aim is to tie down the unions in negotiations with the employers and the government (a la the social partnership model) over minuscule changes of this nature. At the same time the employers carry on with impunity exploiting non-unionists and unionists alike.

However, by far the most graphic example of the real attitudes of employers and government slipped out over the issue of an EU draft directive in relation to worker consultation committees.

These committees would entail employers having to consult with employees' representatives on questions like collective redundancies and transfers of business undertakings.

One could be forgiven for thinking that these committees were just the thing to facilitate the "partnership in progress" proposals.

However, in a report in the *Financial Times*, it was reported that the Prime Minister saw such proposals as 'an unnecessary intrusion'. The truth was revealed later in the same article:

"The real reason for U.K. resistance is not being spoken aloud", said one department of trade and industry official. 'The government does not want to encourage the spread of trade unionism, especially as

it is having to introduce union recognition." (1/12/98)

Ministers fear that such bodies would be dominated by union activists or sympathisers. This is an incredible state of affairs. The CBI are in favour of class collaboration to enmesh the trade unions in their business plans. Blair, however, fears that such involvement of the unions is going too far. He is faithfully reflecting the narrow interests of the City of London.

Clearly the employers and the government have their own agenda and the partnership/class collaborationist approach is central to their aim of maximising profits off the backs of the workers. Central to this objective is rendering our trade unions as ineffective as possible.

Militant Agenda

Trade unionists must also have their own militant agenda to rebuild the unions. Putting forward arguments for collective struggle and explaining the potential for improvements in wages and conditions through collective strength is an essential prerequisite to undertaking this task. It will be important that trade unionists participating in rebuilding the unions lay down some fundamental principles upon which to build. That struggle requires a programme which includes no redundancies, for a thirty two hour working week without loss of pay, no compulsory overtime, voluntary retirement at fifty five, and a minimum wage of two thirds of average earnings applicable to all, with £5.00 per hour as a first step. For the renationalisation of all services privatised under the Tories as a first step to the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under democratic workers' control, working through a democratic socialist plan of production.

Trade unionists in Britain are becoming increasingly alarmed at the continuation of Tory policies. On the basis of events more and more workers will begin once again to see the relevance of trade unions.

In such circumstances the opportunity to rebuild the unions must go hand in hand with an end to class collaboration and the adoption of a fighting programme for the unions.

Every trade unionist should take a principled stand against the concept of "partnership for progress" and ensure that it does not become "collaboration in progress". ■

Mondism revisited



It is the nature of the class struggle that it consumes an incredible amount of human energy, even in victory. After serious set-backs and defeats a certain demoralisation sets in and periods of relative quiescence set in as history awaits a new generation of class fighters to take the struggle forward.

by Steve Davison

Such a period occurred after the General Strike in 1926 following the betrayal of the General Council of the TUC. This is generally known. In the aftermath of the strike the trade union leaders made their accommodation with capitalism and the brief years between 1926 and 1931 bear an uncanny relationship with the current period. Immediately after the strike the Tory Government passed the Trades Disputes and Trade Union Act which declared certain types of strike action illegal and outlawed sympathetic strike action. It also introduced a 'contracting-in' system for the political levy. This was opposed by Labour in opposition but not repealed until the post-war government in 1946. The trade union leaders again opposed the Act - in words, but like today came to live with the constraints quite nicely.

Aftermath

The immediate aftermath of the strike saw a purge of Communist members from the Labour Party and restraints placed on them in the trade unions. The TUC set about crushing the left wing 'Minority Movement' of active rank and file trade unionists generally under the control of the Communist Party. The 'left' were easily defeated at subsequent TUC Congresses. The trade union officialdom moved closer to the Labour Party taking advantage of the prevailing mood amongst the mass of the workers for a political defeat for the Tories and employers. When the Communist Party entered its ultra-left "third-period", denouncing social democrats as social fascists, the way was clear for a right wing domination of the trade union movement. The leader that emerged as a spokesperson of the new way was Ernest Bevin of the Transport and General Workers Union. Along with other General Council members including Ben Turner the President of the TUC, he entered into talks with some

employers leaders, notably Sir Alfred Mond, Chairman of I.C.I. during 1928-29. These became known as the Mond-Turner talks or "Mondism" by its opponents. The first conference took place on 12 January 1928 and it was decided that a small committee drawn from both sides would meet on a regular basis.

Although certain historians like to present this as a form of early "Corporatism" it was nothing short of class collaboration motivated by a survival plan to preserve the prestige of the union leaders both in society in general and in the Labour Party in particular.

GMWU

The trade union leaders position was put by Clynes of the GMWU (whose leader Will Thorne was one of the seven representatives from the TUC), at the 1928 GMWU conference:

"It is the business of trade union leaders to reconcile rival claims and adjust recurring differences in a manner to avert conflicts which usually involve both sides in some form of loss. To arrange peace terms, conference is indispensable."

The agenda items were to include how the employers and trade unions could work together and the issue of 'rationalisation'. This we must remember was in the lead-up to the worst economic recession that Britain has yet experienced. In the context of the economic downturn affecting Britain 'rationalisation' effectively meant agreement to speed-ups, redundancies and wage-cuts.

The talks came to nothing but in the process lasting friendships developed between the trade union leaders and big businessmen. Though no formal agreements were reached Mondism set the tone for trade unionism in Britain in the same way the "Social Partnership" philosophy does today. So what was in it for the trade unions?

Bevin was astute. He had a reputation as a class fighter from his days on the docks and was a trade-unionist, unlike many that lead the movement today. His view of the strike was 'never again'. The trade union movement needed to reorientate itself and particularly swell the haemorrhage of lost income through job losses, victimisation and demoralisation. He understood that a General has to have an army. This position was put succinctly by Emmanuel Shinwell MP who said that the

outcome of the talks should lead to a system whereby, "the trade union keeps the men in order; the employer in return agrees to employ union men only." This was of course wishful thinking given that thousands of trade unionists were driven out of the workplace following the end of the General Strike. Ironically the membership of the TGWU did hold up but only through amalgamations with other unions notably the Workers Union that was virtually bankrupt following the General Strike. The massive haemorrhage of membership from the trade unions and the rise of mass unemployment meant that the employers had less and less need for the trade union leaders to police the membership.

Political Solution

In any case the members were exhausted from the mass struggles of the 1920's and were now looking for a political solution to their problems, i.e. a Labour Government at the 1929 election. This reinforced the hold of the right wing in the trade unions and they used the period well to break the power of the left. In response to the Mond-Turner talks the left responded with the 'Cook-Maxton Manifesto'. This was written by A.J. Cook the miners leader and James Maxton one of the original "red Clydesiders". It was a fierce denunciation of the class-collaboration of Mondism. The manifesto stated, "much of the energy which should be expended in fighting capitalism is now expended in crushing everyone who dares to remain true to the ideals of the movement."

Periods of defeat and reaction are always dark days for active trade unionists. They can seem to last forever. This is true for Marxists as well, particularly those that are heavily involved in the working class movement. The Marxist philosophy and world historical view allows us to be optimistic about a change in the situation. The right wing of the labour movement were victorious by 1929 but within a few short months everything they had won was lost by the betrayal of Ramsay MacDonald and the workers movement once again moved to the left. Today's 'Mondists' are a pale reflection of their historical counterparts, but their fate remains the same. ■

1919: a land fit for REVOLUTION

Prime Minister Lloyd George promised troops returning from the carnage of World War One "a land fit for heroes." In place of this utopia they found a land blighted by unemployment and shortages. Inspired by the end of the war and the victory of the Russian workers and peasants, the spectre of revolution was taking on flesh across the continent and Britain was no exception.

by Phil Mitchinson

In 1918 strikes had already cost 6 million working days. This exploded to almost 35 million in 1919, with a daily average of 100,000 workers on strike.

In the face of such a crisis the ruling class split into two main camps. Those who wanted an all-out assault against the working class, like Winston Churchill, soon to be Secretary of State for War. While others, including Lloyd George himself, preferred to dangle the carrot of concessions - all the more surely to drive the knife home later.

Alongside the struggle of the workers in industry, their brothers in the armed forces and even the police were to take action which sent a shiver down the spine of British capital.

After years in the bloodbath of filthy foreign trenches, Churchill now expected British soldiers to fight a new war against the young workers state in Russia. This was unacceptable and the troops revolted.

On Friday January 3rd 2000 soldiers ordered to embark for service abroad at Folkestone refused. Instead they marched to the Town Hall. There they were promised a rapid programme of demobilisation. Next day, however, new orders arrived summoning a certain number to embark. Again they refused. This time they marched on the harbour. The flood of incoming troops swelled their ranks, and a Soldiers Union was formed. New demands were now added to the demand for demobilisation. Food in the barracks was a disgrace, sanitation was abominable. On January 8th the Army Service Corps at Park Royal in London elected a committee to advance demands including rapid demobilisation; shorter working hours; an end to training; no compulsory church parade; no drafts for Russia; control over messing arrangements; and no victimisation.

Whitehall

Their commanding officer conceded. Yet still 1500 of them marched to Whitehall the next day, against their officers express orders, to see the Prime

Minister. The soldiers delegation must have borne an eerie resemblance to a soviet to the nervous gentlemen in Downing Street.

The sailors too were demonstrating that their revolutionary reputation was well earned. In Milford Haven the Red Flag was hoisted on the HMS Kilbride. Writing in the Herald of January 11th, George Lansbury remarked "Have you wondered why demobilisation is so slow? Perhaps you think it is merely 'red tape.' It is not. It is the Red Flag...Our masters...are trembling for more than their Russian dividends; they are trembling for the security of the dividend-hunting system all the world over."

British Soldiers

Across the channel British soldiers formed the Calais Area Soldiers' and Sailors' Association. Field Marshal Haig wanted their leaders shot under the Defence of the Realm Act. As commanding officer during the war he always seemed more than keen to send his own men to certain death, whether at the front or by firing squad mattered little. Even Churchill, however, had a grain more sense than that, he feared for the repercussions back home.

Meanwhile the Yorkshire Light Infantry stationed in Archangel, North Russia had formed their own soviet, under the influence of the revolution all around them. Their commanders prepared to turn the machine guns of the counter revolutionary White Russians on their own men in the event of open mutiny in the ranks.

The mood in the armed forces alone was more than enough to alarm Lloyd George, Churchill and co. The soldiers however were not alone. Simultaneously there had developed a crisis on the industrial front. The miners and railway workers were preparing for a fight. British capitalism was living out its worst nightmare - a mighty industrial strike wave with no reliable army to restore order. This is no exaggeration. At the end of January Churchill sent a secret memo to his army chiefs. He asked them the following questions, "Will troops in various areas respond to orders for assistance to preserve the public peace? Will they assist in strikebreaking? Will they parade for draft to overseas, especially Russia?"

Haig and the other generals complained that the army was "rapidly disap-



pearing." Even Churchill, still clamouring for troops to fight the Bolsheviks, wrote that "the army is liquefying fast."

On the 17th, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, declared, "We are sitting on top of a mine which may go up at any minute."

To try to defuse the situation demobilisation was stepped up and, on the 28th, the army was awarded a pay rise.

The government now faced a dilemma over whether these same troops could be used to break the growing strike movement. Considering the use of soldiers as scab labour to break the 40 hours strike in Glasgow at the end of January, General Childs argued that although this had been done in the past, that was when "we had a well-disciplined and ignorant army, whereas now we had an army educated and ill-disciplined."

With workers and soldiers taking action, surely British capitalism could rely on the police force? To their dismay, however, even the police were not immune to the movement that was sweeping the country.

In October 1913 the police had formed their own union, the National Union of Police and Prison Officers. They were forced into a semi-underground existence from the outset by the threat of dismissal hanging over any officer who joined or attended union meetings.

Strike Wave

The industrial strike wave had begun a year earlier in 1918, when women workers, in particular, fought for equal pay with the drafted men they'd replaced. The miners and railway workers too had taken action, securing significant advances. The police were drawn into this struggle when one of their number, a certain constable Thiel, was sacked for his union activities on August 25th 1918. The union immediately suspended their no-strike clause and called a strike for better pay and Thiel's reinstatement for the 29th. Union membership was still small, but 10,000 of the Met's 19,000 force came out. Hard though it may be to imagine today, the striking officers sent flying pickets from station to station. Lloyd George was forced to negotiate with a union he didn't even recognise. As he did so, soldiers drafted in to Whitehall refused to drive striking police officers off the streets. Years later Lloyd George recalled with a shudder, "This country was nearer to Bolshevism that day than at any

time since." He capitulated. The police got a pay rise, a widow's pension, and Thiel and all others dismissed for union activity were reinstated.

However the union would not be recognised "while the country was at war." In the coming months the union mushroomed reaching 55,000 members in June of 1919. They affiliated to the TUC and organised a number of large demonstrations in London.

Industrial Movement

By the end of March there was an ebb in the industrial movement. Now seemed like an appropriate moment for the government to try to finish off the police union. On May 30th they were threatened with instant dismissal and loss of pension if they participated in strikes. In response, at the beginning of June, the union balloted for a strike for union recognition and the reinstatement of a sacked member. Compare this with the timidity of today's union leaders, unwilling to break the draconian Tory anti-union laws, and these were police officers.

The vote was 12 to 1 in favour of taking action. Again Lloyd George gave way making big concessions on pay and conditions. Once the mood for action had dissipated however, the government charged full steam ahead. They provoked a strike at the end of July. Although it lasted almost a week, this time there were only a thousand or so out in London which remained fairly calm. In Liverpool, however, where 1600 officers were out, there were three days of serious rioting. A battleship and two destroyers were sent to the Mersey to restore order. This time all the striking officers were dismissed. They were never reinstated.

An immensely favourable opportunity existed here, but such opportunities do not exist for long. Workers, soldiers, sailors, and police officers showed the will to struggle. Every day they were learning and their demands were broadening. The whole history of our movement however shows that that will, although vitally important, is not enough on its own. To unite these different struggles requires a party, a programme and a leadership. The crucial advantage which the Russian workers had over their British counterparts was the Bolshevik party, and the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky.

Such a leadership cannot be expected

to flower overnight but must be built up in advance. The British working class had built up powerful organisations over generations. However, they were saddled with a leadership who had become enmeshed in defending the status quo. Already in 1919 they anticipated the treacherous role they were to play in the General Strike seven years later.

Early on in the year Lloyd George had met with the leaders of the Triple Alliance. He told them "Gentlemen, you have fashioned in the Triple Alliance of the unions represented by you a most powerful instrument. I feel bound to tell you that in our opinion, we are at your mercy. The army is disaffected and cannot be relied upon. Trouble has occurred already in a number of camps....if you carry out your threat and strike, then you will defeat us.

"But if you do so, have you weighed the consequences? The strike will be in defiance of the government of this country, and by its very success will precipitate a constitutional crisis of the first importance. For, if a force arises in the State which is stronger than the State itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the State itself, or withdraw and accept the authority of the State. Gentlemen, have you considered, and if so, are you ready?"

Was he told to pack his bags? On the contrary, Robert Smillie, President of the Miners Federation replied "From that moment on, we were beaten and we knew it."

Opportunity

An historic opportunity was tossed aside. The trade union leaders, who had developed a comfortable existence on the backs of the workers, had stared revolution in the face, and it terrified them as much as it did Lloyd George. Capitalism was forced to lean on the union leaders to maintain itself. That most famous opponent of the working class Winston Churchill drew the following conclusion from the mood of the workers and soldiers of 1919, "The curse of trade unionism was that there was not enough of it, and it was not highly developed enough to make its branch secretaries fall into line with head office." Not for the first or the last time, the trade union leaders played the role of capitalism's last line of defence. We must all learn from the events of 1919 in order to transform the unions, and finally breach those defenses once and for all. ■

NATO's messy entry into Kosovo

NATO has not achieved its war aims in Kosovo contrary to what the TV and the press are attempting to portray. All the more serious analysts agree that at best this has been a compromise. *The Wall Street Journal* (8th June 1999) pointed out that the 19 NATO countries represent about half the productive capacity of the planet and the armed forces of these countries were pitted against Serbia, "a small isolated country whose gross domestic product is roughly one-fifteenth the size of the American defence budget." Even *The Economist* (12th June), which had been pushing for a ground war, has had to admit that, "the West, whatever its protestations, has not won a clearcut victory."

From a purely military point of view the combined forces of the 19 NATO countries could have destroyed Serbia ten times over. But it isn't as simple as that. What has been striking about the whole bombing campaign has been the fear of most NATO leaders of the consequences that could have been unleashed at home in their own countries if a ground war had led to huge casualties among NATO soldiers. In reality one of the factors that paralysed the NATO generals was precisely this opposition to the war in most of the countries involved. If there had been a ground war this opposition would have developed.

The agreement they have now reached with the Milosevic regime foresees a Russian presence, as part of a United Nations force not a solely NATO controlled force. Milosevic has not conceded to what NATO was demanding. In that sense this whole operation has been a partial defeat for NATO.

The bombing campaign has revealed quite clearly that NATO is riven with divisions among its different member states. If the ground war had gone ahead this could have led to the break up of NATO itself. This is important in terms of the effects it will have on the prestige and credibility of NATO in the future.

Paramilitaries

At the same time no one can doubt that Serb paramilitaries carried out atrocities and socialists firmly condemn these crimes against the Kosovar Albanians. But we must not forget that atrocities have been carried out on all sides. Even before the bombing campaign the KLA was carrying out terrorist attacks against innocent Serb civilians.

We must always distinguish the actions of the Serb paramilitaries from those of the ordinary Serb soldiers and civilians. The Serb paramilitaries were under the control of known reactionaries such as Arkan, who was responsible for similar atrocities in Bosnia. There are, however, many examples that prove that the ordinary Serb civilians behaved differ-

ently. In many cases they tried to defend the property of their neighbours.

Unfortunately ordinary Serb civilians have good reason to fear the new situation that is developing. Together with NATO troops the KLA is also coming back. Among them are individuals, like Arkan on the Serb side, who have previous experience of "ethnic cleansing" of Serbs.

As Robert Fisk, reporting in *The Independent* (9th June), pointed out, "NATO, of course, is unconcerned by the fate of Kosovo's remaining 100,000 Serbs - mostly civilians and innocent of the crimes of Serb militiamen - and is already talking blandly of their 'probable' departure."

We also have to distinguish between the hard core KLA members and leaders and those ordinary Kosovar Albanians who joined out of desperation as they saw their homes and families destroyed by the Serb paramilitaries. It is a tragedy that the Kosovar Albanian people have put their fate in the hands of these people.

The KLA's aims are total independence from Yugoslavia and a Greater Albania encompassing Kosovo, Albania and those areas of Macedonia and Montenegro where the ethnic Albanians are a majority. These however are in total contradiction to the aims of NATO and threaten to further destabilise the situation by carrying out attacks on Serb civilians. Reports are already coming in about Serbs being shot by KLA forces. The KLA commanders are not going to give up their arms easily.

That poses NATO with a problem. A Greater Albania would involve the break up of Macedonia where a new war would inevitably be fought out. This time however countries like Greece and Turkey would be involved. It would mean an all Balkans war with two NATO members, Greece and Turkey on opposite sides. Thus, as events unfolding in places like Prizren show, NATO will be forced to betray the KLA and disarm it. Thus the real interests of NATO will be revealed to all.

Another important element in the whole equation has been Russia which has played a key role in brokering the peace accord with Milosevic. NATO has been trying to push forward its sphere of influence right up to the Russian border.



Thus Russia intervened in the conflict between the Milosevic regime and NATO in order to reassert its own role as a major power.

However, right from the very beginning NATO had tried to keep Russia out. This has enraged the Russian military. The Russians would like an area in the North, where the bulk of the Serb minority is based. But NATO tried to double-cross the Russians. That is why the Russian military have reacted by out-manoeuvring NATO in getting to Pristina airport before the British troops. There are reports that they are preparing to send up to 7,000 more troops into Kosovo.

Russian Tensions

Tensions between Russia and the West have been mounting for some time and this has been leading to growing opposition from the Russian generals. Although Chernomyrdin played an active role in achieving the agreement between Milosevic and the West, he was seen by the Russian military as making too many concessions. Thus, when it became clear that the Russians would not get their own zone in Kosovo, this caused indignation both among the people of Russia and the military. This compelled Yeltsin to agree to the lightning move of 200 Russian troops from Bosnia into Kosovo.

Faced with the Russians in Pristina General Jackson had to turn tail. Now the US government "welcomes" the Russian presence. That is only because they cannot afford to fight them. It is not a question of 200 soldiers, a very small force compared with the NATO troops in Kosovo, but to fight them would mean war with Russia and that they cannot afford. This explains why representatives of the West are now saying Russia should play a major role.

These events also reflect divisions within the Russian regime itself, with the more openly pro-western wing becoming more and more isolated. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had one position and the Defence Ministry another. This foreshadows a split in the regime in the future, and even the possibility of a coup at a later stage.

What emerges from these events is that Russia, far from becoming an ally of the capitalist West, is a main competitor on the international arena. The Russian generals are not prepared to stand idly by while their power and spheres of influence are whittled away. And to prove it they have shown themselves to be ready to reach a situation of military confrontation with NATO.

Not having been defeated in war, and with the backing of Russia, Milosevic did not accept the demands being posed to him at Rambouillet and managed to hold out for more than two months against the combined forces of NATO. As the *Wall Street Journal* (8th June) pointed out, "On the cusp of victory, we returned to

Milosevic with weakened demands, which he accepted readily. Now we are told that peace is at hand. If it is, it will be a bad peace. Anxious to avoid a ground campaign, NATO and the Clinton administration compromised on their stated goals, sold out the Kosovar Albanians, resolved nothing and guaranteed that the Balkans will continue to fester." Not exactly a NATO victory!

The Yugoslav army has not been destroyed, as they tried to make us believe. The bulk of Milosevic's forces remain intact. As *The Economist* (12th June) pointed out, "the Serb army remains potent: relatively few of its men have been killed, a formidable proportion of its armour, artillery and mobile air-defence systems is still intact. His army was not defeated".

The Serb people rallied round the government in its battle against the NATO bombers. But the interests of the Milosevic regime are not those of the Serb workers. Milosevic is presiding over a process of capitalist counter-revolution. His government had already privatised about half the economy by the mid 1990s. The clique around Milosevic have been making sure that they get the lion's share of the privatised sectors.

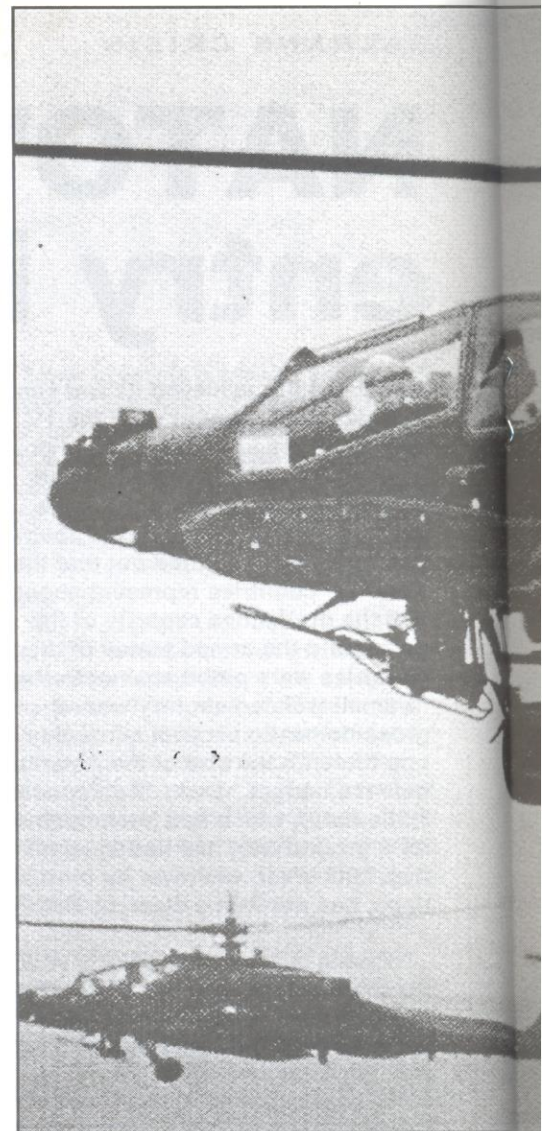
Privatisation has led to widespread "restructuring", i.e. closures and mass sackings. It is within the overall collapse of the economy that Milosevic played the nationalist card, with disastrous consequences for all the peoples of the ex-Yugoslav Federation.

Programme

Genuine socialists oppose this reactionary programme. Unfortunately there has been no genuine Marxist party in Serbia that could explain to the working class that there is an alternative.

Now that the war is over, however, it is clear that the regime has been weakened. But without a genuine class alternative the opposition to Milosevic comes from pro-bourgeois elements such as Draskovic, or from Seselj, the ultra-nationalist. As the Yugoslav Minister for Privatisations, Bogoljub Karic, has pointed out (*Il Sole-24 Ore*, 10th June), "the leader of the ultra nationalist right wing Vojislav Seselj... today represents the only real opposition." Seselj has now resigned from the government in protest at the presence of NATO troops in Kosovo. He obviously hopes to gain support on the basis of whipping up Serb nationalist sentiments. If Milosevic were to be overthrown by the likes of Seselj, the situation in the Balkans would be even worse.

Marxists oppose Milosevic, but the only force that we can count on is the Serbian working class. Milosevic has portrayed himself as the "saviour" of the Serb people. In reality he has led the Serbs from one disaster to another. His opportunist turn towards nationalism played an important role in the break up of the Yugoslav

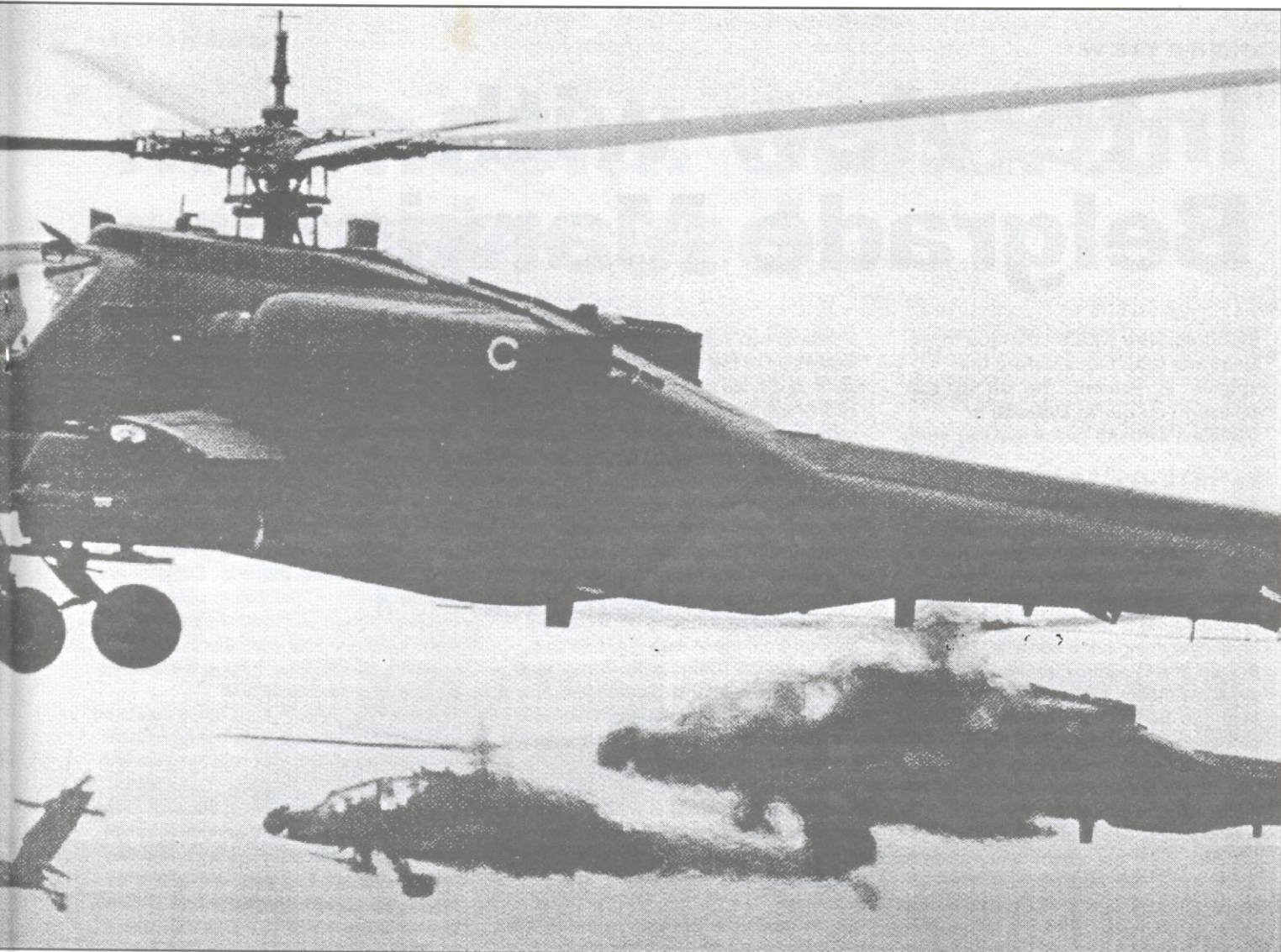


Federation. This led to fratricidal war. The Serbs of Croatia paid a heavy price as the Tudjman regime expelled them en masse back in 1995. The Serbs of Bosnia paid heavily in the Bosnian war. Now the Serbs of Kosovo are beginning to move out in their tens of thousands.

As always in war it is the ordinary people, the workers, the peasants, the youth who pay for the war aims of their governments. And so long as capitalism dominates the Balkans there will be new wars.

Rather than solving the problems of the Balkans, the bombing of Kosovo has further destabilised the whole area. The sudden influx of a mass of Kosovar Albanian refugees into Macedonia has further inflamed the situation there which was already heating up prior to the bombing campaign. The same is true in Albania. The bombing has affected the economy of the whole of the Balkans.

Macedonia has lost about \$1.5 billion as a result of the damage inflicted by the war. Unemployment stands at the staggering figure of 40%. The influx of 300,000 Kosovar Albanian refugees has made the situation even worse. As a result of this situation Dimitrov, the Macedonian Foreign Minister, has said that he fears "inter-ethnic tension."



Romania has also been badly affected. It is in a deep recession and risks defaulting on foreign debt repayments. Added to this is the loss of \$50 million a week's trade due to the war in Kosovo. The war has led to a sudden collapse in foreign investment.

The European Commission calculates that \$20 billion would be needed to relaunch the economy of the Balkans. But the governments of Europe will not come forward with such amounts as they are attempting to keep down their own budget deficits.

It would be up to private investors to provide the money, but these would want guarantees. *The Economist* (12th June) pointed out that, "such aid does nothing to improve the economic fundamentals of Europe's poorest region. For that to happen, Balkan countries need to face up to the rigours of reform when the guns fall silent...the shock of the war may make reform more likely." So after destroying the economy of Serbia, they are now blackmailing the whole of the Balkans. 'Either you let us buy up cheaply those state companies we are interested in and close down the rest, or you get no aid.'

This would lead to an even bigger increase in the levels of poverty and unemployment. This programme will solve none

of the fundamental economic and social problems of the area. Without solving these problems, which were at the root of the war in the Balkans, there will never be a guaranteed peace.

Solution

The only "solution" they have is to maintain a permanent military presence in Kosovo. They cannot leave because this would give the KLA the go-ahead to take over the whole of Kosovo, ethnically cleanse the remaining Serbs and push for a greater Albania, thus further destabilising the whole region. Therefore, just as in Bosnia, they will have to stay for years to come.

This is clearly not a solution to the problem. There is another road, however, and that is the international solidarity of the working class. The workers of the West, through their trade unions and political parties (Labour, Socialist and Communist parties) must give support to the peoples of the Balkans in their struggle against capitalism and against the nightmare of privatisation. They must put pressure on their own "socialist" governments to put a halt to the carve up of the Balkans that is taking place for this will only prepare the ground for new wars in the future. In the last analy-

sis only the workers themselves can stop the killings on both sides. But without leadership and without arms they cannot stop the paramilitary butchers.

All these events re-enforce what we have said all along. There is no solution outside that of the socialist transformation of society. The Balkans are rich in resources. These must be used to the benefit of all the workers of the Balkans. An all-Balkans socialist federation would allow the workers of all these countries to come together and plan out their common resources.

For this it is necessary to rebuild the genuine forces of Marxism in the Balkans, starting in the Trade Unions and then building up genuine mass Marxist parties of the working class in all these countries. If this task is not carried out then we will see more wars in the Balkans. Either the workers build their own organisations and take power or reaction will keep raising its head. There is no other way. ■

Ted Grant and Fred Weston

An extended version of this article is available on our In defence of Marxism website: www.marxist.com

Interview with a Belgrade Marxist

This interview with a comrade from Belgrade took place before the "peace" agreement. The full text can be found on our *In Defence of Marxism* website (www.marxist.com).

SA: There are some on the left who say Milosevic is a left-winger. What can you tell us about his policies and why socialists should oppose him?

Dragan: If one were to judge by his party's name, he is a socialist. But, in reality, he is everything but a socialist. He is at the top of a totalitarian regime, using all available means to stay there. In his ten year rule, he has used a nationalist, a pro-western, a socialist and many other masks to preserve his position and privileges....He created one of the highest levels of inflation in human history with a rate of 2.03% per hour, which is 313,563,558% per month, and robbed the whole of society, manipulating state banks and institutions. He, his family and close party members have a monopoly on oil imports, cigarettes, luxuries and most other goods. They have close ties with the mafia and paramilitary groups. Milosevic rigged the elections, and suppressed strikes and demonstrations with brute force....His corrupt regime tends to control every part of society, and no cost in human lives is too high for them. Now, after he has totally robbed and destroyed Serbia's economy, he wants to conduct reforms towards capitalism. A socialist indeed.

SA: What can you tell us about the policies of the "democratic" opposition in Yugoslavia?

Dragan: There are a few parties which fought Milosevic and then collaborated with him in the last few years....All of them are switching their policies every day, depending on their current needs. You can hear extreme nationalist speeches from a liberal, or a pro-western speech from a nationalist....There is no genuine socialist party to educate the proletariat and fight for their interests, so most people turn to these "liberals and democrats", looking for an alternative to Milosevic. The most significant of them is the SPO (Serbian Renovation Movement). It is pro-bourgeois oriented. It constituted the core of the opposition coalition that fought

Milosevic two years ago, and was in the leadership of the 90 days of demonstrations. But since it represented the interests of a small, but rich layer of society, it compromised with Milosevic and betrayed its partners and 600,000 supporters.

Many of them were misled by the rhetoric about "democratisation". Once the SPO got into power in the major cities, it continued the policies of Milosevic's party. They helped him to destroy the rest of the opposition. The SPO is now again fighting for capitalist restoration, hoping to get support from the West.

Another is DS (Democratic Party), also pro-western, with the same methods and aims. There is also the ultra-nationalist Radical Party of Vojislav Seselj which played a significant role in conducting Milosevic's policies too.

None of these parties is willing to fight for workers' interests, only for their own. They have betrayed the workers many times.

SA: What's your opinion of the break-up of Yugoslavia?

Dragan: The main reasons for the break-up of Yugoslavia were the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracies of the republics in the SFRY and the interests of the imperialist powers. The bureaucrats wanted more power and money, and the way to get them was to form their own national states. This would give them total control over the monetary system, the police and the army.

There were also the interests of the imperialist states involved....They supported the bureaucrats in turning people from one republic against another, supplied them with weapons and even organised military intervention in Bosnia.

The consequences are disastrous: millions of refugees, thousands dead and wounded, the economies of the new 'states' destroyed...

Every day brings another crisis, and nationalist and pro-capitalist policies cannot solve the problems. The only real solution would be a new socialist federation.

SA: After the fall of the Soviet Union, many said socialism was dead. What do you think?

Dragan: The fall of the Soviet Union and other deformed socialist countries is surely a hard blow to workers all over the world. But, capitalism is constantly producing and enlarging the working class, deepening the differences and struggle between the bourgeois and the working class. The antagonisms of capitalism can't be solved by the bourgeois class, but only by socialist revolution and by the abolition of private property. Socialist revolutions and the final victory of socialism are inevitable, not because some theoreticians or ideologists want them, but because capitalism is forcing the working class to rise and destroy it.

The working class in the East is confused and disoriented at the moment, because the totalitarian, Stalinist regimes presented themselves as socialist. This caused workers' disappointment in socialist ideas. Right now, there are no genuine Marxist movements to lead the workers and to explain to them their own interests and social position, so the workers are misled and misrepresented by reactionary pro-western or nationalist parties. But, living conditions are getting worse every day and pro-capitalist reforms are not giving the promised results, so the working class is rapidly becoming class-conscious. It is just a matter of time before new, genuine socialist and communist parties will gain mass support.

A socialist and internationalist policy is the only way to successfully fight imperialism and the domestic Stalinists.

SA: What would you tell those in the West who still defend Marxist ideas?

Dragan: It is very important for the weak and oppressed all over the world that the working class in the most advanced capitalist countries put pressure on their ruling class. In that way they can keep their bourgeois governments from exploiting and oppressing the rest of the world and make it easier for other countries' working classes to fight for their rights. Also, they should lead the battle for socialist revolution on a world scale: if the workers of the most advanced countries seize power, the rest of the world will follow. Any attempt to create a socialist society in small and weak countries alone is fiercely opposed by imperialist powers and in the long run, doomed to fail. ■

Indonesia: Suharto era rejected



Megawati

The elections of June 7th in Indonesia were seized upon by the masses as an opportunity to express their rejection of the Habibie-Suharto regime and to unseat it. The massive rallies organised by the so-called "reform parties," especially in the capital Jakarta, attracted hundreds of thousands of supporters. In one case even the Indonesian Democratic Party assembled 1 million people in the centre of the city. Although the count is not concluded yet, one conclusion can already be drawn: Golkar, the political instrument of the 32 year old dictatorship, has been strongly defeated at the ballot box.

by Jean Duval, Jakarta

The bourgeois opposition to the New Order, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) led by Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of the first Indonesian president; the National Awakening Party (PKB) of Gus Dur; and the National Mandate Party (PAN) led by Amien Rais, are expected to gain an overwhelming share of the vote. Megawati alone would take the lions share with 40%. Golkar, still a formidable machine of status-quo, thanks to its control of the state at all levels, is expected to gain 20%. This is particularly the case in the more isolated villages and in the peripheral islands outside Java. The "Big Five", the above mentioned parties

together with the United Development Party (PPP) a remnant of the Suharto regime, will garner almost 90% of all votes. 43 other parties share the remainder.

The left Democratic Peoples Party, PRD, whose activists played an important role in the overthrow of Suharto, and whose main leaders are still in prison, will have a very low vote.

These elections were called by an illegitimate parliament, whose members were appointed in the Suharto era. The election rules are designed to give Golkar and the army the best chance to preserve their main privileges and even possible control of the next government and presidency.

The elections only affect 66% (462 seats) of all members of parliament who will elect the new president in November. 38 extra seats are allocated to the military. 200 other seats will be composed by the provincial assemblies and social organisations, who are still under the control of Golkar. This still gives a chance to the remnants of the old regime, even for Habibie to stay in power after November.

This is particularly true when one considers the nature of the bourgeois opposition. The 3 main bourgeois opposition parties, PDI-P, PKB and PAN joined in a formal coalition against the "status quo" forces before the elections. First of all, this is the same coalition which betrayed the student protests in the second week of November 1998 when they signed the famous Ciganjur agreement, recognising the legitimacy of the Habibie government and his election manoeuvre, rejecting the demand put forward by the students that they should immediately form a transitional government, and abandoning the demand for the immediate abolition of the political and social role of the army. The last thing these people want is to come to power on the crest of a wave of mass protest. Their desire to distance themselves from the recent mass struggles,

responsible for the overthrow of Suharto one year ago, was again visible when the leaders of those parties refused to participate in May at the commemoration act for the 4 Trisakti students murdered by the military.

These parties are more afraid of the masses in action than of the status quo. Therein lies the true counterrevolutionary character of this bourgeois opposition.

Secondly, all three parties forming this "anti-status quo coalition" established close links with the same forces they pretend to combat.

PDI-P has joined with a lot of army generals and maintains relations with "reform" elements in Golkar (in reality rats deserting the sinking ship). Megawati also rejects any idea of a referendum about East Timor. In the discussions about the composition of the next government PDI-P openly proposes to keep some of the Golkar ministers in their jobs in order to "guarantee political continuity."

The army, thanks to its 38 seats in parliament and its mostly intact social and economic power structure, is holding the main cards in its hands. Amien Rais, the modern Muslim intellectual and leader of PAN also formed a coalition with the PPP, an open ally of Golkar. The main activity of this party in the last two weeks has been intense coalition negotiations. This is the essence of this transition period: the reorganisation of the power structure amongst the bourgeois in order to change the methods of rule (the regime) but not the essence of the system.

Provocation

Of course to keep Habibie in power would be seen as a provocation and probably spur the students, but not only them, into action again. Another means of maintaining the continuity of the old regime would be to appoint General Wiranto as vice-president. Megawati could then be president as a "guarantee" of "reforms".

Whatever coalition comes to power it will very rapidly face what some analysts correctly describe as a "crisis of expectations." The election campaign was relatively quiet and non-violent, compared with most predictions. The main reason for this was that all hopes for change were channelled in electoral illusions. The description of the election campaign as a

"fiesta of democracy" was not exaggerated. There was genuine enthusiasm for this election. The caravans of noisy buses, cars and motorbikes of the different parties were like happy carnivals. This depoliticised the campaign. But let nobody be fooled by the happiness and smiles on election day. Expectations are running very high. But this has another side too.

The poorest in the cities, the young, the workers and the peasants want immediate change. "I give the next government two months" a street seller told us. Indeed the poor cannot wait. Malnutrition (deficiency of vitamin A) is widespread amongst pregnant women and children. The social conditions in Jakarta are twice as bad as in Bangladesh. The rising level of malnutrition in the last two years is having a devastating effect on Indonesia's youth, especially those below the age of three. Almost 90% of a healthy human's brain cells are formed in the first two years. These children will become the slow-learners, and highly susceptible to disease and even death.

Central Java

A Unicef coordinator predicts: "We will lose one generation if we cannot act." But aid programmes in the countryside are not a lasting solution. Peasant organisers in Central Java told us: "Look, the local NGO has spent millions in distributing food packets in the villages. Now they have run out of money and they realise what we told them before, that the problem persists. The peasants start to organise now and do not wait for the NGO's help." Workers from the textile plants from Solo in Central Java were also explicit: "Reform did not enter the factories. Here in Sritex, 13,000 workers work an average of 11 to 12 hours a day, seven days a week. We earn 155,000 rupiah a month (approx. £15). The military have a permanent unit in the factory. The walls are protected by barbed wire. Some 100 plain clothed military check the workers on the floor for dissident voices or union activists. When we go into action we are still beaten up by the military.

"Our factory is the property of Suharto's son in law and his daughter. This explains a lot. Reform for us means the right to strike, to organise, higher wages, to build workers power and to challenge the bosses privileges." Another

organiser adds: "You know as long as capitalism exists it will never be able to solve our problems. The capitalists will always exploit the workers. We have to also struggle to abolish that oppression." But workers have been stunned by the severity of the economic crisis. If a lot of them supported the movement to overthrow Suharto, the deep effect of unemployment and low wages has not pushed them into an independent mass movement.

Last year, 26% of the workforce was expelled from the factories and the minimum wage (which is the average wage) covers only two weeks of food and housing. So a lot of workers are forced into 2 or 3 jobs to be able to survive. It is no accident that in 1998 strike figures were half that in 1997. But the workers are still the decisive social force in Indonesian society. "Workers are half of the population in this country," explains a union organiser from Surakarta. "There are 100 million of us. We are a better power in the struggle for democracy, because we want to carry it out to the end."

Probably the workers will move massively again with a recovery in the economy like in South Korea, where the lowering of the unemployment figures and new orders pushed the workers into action. The difference with Indonesia is that the independent and democratic workers movement is still very weak even after the formation of a new national union federation at the initiative of PRD workers groups. Compared to South Korea, it is still in its pre-87 stage. But any kind of coalition government in Indonesia will not be able to deliver the goods.

The PRD, who despite very low votes appears as the main left political force, is on the wrong track when it campaigns for a coalition government of the so-called "reform parties"(PDI-P, PKB and PAN). In doing this they act as a left cover for the bourgeois opposition. They do not contribute to unmasking the real nature of the bourgeois opposition. The democratic promises of "reforms" - the trial of Suharto, the end of the double function of the military, the elimination of corruption



and nepotism, increased democratic rights in particular the effective right to organise and to strike - will not become reality under a capitalist system in crisis. During the election campaign students and peasants in Medan, protesting against illegal land appropriation by big plantations, were shot and some of them died. The military continue to intervene in social conflicts everywhere in the country.

Living Conditions

To "restore confidence," as the PDI-P programme promises the business world, in a situation where Indonesia is probably the weakest link of South-East Asian capitalism means a savage programme of attacks against the living conditions of the workers and the peasants in the months ahead, imposed by the IMF. This situation will continue to give the army a prominent role in domestic politics to stall unrest.

The crisis has revealed the structural weaknesses of capitalism in Indonesia. "It doesn't really have any world class companies, it had very badly restructured debt, dreadful problems with implicit and explicit guarantees to investors and a very unstable political situation. All these things make Indonesia what we see today, the guy bringing up the rear" says a regional economist based in Singapore.

The Indonesian workers and youth will face tremendous challenges in the next few years. Only those able to understand the real counterrevolutionary nature of the bourgeoisie and the decisive revolutionary force of a magnificent working class, the majority composed of youth and women, will assure the triumph of the necessary social transformation. Some of these revolutionary youth have already started to answer that challenge. ■

India and Pakistan: war threat looms

The Indian subcontinent is bracing itself with the threat of a fourth full fledged war in Kashmir. The present hostilities escalated when two Indian MIG fighters were shot down on the Pakistani line of control on 26th May by the Pakistan army anti aircraft batteries. The next day an Indian M17 gun ship helicopter was shot down by the so called mujahideen.

by Lal Khan, Lahore

The wreckage of the Indian aircraft and a captured pilot were shown on Pakistani television screens to whip up a chauvinistic frenzy, desperately needed by the Pakistani regime to divert attention from the burning issues rocking the government.

Now the Indian regime is talking war. The Pakistani regime has released the captured pilot, has asked for immediate negotiations on a foreign ministry level and is giving all sorts of gestures to back out of a situation in which it has involved itself.

The Americans have started to put pressure on both sides to avert a clash, which could end up in a conflagration creating unprecedented instability and chaos in the whole region. The Chinese bureaucracy is watching from the sidelines, again terrified of the consequences.

This recent tension started in May last year when India and Pakistan exploded nuclear devices against a background of intense socio-economic and political crisis plaguing the two regimes. In India a third general election is being held in as many years.

The crisis has splintered Indian politics and its national cohesion is in tatters. Apart from Kashmir, there are separatist movements and sectarian strife raging in 17 out of 25 provinces of the Indian Union. The concept of a National Party ruling India has withered with the intensifying of the crisis. In 52 years of independence the Indian national bourgeoisie has not been able to solve a single problem or complete a single task of the National Revolution.

Economic growth has slowed down from about 10% in the late '80s to an average of 5.8% in the '90s. The opening up of the Indian market has led to the defeat of the Indian bourgeoisie at the hands of the multinational corporations

and that is why they have resorted to reactionary fundamentalism to maintain their power, thus plunging India into turmoil.

In Pakistan the ruling elite has not been able to fabricate even a democratic facade as in India. 'Democracy' was in fact a distraction and democratic counter revolution to divert the 1968-69 revolution in Pakistan. The failure of left reformism under the first PPP government (1972-77) led to its overthrow and the imposition of General Zia's vicious military rule. This eleven-year-long tyrannical rule had to give way to another mass upsurge which brought Bhutto's daughter, Benazir to power in 1988. In her two stints in power she went from right reformism to outright bourgeois reactionary policies. This led to stagnation in the movement and malaise amongst the masses and prepared the ground for the coming to power of the present reactionary Muslim League government of Sharif in February 1997.

Lurching from one crisis to another, the present regime has resorted to successive acts of repression. The formal economy has collapsed, the black (informal) economy is three times the size of the formal sector and manufacturing industry has fallen by 2.1%. More than 6000 large and medium scale units have been closed down in the last 5 years and unemployment has surged.

Foreign exchange reserves are low, trade volume is contracting, recession is deep with little or no signs of recovery. Pakistan has to import wheat and other food grains to avert starvation.

On this basis ethnic strife is resurfacing once again. The present regime is trying to stoke the fires of the national question, to divert the class movement. Their provocative acts are further enraging oppressed nationalities, especially in Sindh and Baluchistan. If this nationalist strife flares up, eventually it could lead to the break-up of Pakistan in a huge bloodbath over a pro-

tracted period of time.

Although the Islamic fundamentalists have only a meagre base in society their social dominance is mainly due to the appeasement of the mullahs by the capitalist elite and their use of religion to curb a rising tide of class struggle. The fundamentalists have huge resources, financed in the past by US imperialism, now they are the political and ideological face of the Black economy. That is precisely why they are so unpredictable and uncontrollable.

Clausewitz

Now events are catching up and fast. According to Clausewitz's dictum "war is the continuation of politics (domestic) by other (violent) means". Going to war is perhaps the only means for the Pakistani ruling class to enhance their rule. Or so they thought.

If war actually breaks out, it would be a very disastrous one. The Indian ruling class want to finish the whole affair. The hard-liners in the BJP government want to use this opportunity and take the rest of Kashmir. Looking at the balance of military power between India and Pakistan, the possibility of a total annexation of Kashmir by India cannot be excluded. India's armed forces and weaponry outweigh those of Pakistan by about three to one.

However, even if India annexes the rest of Kashmir it will not solve anything. State atrocities can never conquer a whole people in struggle. A total occupation of Kashmir by India would give a new impe-



tus to the struggle in Kashmir, which would turn this victory into a terrible defeat for the Indian ruling class. If the leadership of the Kashmiri national liberation struggle had had a class approach and a less nationalistic policy Kashmir would have proved to be India's Waterloo long ago. If this struggle is linked to the struggle of the oppressed in other parts of India and throughout the subcontinent, which is only possible on a class basis, this wretched system could be overthrown and the whole region would be transformed.

Chauvinist rhetoric

On the other hand, if the Pakistani ruling class loses Kashmir it would be a terrible blow for them. Then, why all this war mongering? Why this chauvinistic rhetoric?

In the last year India and the Pakistan's rulers have embarked upon a path of a militaristic and nationalist frenzy. They have exploded eleven nuclear devices and tested and manufactured several long range missiles. It is sheer utopia to believe that the destiny of 1.1 billion people of the Indian subcontinent can be safe in the hands of Sharif and Vajpayee.

This South Asian region is the most populated, poorest, most undernourished, most illiterate, least gender sensitive and probably the most dangerous region of the world. In the past Pakistan could muster aid from the west due to its strate-

gical importance and its toadyism towards the United States. India having a relatively larger country used to manoeuvre between the US and the former Soviet Union.

After the collapse of Stalinism and the crisis of the world economy the situation has changed radically. The conditions of the IMF and the World Bank, in the scenario of shrinking markets, dwindling consumption and excessive productive capacity have already crippled these economies. Through lowering of the tariffs local industry is being crushed by the aggressive onslaught of the multinationals. Accepting the imposition of privatisation means handing over the crucial sectors of the economy, like power generation, telecommunications, transport and other sensitive branches of industry to the multinationals. This also means a major reduction of the control of the state over such vital areas of the economy.

Also, the "downsizing" of state institutions means physical annihilation of the state apparatus. These conditions have made the state institutions, especially the army more vulnerable to the penetration of fundamentalist and chauvinistic tendencies. Along with these conditions the concessions given to the ruling classes of these countries are being withdrawn. The extremely corrupt rulers who have stashed away billions of dollars in the past are now being asked to service the imperialist debts and put that money in the economy to kick start it. Their markets have already been taken over by the

multinationals, now imperialism wants them to put up their loot to create a market for the multinationals. For the first time in the post-war era the imperialists are forced to attack their own stooges through economic compulsion.

The ruling classes, or at least a big chunk of them, are therefore reacting by trying to reassert the nation state and harping on national and religious chauvinism. This is the

real explanation of the nuclear blasts and building up of this war hysteria. They are trying to scare imperialism to stop the economic and political onslaught against them.

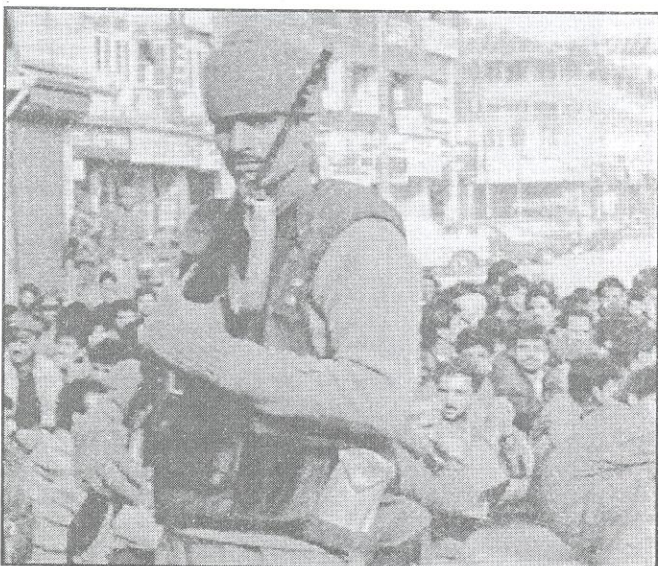
The most important contradiction of this epoch is between the existence of the nation state and so called globalisation. But globalisation under a crisis ridden capitalism is too weak to abolish the nation state. On the other hand the nation state in reality becomes so obsolete that it cannot fight back against the onslaught of world imperialism. Hence the aggravation of the economic crisis will give rise to greater turmoil and social explosions.

Bengal

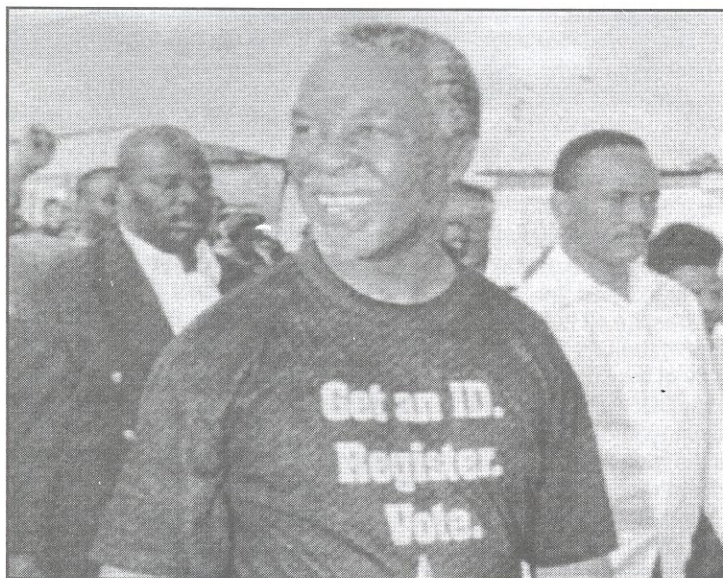
The rulers of the Indian sub continent can't afford a war. The question is: can they afford peace? No! History is witness to the fact that every war ended up in revolution. After the 1965 war there was the glorious 1968-69 Revolution in Pakistan. After the victory of India in the 1971 war in Bengal, there was a mass workers' movement and general strikes of the Indian proletariat. This led to the overthrow and subsequent demise of the victor of that war, Indira Gandhi. If there is a war this time round it will result in total subjugation of the nation state to imperialism, if not its annihilation. But in the aftermath of a war a revolutionary upsurge of unprecedented proportions is inevitable.

With a genuine Marxist leadership its victory and a socialist transformation of society would be entirely possible. If that doesn't happen then the ravages of the war would be so drastic, that the future of human civilisation, culture and existence would be in jeopardy. The whole of the subcontinent would be splintered into bloody fragments and the spectre of barbarism would loom large. Even if they can avert a war now they have no way out of the present crisis. If they had one why would they embark on this path of war mongering?

Either way a spectre of class war haunts the ruling elite. They can neither avoid it nor can they win it. The victory of the working masses and the oppressed peoples of the Indo-Pak subcontinent in the coming class war, is the only way forward for the emancipation of society and survival of mankind. This road is the road of the socialist revolution. ■



ANC Victory: masses expect action



On June 2nd the ANC won, as was expected, a landslide victory in South Africa's second democratic election. With 66.35% of the votes they got 266 seats, just one short of the two-thirds majority needed to amend the constitution, but still 4% more than in the 1994 general election. In the provincial elections which took place at the same time, the ANC won in 8 out of 9 provinces, coming only 2% behind the Inkhata Freedom party in KwaZulu-Natal. Despite this, the ANC will not be part of the new Western Cape government as a coalition of minority opposition parties was formed to exclude them.

by Jordi Martorell

The balance of the first term of the ANC government is an uneven one. On the one hand it is true that the ANC has delivered on some of its promises. The government had pledged to build 1 million new houses and 500,000 have actually been built. Most important of all the ANC-led government has managed to bring clean water to 3 million people and electricity power now reaches 63% of the population. These are modest, but nevertheless important advances which have convinced a majority of the South African masses to continue to support the ANC.

Nevertheless this is just one side of the coin. Millions of black South Africans

remain in utter poverty and ignorance, 20% of the population still has no access to clean water, 10 million (25% of the population) still live in shacks and as squatters on someone else's land. Unemployment is still at 42% amongst the black majority, and about 500,000 jobs have been destroyed in the private sector in

the last five years while the working age population increased by 5 million.

The lack of jobs has also created problems with the supply of electricity and water, which many simply cannot afford to pay for. The local authorities (mostly ANC-run) have launched campaigns to force people to pay or else. The Financial Times describes quite bluntly the situation in the country town of Vryburg: "many black consumers - unable to afford or unwilling to pay for the services they receive - are in arrears on their electricity and water bills. One reason for non-payment is that more than half of the Vryburg workforce have no jobs". (Financial Times, May 5, 1999)

In 1996 the government announced the misnamed Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme (GEAR) which basically meant adopting strict monetarist economic policies. Soon both the powerful trade union confederation COSATU and the South African Communist Party came openly into opposition to these policies at their respective congresses. This is significant as both COSATU and the SACP form part of the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and provide the movement's mass rank and file basis. Both organisations clearly reaffirmed their commitment to the struggle for socialism in their resolutions. However they have not been able to offer a clear alternative to the pro-capitalist policies of the ANC government.

At this point the leadership of the ANC entered into an angry and open conflict

with its allies. Both Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki made angry speeches at the SACP Congress denouncing those who "claim to be on the left" for repeating the "right wing allegation" that "our movement has abandoned the Reconstruction and Development Programme" and thus "hoping to turn the masses of our people who voted for us in 1994 against our movement by seeking to project the notion that we have betrayed the trust that people placed in the ANC". Mbeki warned those who "engage in fake revolutionary posturing so that our mass base, which naturally wants speedy transformation and the fulfilment of its material needs on an urgent basis, accepts charlatans who promise everything that is good, while we all know that these confidence tricksters are telling the masses a lie" (Umrabulo n. 5, ANC Political Education magazine).

Political Democracy

In other words Mbeki was warning the activists of the SACP and COSATU to stop telling the masses that the ANC was going to solve their problems because, as "we all know", that is not possible. But the problem is that the masses expect the ANC, precisely to improve their living conditions. It is not enough for them to have achieved political democracy if they are still poor, unemployed and living in shacks.

The end of apartheid has allowed a small but very vocal layer of black businessmen to come to the top of the social pyramid. Many of them come from the leadership of the ANC and even of the unions. Amongst the wealthiest, but by no means the only one, is Cyril Ramaphosa, former leader of the National Union of Miners. He made millions of pounds while he was on the board of New Africa Investment Limited (NAIL) before he was forced out of the company. These new black capitalists are ironically called "comrade capitalist".

But at the same time the share of the wealth going to the 60% of the country's population who still live in poverty (about 25 million people) has declined.

Some in the leadership of the ANC have started to give their new acquired wealth and privileges a political justification. There is a lot of talk about the "patriotic bourgeoisie", about "black empower-

ment" and so on. But in reality, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world and the majority of black workers and youth who support the ANC have not benefited at all from the fact that black businesses in the Johannesburg Stock Exchange now represent 5.5% as opposed to 1% three years ago.

Many workers now know from their own experience that a capitalist is a capitalist regardless of the colour of his or her skin. When former political prisoner Mzi Khumalo took over a major company, JCI, he was asked whether he would be sympathetic to the unions. "I have spoken to the unions at JCI and made it clear: we are here to run a business. I'm not for any of this brotherhood stuff," he said. Shortly afterwards JCI sacked hundreds of workers and collapsed a few months later

Disillusionment

In Autumn last year disillusionment with the government was at an all-time high and for the first time there was a majority who thought the country was moving in the wrong direction. In September 1998 that figure dropped to 51%. When asked whether they feel close to any political party, only slightly more than one-third (35%) said they identify with the ANC.

This dissatisfaction had a reflection in a very slow pace in the registration process for the elections which had many ANC leaders worried. Nevertheless the

masses of workers and youth, the poorest sections of society, voted massively for the ANC and the opposition parties, most of them clearly identified with the apartheid regime were unable to offer any alternative. This election contest was in fact described by a commentator as "Snow-white and the Seven Dwarfs".

The main opposition party is now the Democratic Party which got the support of most of those who abandoned the New National Party. But despite all the talk about the advances of the DP, they did not even reach 10% of the votes. In an ironic press release, COSATU remarked that: "It is worth noting that the DP (which has made the habit of attacking COSATU) can only attract 1,524,696 (9.55%) of the electorate, significantly less than 1.8 million of our paid-up members. This is indicative of the fact that we represent a far bigger constituency than the party of big business."

In his victory speech Thabo Mbeki declared that: "the poorest of the poor have said they trust the ANC to help them out of their misery". That is quite true, but this is precisely where the problems for the new ANC government are going to come from. Up until now there has been a feeling that "you cannot reverse decades of apartheid and solve all the problems in just five years". But the patience of the masses is reaching its limits.

For many, it is now time to deliver real change. In the words of the ANC MP Lockley, "over the last five years our greatest achievement is that we have put

in place a democratic constitution. The next step is to go for economic emancipation".

But the main problem is that Mbeki and the leadership of the ANC are firmly committed to continue with capitalist policies. So the question is, can South African capitalism afford any of the reforms needed to satisfy the needs of the masses who voted ANC?

The South African economy was badly hit by the collapse of

the South East Asian economies and the subsequent loss of confidence of investors in the so-called "emerging" markets. There was a massive devaluation of the rand (by 30% since the last election), foreign investment left the country and this translated into job losses. At the same time the price of gold, which represents 18% of the country's export earnings has been consistently falling for the last 18 months to reach a 20-year low level of \$259/ounce in the second week of June - a substantial fall from its levels of about \$300/ounce at the beginning of the year. This will mean even more job losses, in an important industry which has already destroyed 100,000 jobs in the last three years.

Another important effect of the unfavourable international economic conditions has been a massive increase in interest rates which is draining public resources as the government pays off the servicing of its debt, and slows down the economy because the price of borrowing is clearly over the top.

The Economy

The prospects for the economy are not rosy. After having a 0% growth in 1998, the forecasts for this year predict a 0.4% growth at most. Or at least that is the analysis of stockbrokers SG Frankel Pollak's chief economist and strategist Nico Czipionka. But he also warns that this "barely noticeable" growth will only be possible "if the global economy keeps on expanding", and is threatened by the possibility of another emerging-markets crisis (perhaps triggered by China or India) and what he calls "the very real chance of a world equity market collapse." A very conditional forecast indeed! But even a small recovery in the economy would not solve the pressing needs of the South African poor. According to Time magazine "even if the economy were to soar to 8.5% growth - an impossible dream - it would take 10 years to provide jobs for all those who need them" (*Time*, May 24, 1999).

So the only policy which the government can implement as long as it accepts the limits of the capitalist system is one of more cuts, privatisation and transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich (and not the other way round). An indication of things to come can be seen in this year's budget which, amongst other measures,





cuts the expenditure for all Reconstruction and Development Programme Ministries, and intends to shed between 50,000 and 100,000 public sector jobs. On top of that there has been a cut in corporate tax of 5%. Individuals are paying 42% and corporations 15% of the tax revenue, whereas, in 1960, 17% came from individuals and 43% from corporations.

Only a programme based on "transferring the wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry to the ownership of the people as a whole", as expressed in the ANC's Freedom Charter, can free the resources needed to fulfil the aspirations of millions of ANC voters. In the next few years Mbeki's ANC government will increasingly enter into conflict with the trade unions and the ANC's social base on issues like budget cuts, privatisation, housing, labour rights, etc. The opposition which has already developed during the first ANC term will be nothing compared with the clashes in the next period, specially since Thabo Mbeki does not have the same authority in the movement as Mandela.

Important Conclusions

The left wing of the SACP and the trade unions has already drawn some important conclusions. Above all they have formally rejected the pernicious two-stage theory, which states that the tasks of the national democratic revolution (NDR) and those of the socialist revolution are completely separated. This menshevik theory, put forward by Stalin, was used for many years to convince the South African workers and youth that the struggle was first for democracy and later on for socialism.

"The struggle against national oppression and against imperialist domination, and the struggle for thorough-going democracy, are not side-tracks from the socialist struggle. They are integral to it," affirms an educational article in the SACP paper Umsebenzi. Actually, those who

defend the two-stage theory most enthusiastically today are the openly capitalist elements within the ANC who don't even want to hear about socialism. This is ironically described in the SACP paper *Umsebenzi*:

"It is interesting that, at the very moment when the mainstream of socialism in our country has been re-thinking the two stage theory, anti-socialists have begun promoting it. Some in our broad national movement, for instance, have recently been arguing that the NDR is "not about transforming property relations" - that, apparently, belongs to another stage. Others have argued that "socialism" is irrelevant in "this stage". The tasks of this stage, we are told, are to consolidate a strong "capitalism", by deploying leading cadres into the boardrooms!" (*Umsebenzi*, March-April 1999)

In a recent issue of the SACP theoretical magazine *South African Communist*, the SACP general secretary, Blade Nzimande stated that:

"It is our view that the achievements of a deepening national democratic revolution cannot be sustained whilst the bulk of the wealth of the country is in private hands and South Africa essentially remains a capitalist society. The attainment of fuller freedom and liberation can only be realised under a socialist South Africa. This is simply because, in our conception, liberation and freedom cannot be restricted to formal political institutional freedoms, but must, principally, be extended to the economy and economic relations. No people can ever truly be free whilst the bulk of the wealth of the country remains in private hands. Capitalism, by its very nature, is undemocratic, and it is neither characterised by freedom nor liberation." (*South African Communist*, n. 150, 1999)

But the necessary conclusion which needs to be drawn from this is the elaboration of a clear programme linking the most pressing demands of the masses of workers and youth with the struggle for socialism. This programme needs to be

defended in every SACP branch and in every COSATU local and adopted as a programme of struggle. It is not enough to adopt the slogan "Socialism is the future, fight for socialism now!" as the SACP did in its last Congress. The SACP should also fight to win over the ANC to genuine socialist policies and abandon any sterile attempt to manage the capitalist crisis. Otherwise it will be reduced to being just a left-wing fig-leaf for the capitalist leadership of the ANC.

Party Structures

In an article in the same issue of *South African Communist*, Lucky T Montana launched an attack against the "ultra-left" tendencies of the Party youth:

"Party structures are in the hands of a membership that is predominantly constituted of young workers, militant youth activists, students, etc., who joined the Party at its unbanning... (On) a positive side, most of these young militants are direct products of progressive youth formations in our country that espouse a commitment to the fundamental and socialist transformation of our society. There are however problems that accompany these positive aspects. The first is that some, if not most, of these young people joined the Party because they were opposed to negotiations. They saw the ANC as selling out in its suspension of the armed struggle. They are hostile to, if not completely harbouring anti-ANC positions... It is among this section that there has been a strong call for the establishment of the Young Communist League within the Communist Party." (*South African Communist*, n. 150, 1999)

But it is precisely in these youth who are being criticised for their alleged "ultra-leftism" that the hope for the future of the South African revolution lies. If these young workers and students are able to conquer the genuine programme of Marxism they will be an unstoppable force. ■

Letters MATTERS

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Dear comrades,

Much noise is made in the mass media about the apathy and selfishness of our generation, brought up in the 80s and 90s. As usual, while there is some truth in this, the press exaggerates to make us feel unable to change things, including our own natures. If you search deeper there is the age old aspiration to live in a better world.

In Cambridge recently I helped build for a meeting on Kosovo. We took to chalking the streets and initiated a street meeting, in which more than 60 people at any one moment were gathered round, taking leaflets and joining in the debate. A common feeling among friends I know is that such a situation would not be needed if the mass media or trade union and labour leaders presented our case and organised opposi-

tion instead of towing Blair's line.

The experience of the impromptu meeting reveals that there are many people who were willing to be involved in the campaign against Nato. Many other students I know are sickened by the unnecessary ills of this society and find that what we understand instinctively is explained and crystallised in this journal and other material, such as the book on science, *Reason in Revolt*.

For me, the small campaigns against the Nato bombing that I have been involved with, where our time and enthusiasm is incorporated with the experience and leadership communicated up and down the country in the journal, are a glimpse of the potential we have to offer in both domestic and international struggles.

Fraternally,
Tom Rollings, London



Dear comrades,

I was excited to read your material about Kosovo and translate them, among all the "western" internet material. I have already translated some of your material about Kosovo and published it in the daily political left-wing newspaper YENIDUZEN, where I'm the news editor.

U.S. North Cyprus

Key Quotes

"It doesn't matter if Scotland is independent or not - you are in the hands of the multinational conglomerates. I have more in common with workers at Hyundai in Korea than with people in the City of London, wheeling and dealing in finance."

John Brown, convenor Kvaerner Govan shipyard.

Nigerian Students Freed!

Good news: the arrested students are now out! They were released between Tuesday (15th June) and Wednesday (16th June) Tosin was released on Wednesday while some were released on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the students from Lautech have been suspended indefinitely from Lautech by the university management. The process of their victimization has started. The same goes for Ilorin University. We will now be launching a campaign against the victimisation of the students.

Below we are publishing a letter from one of the released students.

Dear Comrades,

Hope all is well with everybody over there. I came out of detention yesterday (totalling 36 days). The Magistrate eventually granted a bail with conditions that constrained the "11" to be released piecemeal. We needed to get guarantors for bail each with developed landed property in Ilorin.

Thanks for coordination of the campaign for the release. The news I got about it was superb and the

comradely concern is quite encouraging. My regards to all the comrades that took part..

I must confess the detention has its positives and negatives, for one it further strengthened my conviction for change and for the future. Presently I am still counting my losses but I know that eventually with the campaign continuation it shall be well politically and academically.

I have read your material on Yugoslavia and it is very apt in the update form.

On the school front, anything can happen, they might attempt indefinite suspension to expulsion, but with the sustainance of the campaign we shall over come. They have suspended the Lautech guys till they 'clear' themselves from the police, such attempts by the University of Ilorin is not off the agenda.

Comradely,
T.
17th June 1999

A more detailed report will appear in the next issue.

Tolpuddle remembered

Every year in July workers gather in the small Dorset village of Tolpuddle to remember a struggle for trade unionism which occurred well over 150 years ago. The sacrifice of the Tolpuddle Martyrs has remained an important symbol for workers worldwide of the price which had to be paid to establish and defend the rights of trade unions. But does this event from long ago have anything to say to us today?

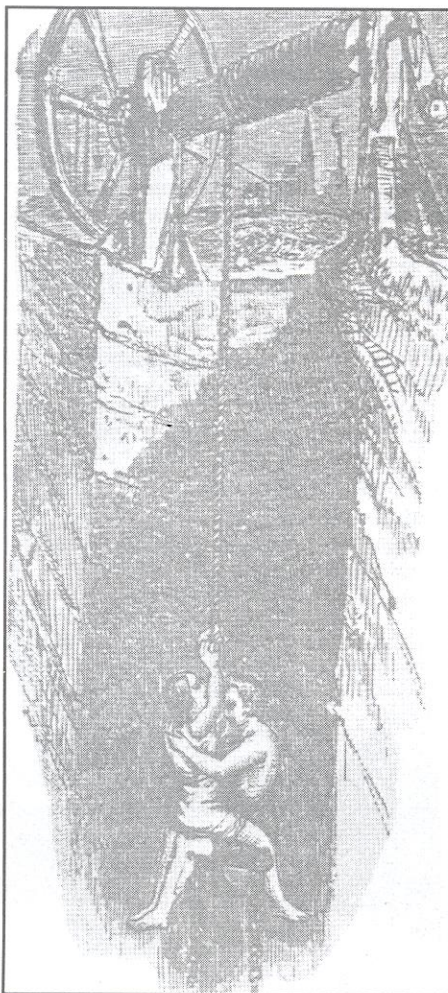
by Steve Jones

Undoubtedly there are some who would like this episode to be seen just as some sort of costume drama which is of dramatic historical interest but nothing more. Yet today, more than ever, there are important parallels and lessons which all activists should take on board.

Who were the Tolpuddle Martyrs? Their fight took place against a background of change and conflict in Britain. The economy of the 1830s was in crisis; prices and unemployment were rising and there had also been a series of bad harvests. The divide between rich and poor was widening. In the countryside, landowners were mercilessly seeking to impose new industrial methods of farming which, combined with cuts in wages (the average wage of a farm labourer was nine shillings in 1830 but only seven by 1834), had left many in desperate straights. Not surprisingly there was a growing mood of unrest throughout the country with farmworkers burning haystacks and damaging farm equipment in response to the brutal treatment by landowners. The 1832 Reform Act had permitted the establishment of the first legal unions.

In Tolpuddle, a number of men around one George Loveless, a self educated man who had taught himself to read and write, having learnt of the establishment of trade unions such as the Grand National Consolidated, sought to establish a union called the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers. During the winter of 1833-34 they organised and agreed a demand that they would not work for less than ten shillings a week.

Up to then nothing they had done was illegal. But the farm owners were in a panic, terrified by the mood of unrest coming from those they were so ruthlessly exploiting in the interest of profit, they feared revolution and demanded action from the authorities. A local magistrate and



landowner called James Frampton wrote in January 1834 to the Home Secretary Lord Melbourne complaining about the Tolpuddle men and drawing his attention to the fact that in forming the union the men had sworn "oaths administered clandestinely." In doing this the workers had inadvertently broken an old law passed in 1797 to deal with the naval mutiny at Spithead.

In March 1834 six of the leaders of the union, including George Loveless and his brother James, were arrested under charges of unlawful assembly and administering oaths. At the trial landowner spies came forward with evidence of what the six had done and with a hostile judge and jury—all farm owners and squires—the sentence was all too inevitable. The judge summed it up thus: "If you do not find them guilty, you will forfeit the goodwill and confidence of the Grand Jury".

The sentences were brutal and intended as an "example to others": seven years transportation to New South Wales,

Australia—the maximum sentence allowable for these offenses. They were duly shackled and shipped out.

A massive campaign to repeal the sentences was started with demonstrations, rallies and petitions. Amongst those involved were members of the Chartist movement, one of the first examples of the working class entering onto the stage of history as a political movement. With the bosses having launched a general offensive against unions such as the Grand National and seeking to impose the most brutal of conditions on the working class, the government was in no mood to act leniently and repeal the sentences. Only when there was a cabinet reshuffle and Lord John Russell became Home Secretary did the public pressure start to bear fruit. Finally in March 1836, the men were given full pardons although with typical vindictiveness, no one made any particular arrangement to actually tell the men that they were free. In the end it was left to George Loveless himself to discover his fate by virtue of reading about it in a month old London newspaper!

He tracked down the others and in the following year they returned to London, being greeted with great celebrations. A fund had been established by public subscription to buy them land to live on in Essex but five of the six later moved to Canada never to return.

Reviewing the events described above it is impossible not to see similarities with today. Then as now the working class were under attack from a privileged elite seeking in the face of economic storms to protect their profits. Then as now the bosses were seeking to use unjust laws to break the will of the unions and frustrate their efforts to defend the members. In the 1830s what kept the flame of trade unionism alight was the will and steadfastness of people such as the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Their stand acted as a beacon to those willing to defend workers interests. They did not wilt under the pressure of those who say "you must not break the law", a common comment from some when the anti-trade union laws of today are brought into play to defeat union action. The Tolpuddle Martyrs saw, in the most graphic terms, exactly which side the law is on when it comes to workers verses bosses and the best way we can honour their fight and sacrifice is to remember that point today. ■

Making and unmaking of Yugoslavia

Burn This House - The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia, edited by Jasminka Udovicki and James Ridgeway.

"Burn This House", published in 1997 is worth reading as the Balkans have been yet again plunged into war. It is written by critical non-nationalist Muslim, Croatian and Serbian historians and journalists who challenge the ethnic-nationalism of the politicians currently running former Yugoslavia and the views and strategies of the so-called "international community".

Reviewed by Barbara Humphries

The editor writes: "The understanding of the war among the Western public was shaped by the pronouncements of Western politicians and the writing of Western journalists - of whom far too many stubbornly stuck to their claim that at the root of the war lay ancient Balkan hatreds". Because of this the policy of the western imperialist powers has only served to ferment the process of war in former Yugoslavia, and often for their own ends, have played into the hands of nationalist leaders such as Milosevic and Tudjman.

The book gives factual information which counters this view of the Balkans. The first two chapters on "The bonds and the fault lines" and "The making of Yugoslavia" show that there are no historic ancient hatreds (in fact, the first inter-ethnic war was not fought until 1941 when German and Italian fascists tore Yugoslavia apart). On the contrary, the south slavs were ruled by foreign powers for many years, including the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires and sought unity on many occasions. In the 19th century and early 20th centuries south Slav unity or "Yugoslavism" aimed to resist the foreign invader, particularly the influence of German imperialism in the Balkans. This gives the lie to those who justified the secession of Slovenia and Croatia in 1992 on the grounds that Yugoslavia was an "artificial state" - in fact Yugoslavia was no more "artificial" than any other nation state in Europe.

The first Yugoslavia was born after World War 1 according to the principles of the Treaty of Versailles which broke up

the old pre-war Empires in Europe. It was doomed because it was a centralised state which did not take into account the diverse ethnic fabric of the region. It also foundered because of chronic underdevelopment by European standards. Most of the country was agricultural. The creation of the second Yugoslavia was fought for by Tito's partisans and the Yugoslav Communist Party. This was to be a federation, avoiding the mistakes of the first Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. Not only was this to be a federation of states, but also the rights of minorities such as the Serbs in Croatia were to be enshrined in the constitution. Post-war Yugoslavia was founded on the principles of "Brotherhood and unity", principles which were never challenged during the days of Tito, or indeed until the 1980s. Most Yugoslavs believed that the days of ethnic conflict were gone for good, a relic



of the Nazi occupation of World War 2.

Further chapters outline in detail the main events which have led to the breakup of Yugoslavia over the past twenty years. These include the unravelling of grievances in Kosovo and tension between Serbs and Albanians over the past twenty years upon which Milosevic built his nationalist bandwagon. In the 1980s the plight of the Kosovo Albanians was ignored by Slovenia and Croatia. There are chapters on the roots of the ethnic conflict in Croatia and subsequent war, the role of the Yugoslav army in

Slovenia and finally the outbreak of war and division of Bosnia. All ethnic cleansing is recorded including the exodus of Serbs from Krajina in 1995, an event which did not receive much coverage in the western press.

All the Yugoslav politicians come out of it badly. They have all played a role in the Balkans inferno. The governments of Western Europe also come over as at best ignorant, employing double standards, ignoring the rights of minorities and hence encouraging further violence, and at worst seeing the republics of former Yugoslavia as areas of influence for their own ends. But there are heroes in the Yugoslav inferno who have not made headline news in the western media. Those citizens who have opposed ethnic division in their own republics - the Croats and Serbs who fought together in Croatia to protect their homes from the paramilitaries on either side. The demonstrators in Sarajevo who tore down barricades and called for unity in the face of sectarian attack. Those who have defied media bans in Croatia and Serbia. It is these people who have been divided against their will, by force, who could have built an alternative to the present bloodshed in the Balkans.

The book is weak on the economic roots of the conflict in former Yugoslavia, most of the authors seeing the free market as a solution. In fact the impact of world capitalism and the debt problem in particular did much to undermine the former Yugoslav federation. Western governments freed from fear of Russian intervention in the Cold War no longer had vested interests in maintaining unity in the area by giving financial assistance. The concluding chapter of the book however spells out the catastrophic effects of the war and break up on the economies of all the former Yugoslav republics, where falling living standards have prevailed and disruption to the former economic links within the federation has caused chaos. This was before the Kosovo war and NATO bombing.

As a documentary on the roots of the Yugoslav crisis "Burn This House" must be one of the most comprehensive and impressive to have been written and will give hope and ammunition for all those who argue for an alternative to the policy pursued by western imperialism in the Balkans. ■

Bolshevism

the road to revolution

There have been many books and potted histories of Russia, either written from an anti-Bolshevik perspective, or its Stalinist mirror image, which paint a false account of the rise of Bolshevism. For them, Bolshevism is either an historical "accident" or "tragedy," or is portrayed erroneously as the work of one great man (Lenin) who marched single-mindedly towards the October Revolution. Alan Woods, in rejecting these "theses", reveals the real evolution of Bolshevism as a living struggle

to apply the methods of Marxism to the peculiarities of Russia.

Using a wealth of primary sources, Alan Woods uncovers the fascinating growth and development of Bolshevism in pre-revolutionary Russia. The author deals with the birth of Russian Marxism and its ideological struggle against the Narodniks and the trend of economism.

The book looks at the development of Russian Social Democracy, from its real founding congress in 1903, which ended with the division between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, through to the 'dress rehearsal' of the 1905 revolution. Here the rise of the Soviet form of organisation is explored, together with the transformation of the party (RSDLP) from an underground organisation to one with a mass workers following. However, the defeat of the revolution led to four years of political reaction within Russia and the near disintegration of the party. Alan Woods traces the ebb and flow of the party and the role of Lenin as its principal guiding force.



The author then explores the eventual revival of the party's fortunes from 1910 onwards, the creation of the independent Bolshevik Party two years later, and the isolation of Marxism during the first world war. The final section of the book deals with the Bolsheviks' emergence during the February Revolution and, after a deep internal struggle, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, the party's eventual conquest of power in October.

Bolshevism: the road to revolution is intended as a companion volume to Ted Grant's *Russia: from revolution to counter revolution*, which is also available from Wellred.

Bolshevism: the road to revolution by Alan Woods

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The book's foreword was written by Leon Trotsky's grandson, Vsievodol Volkov, who has long campaigned for the political rehabilitation of his grandfather.

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Sales boost

Our analysis of the war in Kosovo has proved popular with workers and young people all over the country. As a result our sales have increased over the last month. You would search in vain for the truth about NATO's murderous bombing campaign anywhere in the capitalist press, but *Socialist Appeal's* case for a Socialist Federation of the Balkans has found a ready echo. 18 sellers sold 60 copies at the recent anti-war demo in London. Meanwhile 5 sellers sold 40 copies on another demo taking place the same day in Glasgow. Our supporters in Cambridge along with the local anti-war movement organised a very successful local demo, following their meeting reported last month, attended by around 400 people. Internationally too there has been a great interest in our Marxist analysis. We have received the following letter from supporters of our sister paper in Italy, *Falce Martello*.

Dear Comrades,
We would like to thank Ted Grant for his visit to Italy at the end of April. He came to Italy to speak on the war in the Balkans and to launch the Italian edition of his book *Russia from Revolution to Counter-Revolution*. Ted spoke at four meetings in Milan, Bologna, Rome and Caserta. About

200 people came to hear Ted speak, mainly party, trade union and student activists. These meetings took place at a time when the labour movement was involved in discussing the war and above all the tasks it posed to the labour movement.

It was extremely important for us to be able to present the Marxist position as the only serious alternative to the barbarism of imperialism. In this task which we carry out in our day to day activities a discussion with Ted proved to be extremely useful and strengthened our determination to struggle for a socialist alternative both in the Balkans and world-wide. Very warm communist greetings, Editorial Board of *Falce Martello*, Milan, Italy

Back home, our position on the war and the disillusionment with Blairism demonstrated so dramatically in recent elections, contributed to our selling 30 at the CWU conference. Sellers at UNISON confer-



ence sold more than 50 journals and £20 worth of other literature. The results of the European elections especially demonstrate a widespread and profound disillusionment with Blair all over the country. Now is the time to step up our sales in local Labour Parties, trades councils and union branches. Has your branch considered taking out a subscription or a bulk order?

Campaigning out on the streets we are bound to come across many workers and youth looking for such a socialist alternative.

Now that summer's here perhaps you should consider livening up a Saturday sale with a street meeting. 60 people attended such an event in Cambridge in the build up to the recent demo. Don't forget to let us know about your local initiatives. Now you've reached the last page it's time to get out there and sell!

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by Alan Woods

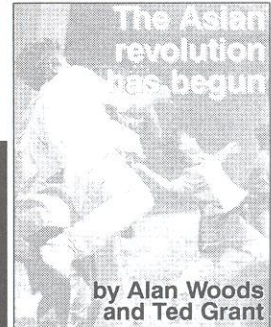
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Indonesia

The Asian revolution has begun



by Alan Woods and Ted Grant

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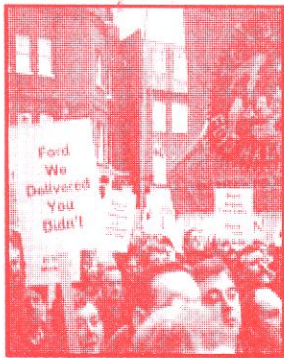
socialist appeal fights for

☆ **Socialist measures in the interests of working people!** Labour must break with big business and Tory economic policies.

☆ **A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.** £5.00 an hour as a step toward this goal, with no exemptions.

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

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



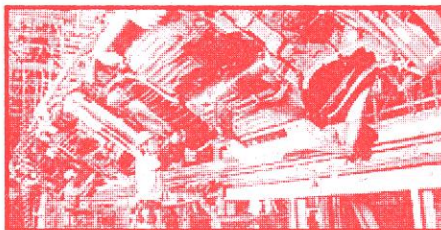
☆ **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.



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

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

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



☆ **The outlawing of all forms of discrimination.** Equal pay for equal work. Invest in quality childcare facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act.

☆ **The abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.** Full economic powers for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, enabling them to introduce socialist measures in the interests of working people. ☆ No to sectarianism. For a Socialist United Ireland linked by a voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain.

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

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

 **Join us in the fight for socialism!**

Socialist Appeal supporters are at the forefront of the fight to commit the Labour government to introduce bold socialist measures. We are campaigning on the above programme as the only solution for working people. Why not join us in this fight? For more details:

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