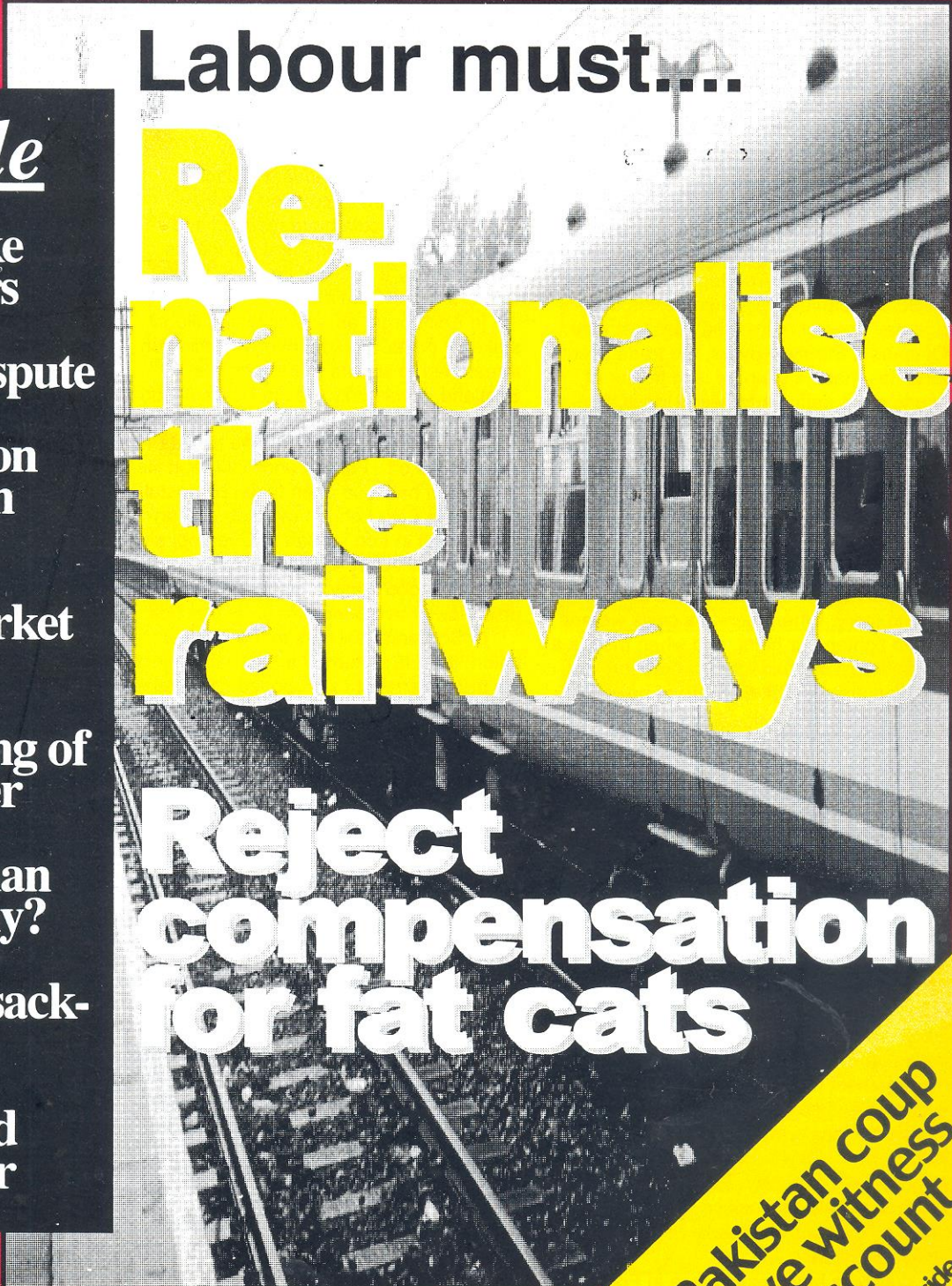


# socialist *appeal*

Labour must....

*inside*

- ☆ strike tremors
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- ☆ Nissan sackings
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**Re-nationalise the railways**

**Reject compensation for fat cats**

**Pakistan coup  
eye witness  
account**  
see inside

# Tremors on the industrial front

**"People have got to recognise that the responsibility on their part, employers and employees, is not to pay ourselves more than we are earning and... at the same time to take the jobs that are on offer." Gordon Brown, 13th October.**

Brown's call for wage restraint and for the unemployed to accept what is "on offer" will infuriate the vast majority of workers who have had their noses continually pushed to the grindstone. As with Tony Blair's scandalous attack on public sector workers, who have seen their wages and conditions systematically eroded, these remarks will cut no ice while the bosses continue to award themselves huge salaries and perks. The top directors of 77 FTSE companies gave themselves average pay rises of more than 26% last year. Of course, Stephen Byers, the trade secretary, has made it plain he is in favour of "world class salaries for world class companies."

As for the rest of us, we are clearly living beyond our means. "We cannot go back to the old ways", warns the Chancellor. Unless workers show restraint over pay, they threaten to throw away economic success. How many times have we heard this argument before? It's the never-ending story. When there's a crisis we are told to tighten our belts, and when there's a boom, we're still expected to tighten them.

Workers are sick to death of having their backs to the wall. Stress in the workplace has reached record levels, affecting both blue collar and white collar workers alike. Job insecurity in Britain is already at levels unprecedented in the post war period. Increasingly, workers are saying "enough is enough".

Over a whole range of issues, sections of workers are either taking industrial action or are balloting for action. On the railways, both ASLEF and the RMT have either threatened or voted for industrial action over safety in the light of the Paddington disaster. The threat of strike action on the London Underground forced management to back down over the victimisation of a shop steward.

Electricians around the country have led the way with a series of unofficial and illegal strikes over pay. This has been in the face of bitter opposition from the trade union officialdom, especially Sir Ken "no-strike" Jackson.

Walkouts have taken place in Ford, at

both the Dagenham and Southampton plants, over pay and working conditions. At Dagenham, racism and bullying by management has added to the general dissatisfaction over increased levels of work to produce an explosive situation. Pushed to the limit, workers are being forced to react.

Firefighters in London, West Yorkshire, and Greater Manchester have also threatened to take industrial action over the attempt to change their long-standing terms and conditions. Consequently, Jack Straw was forced to promise a review. Local authority cuts have resulted in disputes over restructuring and job losses, most recently a one-day strike of 12,000 workers in the Cardiff area.

In Edinburgh, an unofficial and illegal strike by postal workers over victimisation threatened to spread to the whole of Scotland. It was only the total capitulation by management that resolved the dispute. It proves that action or even the threat of action pays off. Further unofficial (and illegal) action has also been taken by postal workers in East London over job guarantees, which in turn spread to Liverpool and Birmingham. A key lesson is where workers have stood firmly together the anti-union laws have been torn up in practice.

In Scotland, teachers in the biggest union, the EIS, returned a 98% vote rejecting the government's proposed changes to working conditions. If the government does not back down, a strike is planned for early December. Teachers are literally on their knees after huge changes brought in over the last decade. Now Blair attacks them, as well as public sector workers generally, for "conservatism". Rich talk from the most "conservative" Labour prime minister in history. It is precisely the Blair government that has embraced the "forces of conservatism".

However, while bitterness and discontent begin to boil over, the Labour and trade union leaders are trying to keep the lid on it. Blair's remarks that the "class war is over" and Jackson's dream of "a strike-free Britain" show how out of touch these characters really are. As someone once said about the Tory Party: "they don't preach class war, they just practice it." The same can be said of the employers.

The trade unions were created as defence organisations of the working class. The leaders are peddling class collabora-



tion - social partnership - as the way forward. But the interests of the workers and employers are diametrically opposed. Consequently, the trade union leaders have capitulated to the employers' offensive all away along the line. Sweet-heart deals are top of the menu. It is no wonder that trade union membership fell from 13 million in 1979 to 7 million today. Just like the generals who led the soldiers in the first world war, they are lions led by donkeys.

The present outbreak of strikes reflects an underlying and deep-seated discontent with the pressures at work. As far as terms and conditions are concerned, many layers are faced with a race to the bottom where there is no finishing line. Despite the battery of Tory anti-union laws still in place, and the capitulation of the bulk of trade union leaders, many workers are reaching the end of their tether.

If this anger was harnessed properly, the unions could stop the employers' offensive in its tracks. There has never been a stronger argument, nor a more urgent need for militant trade unionism. Now is the time to organise the opposition forces within the trade unions. As a step in this direction, *Socialist Appeal* is organising its first industrial conference in London on Saturday 6th November. Already, trade unionists from all parts of the country are represented: miners, bus workers, building workers, railworkers, postal workers, local authority workers, teachers, and many others will be there. This conference will be a key event for militant trade unionists. Help defeat the bankrupt forces of "New Realism" and transform the trade unions into fighting organisations. We appeal to all workers: come to the industrial conference! (See page 14 for details).

- ☆ No to social partnership!
- ☆ For Militant Trade Unionism!

# NISSAN axe 21,000 jobs

Throughout the eighties British workers were told that they should follow the example of Nissan, supposedly a by-word for efficiency and flexibility. Today the company's share of the world market has fallen below 5% and they are running at a loss. The automobile industry of Japan and South East Asia has become the main target for the rapacious appetite of western multinationals for mergers and acquisitions.

*By Phil Mitchinson*

Renault recently bought a 36.8% share in Nissan, and now they've sent in one of their executives Carlos Ghosn to carry out a restructuring programme. The Renault boss' plan involves the loss of 21,000 jobs, 14% of the workforce, and closures worldwide including the unprecedented closure of five plants in Japan itself.

Mergers and acquisitions have become a mania in the present boom, the capitalists desperately scrambling for profitable fields of investment cannot increase production in an already bulging world market, so they buy up existing production and make a profit out of sacking workers and closing plants. These mergers always lead to job cuts, under the guise of rationalisation, and there are a lot more on the cards as GM conduct talks with Daewoo. They already control 49% of Isuzu and 10% of Suzuki, while Ford has a 33.4% share of Mazda.

The global car industry suffers from massive overcapacity, it is the epitome of the waste and inefficiency of the market. Nissan's aim is to increase capacity utilisation from 53% to 82% over the next three years by closing down plants, sacking workers and making those lucky enough to keep their jobs work harder, changing from a shift pattern of 3600 hours of annual production to 4400 hours. Thousands more jobs will be lost, particularly in South East Asia as purchasing costs are cut by 20% and the number of suppliers cut from 1145 to 600.

Profits are maintained and productivity increased not as a result of investment and the development of the economy, but through cutbacks and flexibility, i.e. by fewer of us being made to work harder. While Nissan restructure, GM plan to increase their share of the Asian market to 10%. They too will sack workers and impose further flexibility to reach this goal, putting still more pressure on Nissan and

others to make yet more cuts. This downward spiral is the best these multinationals can offer workers in a world boom. The onset of world slump will see thousands more jobs destroyed, the latest cuts announced by Nissan, and the state of the Japanese economy provide a glimpse of what the rest of us have to look forward to.

While the US economy continues to drag the rest of the world behind it, the Japanese economy, the world's second largest, is suffering its tenth year of slump, it is mired in deflation, and there is no escape route in sight. The government's attempt to intervene using Keynesian methods to pump prime the economy has meant little more than flushing around \$1 trillion down the toilet.

There will be a recovery, but only after a period of "restructuring" ie massive job cuts like those now planned by Nissan. Japanese workers have not experienced such cuts before, now their jobs for life have gone. The powerful trade union movement will be forced to confront the bosses over these cuts preparing a new wave of industrial militancy in Japan in the next period.

The world's big car manufacturers have based their projections on the continuation of the boom. Many of them pin their hopes on China to provide a market. They project sales growth of 15% a year in China, but this is more wishful thinking than serious analysis. Such growth would be unlikely if the economy of China simply continued to grow. But China itself is suffering from a crisis of overproduction, and the threat of devaluation would have a dramatic impact not only on projected car sales but on the entire world economy. China like the rest of South East Asia will prove to be a source of immense instability for the world economy in the next period.

What an unjustifiable and unsustainable system it is that operates in this fashion. The immense productive potential of the automobile industry could be pooled and planned to produce the world's needs for cars and the excess capacity put to other productive uses in the interests of society. But the bosses of Nissan, Fords, GM and the rest are not interested in the needs of society, or of their workforce, they aren't really even interested in producing cars, all they care about is profit. While the ownership of these multinationals remains in private hands this colossal waste and inefficiency will continue. ☆

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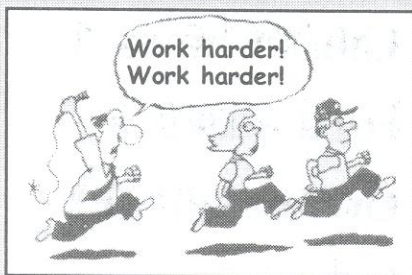
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## Capital Idea



Lost for words

With the class war declared over by Blair, workers in Vyborg near the Russian-Finnish border have failed to get the message. Last month more than 2,000 Russian workers fearing for their jobs seized a British-owned paper mill after battles with riot police and private security guards.

"The private guards shot at us. Two people were wounded in gunfire and nine injured in scuffles," said Olga Sushkina, assistant to the head of the occupying collective.

The 2,160-strong workforce occupied the plant and have been there ever since. "We've got everything under control and we're not going anywhere", she continued. Alcem, the

British owners on discovering the news issued a terse statement by director Bryan

Webb: "Russia has been closed for four hours", he said. "I can't comment."

### More class war...

In the South of Ireland, 27,000 nurses began an indefinite strike over pay and conditions. It is the biggest strike in the history of the Irish Republic. Nurses voted overwhelmingly to reject a Ir £60m pay deal. Fears have been raised that the action will wreck the government's Partnership 2000 deal, pay restraint involving business, unions and government. Nurses were particularly incensed by revelations of sleaze, with the former taoiseach Charles Haughey using £16,000 of public money to buy shirts from a Paris tailor while he was preaching hairshirt economics to public sector workers.

This courageous action is an example to British nurses. A recent UNISON survey showed that nearly two-thirds of nurses are seriously considering quitting because they are under-paid and under-valued.

### Promises: up in a puff of smoke

New laws banning tobacco advertising and sponsorship are to be delayed by the government. Frank Dobson's last act as Health Secretary was to retreat on the issue. The proposal was to outlaw by 10 December all forms of advertising apart from price lists and stock display material in shops. The government pledge will not now be implemented until 2002. Instead firms will be given a period of grace, so that some of the most lucrative practices, including sports sponsorship, will remain untouched. The government is bending over backwards to accommodate the tobacco companies. It is clear the Blair government is too much in the pocket of big business, while we are all attacked as "conservatives of the left and right." ☆

# Courts block safety strike

**In the light of the recent train disaster at Paddington, the attempt by Railtrack and the train operating companies to downgrade the role of the guard on trains has been met with fierce opposition by railworkers.**

by Rob Sewell

This proposed change in working practices to the Rule Book introduced by Railtrack and endorsed by the train operating companies and the health and safety executive would undermine safety as it would place further responsibilities on train drivers. The rail bosses have constantly used words like "historically outdated practices", which gives the real pointer to their ultimate aim. At the moment, the guard is responsible for the train and its safety. The erosion and "deskilling" of the guards' role is seen as the "thin edge of the wedge". Rail workers believed that such changes would lead to future moves to get rid of the guard's job completely. This hidden agenda has been seen by workers as a cost cutting exercise to boost the profits of the operating companies.

"Yes, this was not simply a vote to maintain safety levels", said RMT executive member Steve Jones, "but was also a protest about future job losses. The operating companies would be pressing us to allow trains to be run without guards. There is no way we can accept this."

### Rule book

In 1997 railworkers took strike action over proposed changes to the rule book. This resulted in a big victory for the RMT when all the operating companies capitulated one after the other. There has been a series of union strike ballots since 1997 over threats to the guard's position. The bosses have tried repeatedly to redefine the job, seeking to replace "guard" with "competent person" in the rule book, which can mean anything. The Train Crews and Shunting Grades' conference in Ayr in April pushed for a ballot, following the successful on South West Trains, which was eventually organised.

This was followed by discussions with the rail bosses, but they refused to budge. The RMT had no alternative but to act. Despite pleas from the operating companies, in a national RMT ballot over industrial action guards voted by a massive majority of 9 to 1 in favour. At Great Western,

out of 111 votes cast, 105 were in favour and only 6 against. At Central Trains, out of 145 votes cast, 117 were in favour and 28 against. Out of the 369 guards balloted at First North Western, 362 voted yes and only 7 against. And at South West Trains, out of 386, 366 were in favour and 20 against.

In all, guards at 19 of the 25 train companies have voted for strike action, with those at four voting against. Out of 6,000 guards, 2,000 voted, of whom 84% were in favour. Only two companies, Thameslink and Anglia Great Western, were not involved in the dispute.

"This was an excellent result for us", said Steve. "Feelings are running high and were clearly reflected in the ballot result." The first 24-hour strike was scheduled for Friday 29th October.

### Called off

However, three operating companies, Virgin, South West Trains, and Connex - in reality stalking horses for the rest - ran to the high Court to get an injunction against the RMT to get the strike action called off. They argued that it was Railtrack that was introducing the changes and not the operating companies, therefore it was not a dispute with them. As expected the judge found in favour of the rail bosses and declared the strike illegal. Consequently, the strike was called off. Jimmy Knapp, the RMT general secretary, correctly condemned the legal interference as "outrageous", and made clear nothing short of the complete withdrawal of the rules would be acceptable.

Whether the RMT goes ahead with a legal appeal against the judgment or not, the anti-union laws cannot be allowed to frustrate the democratic will of the guards. The changes in the new Rule Book are being used to undermine and eventually destroy the jobs of the guard.

The RMT executive should call an emergency conference to decide the next step. This must include the question of calling industrial action in defiance of the court injunction. This will risk the sequestration of RMT funds. All the necessary measures should be taken to protect the union, and build up solidarity with other unions in the event of sequestration.

This decision of a Tory judge to block a democratic decision has put the union in the firing line. It must demand backing from the TUC and put the maximum pressure on the Labour government to rescind the Tory anti-union laws. ☆

# FORD workers take unofficial action



**Ford management's onslaught on workers conditions, in reaction to the world crisis of overproduction in the car industry, has led to a series of fightbacks from Ford workers around the world. As the Company handout to British Ford workers in this years pay negotiations is quick to point out in the opening paragraph "there is too much vehicle manufacturing capacity in the world" resulting in a "25 million car and light truck" world-wide surplus capacity.**

*by a Ford shop steward*

This overcapacity has resulted in pressure from Ford management to clamp down on workers pay and conditions everywhere to gain increasing profitability and increasing monopoly of the market, through market share and recent acquisitions, such as Volvo. The methods used to retain profit have been to squeeze the pay and productivity of the workforce. Fords latest strategy in Brazil has been to open a new £1 billion plant in Bahia which will be run entirely by contract labour leading to the closure of factories in Sao Paulo and Sao Bernardo. Ford workers in the Piranha plant are on strike over the transfer of production and the loss of jobs.

This strategy of contracting out jobs is likely to be adopted by management worldwide. Fords have also been attempting to separate the Ford factories producing automotive components, electrical

components, fuel systems, glass and chassis systems, setting up a sub-division they have called Visteon. This has matched moves made by General Motors who have recently separated their parts division, enabling them to introduce competition into the supply of parts, and drive down the wages and conditions in the newly separated company called Delphi. The attempt by Fords to separate Visteon almost led to a strike of 101,000

American Ford workers recently until at eleventh hour negotiations Ford agreed that the 23,500 Ford workers in the sixteen American Visteon plants will retain their Ford employment status and any new hires taken on for the next three agreements (12 years) will also be considered Ford employees until retirement.

## Strike ballot

This victory, gained by the real threat of strike action with a 96% majority in a UAW (United Autoworkers) strike ballot and four plants striking at the turn of the strike deadline, does not apply to the 54,500 Ford workers in the 52 Visteon plants around the rest of the world. This will inevitably mean that the UAW deal in America will have to be fought for in Britain and throughout the world. A meeting of the Ford European works council has been called to discuss the Trade Union strategy and should raise the demand for co-ordinated international action to oppose Ford's plans for separation of Visteon.

Meanwhile, in the British pay talks held on the 14th October, the company has offered a 2% pay rise this year, 0.9% above inflation and inflation related increases for the next two years. The strings attached to the offer are for the use of temporary labour to enable the company to hire and fire at will, a demand they were forced to back down from in 1988 following a successful two week strike; new shift patterns to enable the

company to introduce weekend working as part of the normal working week with normal rates of pay; corridor hours to force workers to work overtime at normal rates of pay and take the accrued time off when the company chooses and therefore eliminating the need for lay off pay and integrating staff with hourly paid pay negotiations which will mean adding 6000 company orientated foremen and engineers to the 19,000 hourly paid workforce, so making it harder to achieve a majority for strike action.

## Bonus payments

The company have also offered to introduce a scheme of bonus payments of £40 per year for every half per cent reduction in absenteeism, hoping to introduce pressure from fellow workers not to take time off on those who are sick. The company has refused to concede an extra allowance for Toolmakers who are taking official strike action to have the allowance recognised. Southampton Transit van plant workers walked out on unofficial strike on the night and the following day of the pay talks in disgust at the offer.

In Dagenham PTA (Paint Trim and Assembly) and engine plants there have been unofficial walkouts and a call for a strike ballot in protest at the company's attitude to racial discrimination, bullying, harassment and discrimination in job opportunities. The walkouts occurred following the release of details of serious acts of racial discrimination at an employment tribunal hearing and an assault on an Asian shop steward in the PTA and the refusal to discipline the Foreman involved. The company has moved the Foreman to the Dagenham tool room. These stoppages are also a general reflection of the increasing pressure being applied by the company for speed ups and the reaction to the bullying and intimidatory tactics used by Foremen to achieve increased production.

Further pay talks are planned for November 9th, 10th and 11th and there will most likely be a strike in the New Year. ☆

# Transport workers fight for safety

TGWU members have taken part in a march and rally in Dover, organised by their union in conjunction with other European unions, to protest against the long hours now being worked by transport workers. The October 5th event highlighted the disgraceful attempts by the British government and others to get exemptions from the 48 hour working week directive for workers in the transport industry.

by Mark Langabeer  
1/366 Branch TGWU (Personal Capacity)

The rally was attended by over 600 workers with over 50 coming across from France. Speakers included John Monks from the TUC and a leader of the International Trade Union Federation. It was reported that transport workers had

organised a 2 hour stoppage in Oslo and had put road blocks up in both France and Germany. A demonstration had also been organised in, of all places, Mongolia—a fact which gained loud applause from the audience.

Support was also given to the call from a French trade unionist for action in support of the 35 hour basic working week. John Monks reported that between 15 and 20% of all road deaths each year can be directly attributed to driver fatigue. Monks also stated that although the government seemed ready to accept the TUC's case against exemption, the Road Haulage Association were now busy trying to push through new loophole exclusion clauses including such groups as 'Owner Drivers'.

Graham Stevenson, national secretary of the TGWU, urged branches to bring forward ideas on how the campaign against long hours

could be developed but rather weakened his call by insisting that any action remains within the scope of the anti-trade union laws. The example of the French workers seemed to many at the rally to be closer to the mark. Any campaign organised should build for a 24 strike of all transport workers so that the spotlight is clearly placed on the connection which exists between safety and hours of work.

One final note. It had been intended to have a march after the rally but police used the Public Order Act provision, which had been put in place to stop the fascists marching in Dover against the refugees, as an excuse to ban the march. Having failed to stop the actions of racists in Dover, the police seemed all too keen to put a stop to the rights of the labour movement. A warning for the future. ☆

# Electricians' struggle carries on

If anyone needed convincing that Tony Blair's obituary of the class war was somewhat premature then they needed to look no further, on the Wednesday (Sept 29th) of Labour Party conference itself, than to the sight of thousands of electricians around the country out on a second unofficial strike.

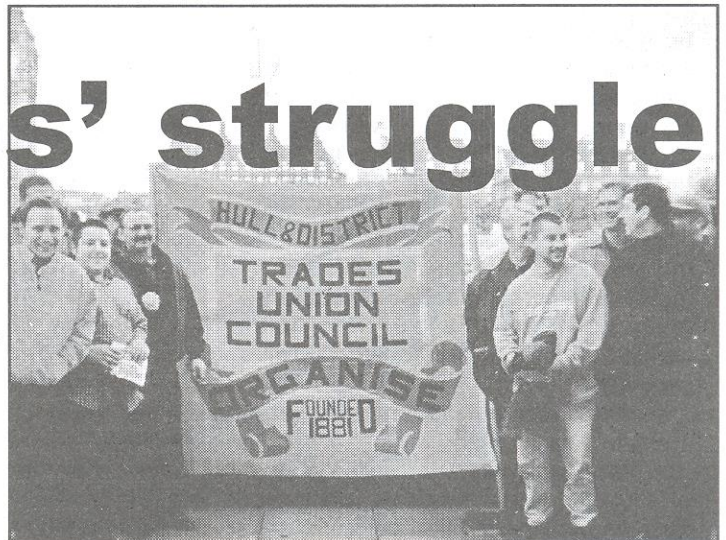
by Simon Wright

The action was once again in total defiance of the Tory anti union laws—and there was nothing the bosses could do about it. The strike was accompanied by a number of demonstrations in different cities around the country. In London about 1,500 marched through central London past the houses of parliament to Marble Arch.

The police had not been happy with the situation but had obviously thought it politic to allow some sort of demonstration to be held. The mood was angry with strikers carrying placards with various printable and not so printable remarks on them!

The demonstrators had wanted to march on another half a mile to the Employers and contractors buildings but the police put their foot down and refused to allow the march to go any further allegedly because of the disruption to traffic.

A compromise of sorts was arrived at whereby the demonstrators could hold a meeting in Hyde park. At midday the strikers reassembled and marched into the park. When it was clear that there were no police around they marched back out of the park



and continued on their way to the employers' buildings anyway.

By the time the police vans arrived, with flashing lights and sirens wailing, it was too late—the demonstration had made it to the road where the employers building was situated.

A "noisy" lobby then took place in full view of the television cameras that had hurriedly arrived to record the action. A delegation of stewards went into the building to put the case against the pay offer but reported back to the members that it had fallen on deaf ears.

The stewards are now concentrating on getting a no vote against the offer but are concerned that, because of the voting procedures, things could be weighted in favour of a yes vote.

These workers have shown that if trade unionists stick together and act in a determined way then the anti union laws are not worth the paper they are written on. Far from being over, the class war has just found some new troops. ☆

**Stop press:** ballot result just announced, 55% in favour, 45% against. London electricians vow to fight on. Full report in next months *Socialist Appeal*.

# Unison general secretary election

The early retirement of Britain's longest serving trade union general secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe, has created a vacancy for potentially one of the most powerful positions in the Labour and Trade Union movement.

by Peter Lomax

At the time of going to press the nomination procedures in Unison are in operation with branches, regions and self organised groups nominating their favoured candidates.

As far as we are aware there are at least five candidates seeking nomination. The main names seeking to be thrown into the hat are Dave Prentice, a deputy general secretary, (the favoured candidate of the union bureaucracy), Roger Bannister (NEC member and candidate of the CFDU) and a Tory.

For years Unison members have been suffering devastating attacks on their jobs, wages and conditions as a result of cut-backs in public expenditure and the systematic privatisation of public services.

The consistent failure by the leadership of the union to meet these national attacks with an effective national campaign to defend jobs and services has led Unison members to look for answers on the political front.

Many thought that the landslide victory and election of the Labour government with a 179 majority would surely lead to a reversal of this situation.

Instead there has been a continuation of the Tory restrictions on public expenditure.

The minimum wage that has been introduced is set at such a low and discriminatory level that hardly any Unison members will notice a difference.

However by far the worst aspect of Labour's continuation of Tory policies for Unison members has been the privatisation programme. Many private finance initiative (PFI) schemes in relation to new schools and hospitals have been renamed public/private partnerships (PPP's) but they are in effect the same thing.

Compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) in local government is being replaced by Best Value schemes which end up privatising even more services than CCT did.

So what should Unison members be looking for in a new General Secretary?

In our opinion a fighting leader who is

prepared to campaign industrially and politically at a national level on behalf of Unison members.

However perhaps even more importantly someone who is prepared to use the position to build and unite the forces of genuine trade unionism inside the union. This is an essential prerequisite to effective national campaigning in defence of jobs and services.

No serious trade unionist should need convincing of the case not to vote for the Tory candidate but what about the position of the apparent front runner. The track record of the union machine's favoured candidate Dave Prentice is far from inspiring. Politically he has been part of the union leadership who is Affiliated Political Fund structure is becoming so discredited that it is viewed by many as being a vehicle for transporting Blairite views into Unison as opposed to being a vehicle for transporting union policy into the Labour Party.

## Bought off

It is a reasonable assumption to make that if Unison's APF had thrown its full weight behind the campaign against PFI and PPP, instead of allowing themselves to be bought off with minor concessions, these methods of privatisation could have been on their way to the dustbin of history. Many believe that should Mr. Prentice win we will see a shift to the right in the way the union is run in that he will be more inclined than his predecessor was to accept the line of the fulltime apparatus.

This leaves us with Roger Bannister, who has now become the main candidate of the left inside Unison, following the withdrawal of Geoff Martin from the fray.

He has a track record on the industrial front, at local, regional and national level of supporting numerous groups of workers in struggle.

He has always voted for national action in response to national attacks often from a minority position at NEC level. He has led industrial disputes and his record as a militant trade unionist is very good. He stands correctly on the position of only taking the salary equivalent to the average earned by Unison members rather than the usual inflated levels which senior elected officials



take home.

Unfortunately we would have to be critical of Roger Bannister in relation to a number of issues not least the question of affiliation to the Labour Party. *Socialist Appeal* would argue that Unison should be actively affiliated to the Labour Party, campaigning on socialist demands and encouraging all union members to join and fight inside Labour. Such a programme would not only aid the chances of winning the election but would also give a clear beacon to Unison activists that the union can be used to undermine the manoeuvres of the Blairite machine and put real pressure on the government. Roger's stated position of raising the question of disaffiliating from the party and using the political levy cash elsewhere is not only naive but also plays into the hands of the rightwing who would be only too happy to see the party split from the trade union movement. Despite this it is clear that Bannister represents, this time around, the best chance to defeat the right wing and should be given support.

Following the general secretary campaign a conference should be called of all those inside Unison who want to see a unified left force. The idea being to thrash out a fighting socialist programme around which the best activists inside the union could unite. On this basis, and on the basis of a united campaigning approach to future national executive council elections, the left could make significant headway in Unison.

Win, lose or draw in the General Secretary election it is what happens in relation to uniting and extending the left's influence in Unison that really matters over the next few years. ☆

# Privatisation disaster

**The worst railway disaster in Britain for 50 years with all the pain, suffering and horror could have been avoided. The death of about 30 people and 200 injured need not have taken place. For many people the effects of this crash will be with them for the rest of their lives.**

*Andy Viner (ASLEF)*

The inquiry following the Clapham rail crash in 1998 recommended that Automatic Train Protection (ATP) should be adopted. The Tory government under pressure agreed to implement the safety system. The cost was estimated to be about £700 million, at a time when the Tories were looking to privatise British rail. The prospective bidders put pressure on the government to get them to reverse their decision. Dogma ruled over safety. Privatisation had to be implemented even at the cost of human life.

Big business only saw ATP as a threat to their profits. To them it was a case of working out how many people would be likely to die and sue the privatised companies compared to the cost of ATP. On this basis it was assessed that a life is valued at £2.65 million, Train protection warning system (TPWS) at £4.6 million per life and ATP at £17 million per life. For them it is a case of mathematics and the indent into their profits.

Last year Signals Passed At Danger (SPADS) had increased by 8% from 593 to 643. SN109, the signal at the centre of the present inquiry, has been passed 8 times in six years. Despite commentators using phrases like, "drivers ignoring red signals" and other remarks aimed at drivers, a driver will never deliberately pass a red signal at danger, especially knowing a junction lies before them. To do so puts their own life in unnecessary danger. Remember a driver is likely to be the first to die if there is anything in front. It's strange how the very next day after the Paddington crash, railtrack found 21 locations that needed to be reviewed urgently as potentially dangerous accident areas.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) reported in a year long audit into how incidents are investigated and reported that the systems used to identify corrective action and the effectiveness of action taken to stop the same signal being passed

again was flawed. They found significant weaknesses in industry systems and in how effectively they are followed.

There are two key areas where real improvement is required. First, investigations must be carried out promptly and must find the root cause of SDADs -

this does not always happen at the moment. Second, the industry must find more effective ways of reducing the numbers of multiple SPAD signals- those that have a history of more than one SPAD.

The shift patterns of drivers since privatization have changed dramatically. To reduce drivers hours to 37 hours a week, drivers had to agree in some cases to 10 or 11 hour shifts with 20 minute breaks, being able to drive for 5 hours without a break at all times of night or day. This is bound to have an effect upon safety. Railtrack's plan to stop SPADs is just to punish drivers.

## Older trains

How can we trust Railtrack and the operator companies to put safety before profits? Railtrack moan that the present day cost of installing ATP would be £1 billion and take 7-8 years. There is also the question of installing the equipment in the older trains. If it had been put in after 1988's crash the whole railway network system would now be covered. Railtrack made £300 million profits last year. Since privatization the value of the company's shares has increased sixfold. Because they bought the railway so cheaply we subsidise the railways today more than before privatization. Privatization has cost us millions to set up. How can these people now moan? Railtrack want to install Train Protection Warning System (TPWS) which would cost them only £150 million. But it is only 80% effective. It is the cheap and nasty option.

Technology has moved on. An even more effective safety system would be the device that can give



drivers target speeds to be maintained taking into account how clear the train path is, track speeds to be maintained taking into account how clear the train path is and whether the train is to stop at a certain point. If the driver, for whatever reason, does not reduce their speed the brakes will apply automatically. This however would seriously damage profits of Railtrack and the operating companies.

While private companies look to make money from the railways, safety will always be compromised. Price tags will be put on safety and then compared to share holders' dividends. The two can never be partners they are enemies.

The only way to prevent such a disaster again is to renationalise the railways. This should be run under workers control and management, democratically involving government, unions, railworkers and passenger representatives. Only in this way could you have a safe railway system, inexpensive and running at socially necessary times. ☆

### Privatisation Disaster



**Time to  
RENATIONALISE  
the railways!**

by Rob Sewell

50 p

**A Socialist appeal pamphlet**

This new pamphlet written in the aftermath of the Paddington disaster puts the case for a socialist transport policy, based on the renationalisation of the railways. It is essential reading for all activists and can be ordered from the usual address for 50p per copy.



# Supermarket wars!

As Wal-Mart prepares for the invasion of Britain, *Socialist Appeal* looks at the retail industry, the employment of young people and the blind alley of 'company unionism'.

by Steve Davison

As speculation mounts about the prospect of a fall in supermarket prices as a result of the take-over of Asda by the American retail giant Wal-Mart, trade unionists need to be aware of the ongoing exploitation of workers in this sector of the economy. The supermarket chains now dominate the food retail industry and employ thousands of workers. The recent pay deal between the shopworkers union USDAW and Tesco covered 165,000 workers. Sainsbury's employ 110,000, Asda 86,000 and Safeway 60,000. Retail is international big business.

## Rip-off Britain

Most workers will welcome the prospects of lower prices in the shops. Over-priced "rip-off" Britain is now a national phenomena not just in food but also cars and white-goods. Very little of the profits have gone into workers pay packets. This area of the economy still remains at the bottom end of the pay league with basic rates of pay usually between £4.00 and £4.50 for over 21 year olds (the age at which the minimum wage of £3.60 comes into effect.) The supermarket bosses foolishly misread 'New' Labour's election pledge and upped wages above £4.00 in anticipation of a minimum wage of that figure. As the major retail employers are forced to reduce shop prices there will be a squeeze on other workers in the economy, ie. the producers, in much the same way that workers in the 'third world' have been exploited for cheap raw materials and agricultural products. The retail giants will also turn their attention to further reducing costs amongst its directly employed staff to maintain their profit margins.

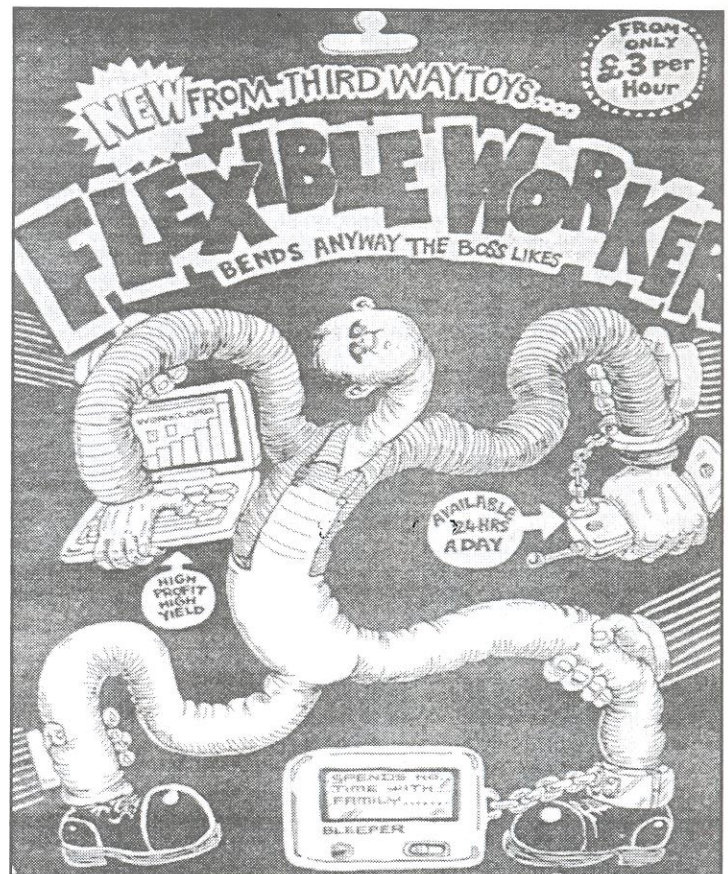
## Wal-Mart

We all know that there is no such thing as a free meal. Similarly there will be no cheap prices at the expense of profits and dividends. The Chief Executive of Asda, Allan Leighton, claims that Asda will bring

down prices to American levels within 18 months. Whilst he misses the obvious point as to why they should be so much higher. Now it is worth looking at Wal-Mart's history to see how they have achieved low prices. Wal-Mart's wages are well below the American average for the industry with many of their employees claiming the equivalent of our income support. They are totally anti-union and practice the hiring of part-time, temporary and casual labour to try to get around employment legislation, usually dismissing workers before they are entitled to claim redundancy, unfair dismissal etc.

They are renowned for putting pressure on their suppliers to reduce costs which invariably leads to cuts in jobs, wages and worsening working conditions in the USA. This in turn forces the suppliers to get their products from abroad in the free-trade zones and countries with no labour protection or non enforcement. A recent claim made against the company by US human rights groups was that one of their suppliers was paying teenage workers half the minimum wage for 80 hour seven day week working in Bangladesh.

They also practice a low pricing policy for a period to force their competitors out of the market place with detrimental effects for the small traders. Not surprisingly there has been mass campaigns in hundreds of American towns to stop Wal-Mart getting into their community. They are particularly keen to get into out of town shopping, building huge hyper-markets often as large as 50,000 sq feet. It will be interesting, given Blair's love of the hyper-rich, if 'New Labour' will keep to its planning restrictions against out of town shopping. We shall soon see if Lord Sainsbury's £2



million pound investment in 'New Labour' is money well spent as Wal-Mart's competitors prepare their survival plans. One thing is for certain that the trade unions in this sector of the economy will soon discover that their new 'partnership' deals will end up in the divorce courts!

## Student labour

Britain's de-regulated economy and weak labour laws look ideal territory for Wal-Mart's expansion. It is widely known that these companies are major employers of female labour, most of whom are part-time. Not as widely known is the amount of students and school children that they employ. Sainsbury's now employ 30,000 full-time students, almost 30% of its total staff. This is a 500% rise from the 6,000 they employed in 1989. Most retail companies use a starter rate for new employees whilst they undergo 'training' so with the turn-over rate amongst students and young workers and the non applicability of the minimum wage for under 18 year olds they can get away with even lower rates of pay. The further impoverishment of students, with the abolition of grants and the introduction of payment of course fees, forces them into the labour market to make ends meet. No wonder that Lord Sainsbury is such a big supporter of 'New' Labour and

presides in a Government that hand over to his company a subservient workforce!

Just in case there are not enough students to do their work the retail companies now draw their employees directly from the schools. In a recent survey by NatWest bank 90% of sixth-formers said that they expected to work part-time whilst they studied for their exams. The Governments publication, Labour Market Trends, show that 52% of young people in full-time education between the age of 16 - 19 were economically active. That is 1.5 million young people.

The employment trend in degenerate capitalist Britain in the last few decades has seen the replacement of men by women in the labour market reflecting the decline of heavy manufacturing industry. Now we are seeing the potential for replacing women by even lower paid young people and school students as the retail and servicing industries predominate. The employment trend is of mum working during school hours and daughter taking over her place in the super-market. Although there is not a 'flat-hat or whippet' in sight it looks more like the early days of the industrial revolution than the white-heat of cyber-technology! Taken as a trend it represents the collapse of the old way of life for working class families and communities and its replacement by an even more parasitic form of exploitation of the most vulnerable in society.

### Weekend Working

The last remnants of protection for workers employed on Sundays are disappearing either through negotiation or in the form of new contracts. When the Sunday Trading Act became law in 1994 there was protection for those who didn't want to work Sundays. That right is being removed for all new starters as many have Sunday only contracts or contracts that stipulate Sunday as one of the possible working days. In order to entice workers to work weekends overtime premium payments were made usually at the rate of up to time and one half for Saturday and double time for Sundays. At the time of the Act, USDAW met with the major retailers in the Shopping Hours Reform Council where a 'gentleman agreement' was made to protect weekend premiums. This has now been blown out of the water. Asda dropped the Sunday rate in 1995. In 1998 Safeway did the same followed by Tesco's in 1999 and the Co-op intends to get rid of all Sunday premiums in

2000. Tesco's is now removing premium pay for Saturdays. This went for all new starters in their 1995 pay deal and they are proposing a one off payment to get the older staff off the higher rate.

Every day will be the same day, or at least paid the same in the bright new 'third-way' partnership milenium!

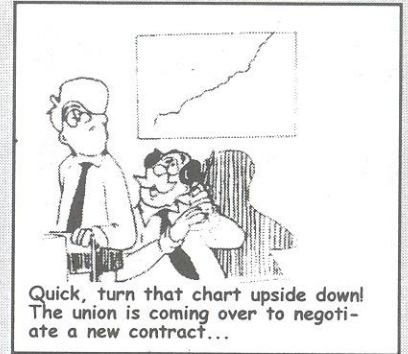
### Trade Union Response?

Last year the much heralded "Partnership Agreement" between Tesco's and the shop workers union USDAW hit the national news. This was the 'third way', the future of trade unionism. The end of confrontation and the beginning of a new partnership to steer Britain into the bright new millennium. How is this partnership achieved? Simply by agreeing to abolish the right of the unions membership to have a vote on whether to accept or reject the annual pay rise. Why? Because voting is confrontational. With almost one third of USDAW's members employed at Tesco's this is not an insignificant situation for the union and the trade union movement. If in the only expanding sector of the British economy, albeit part-time and temporary employment, this 'partnership' practice of giving away the basic trade union right to vote is expanded to other sectors and that this is the area that young people enter the labour market then their initial experience of trade unions will be company unionism. We should not be surprised that so many young people say what's the point of joining the union they do nothing for us!

### Solidarity

The supermarket till represents all that is wrong with the capitalist system. We don't have enough money to buy the quality food that we need. The fancy packaging hides from us the reality of what we are actually eating. The check-out assistants are paid a pittance and the biggest losers of all are the exploited peasants and workers of the 'third-world' who produce so many of the products that we consume. The only winners are the millionaire retail barons and their grossly overpaid shareholders. This situation can only be changed by a new 'partnership' between the shop workers of Britain and the toiling masses of the 'third world' against their common enemy the employers. Socialists must demand an end to company unionism and raise the 'old' demands of international workers solidarity and struggle. ☆

## The class divide



### Market jargon

The rail bosses have nothing but contempt for the likes of you and me. The way they handled the Paddington disaster was nothing short of utter disgrace. Take Railtrack director Richard Middleton. He had the gall to insult everyone who had concerns about rail safety. "I must stress that it really is time for the hysteria around rail safety to be calmed down" said Middleton on the BBC Radio Today programme.

Railway posters at stations described the Paddington crash as an "incident". The word "accident" might have been acceptable, but it suggests that someone somewhere may have been responsible - and that would never do. They even had the effrontery to describe the people who died as their "customers".

### From the horses mouth

"By the time we finish our ten-year programme of modernisation the NHS of 1948 will be unrecognisable." Alan Milburn, the new health secretary.

He went on: "People shop at all times of the day and night, they buy their insurance over the phone and, frankly, they expect a modern NHS to be equally fast and convenient."

Clearly, the NHS is going to be rebranded National Health at Sainsbury's.

### Tories in double trouble

The civil war in the Tory Party is taking its toll.

A new parlour game is doing the rounds in Tory circles: Who Wins Central Office? in which competing factions seize control of the party headquarters. According to the Guardian, the game is "being played out among young Tories who now fear that they are heading for a split that will rival the fracturing over the corn laws in the 1840s."

With Wee Willie alienating all but one of the most senior members of John Major's last cabinet, one grandee said privately: "A split is now looking possible."

### Oh what a lovely war!

When ever the ruling class sees the need for a war, then money is no object. According to the BBC and Jane's Defence Weekly, the costs for the NATO bombing hell out of Yugoslavia was:

Yugoslavia was:  
Bombing: £2.63bn  
Humanitarian aid: £2.54bn  
Peacekeeping: £6bn  
Reconstruction: £20.5bn  
TOTAL: £31.67bn.

Yugoslavia lost 44% of industrial production and has now replaced Albania as the poorest country in Europe. Ten million people face a threat to their water supplies, according to the BBC, and 500,000 landmines and 10,000 unexploded bombs remain to be destroyed.

# Labour conference: Tide begins to turn



This year's Labour Party conference turned out to be a very different affair to those of the last few years. The evidence was there for all to see. A poll in the Observer newspaper on the eve of conference had showed the following. Only just over half of those polled who voted Labour in 1997 thought Blair had kept his promises in relation to improving education and the NHS. 55% thought he was breaking his promise to improve public transport, (a significant and very worrying figure for the Millbank machine in the wake of the Ladbroke Grove rail tragedy).

By Stuart McGee

A third thought Blair had become too arrogant since he came to office. Almost half thought he didn't care enough about Labour voters and that he was too concerned with the interests of big business backers.

Given the mood of the delegates, motions which looked likely to get onto the agenda for debate included the future of the Post Office and the 48 hour working time directive. The leadership of the party knew they were facing defeat on both of these issues.

It didn't help matters when a sleazy story emerged, significantly on the eve of conference. It was alleged in a newspaper article that the son of the then Secretary of State for Scotland had been using his family connection to enhance the interests of a lobbying firm he works for (and by implication his career).

## Vested interests

This however would have palled into insignificance if the papers had taken the trouble to examine the accounts booklet that delegates had access to. All donations to the party of over £5,000 are recorded, although the precise amounts are not disclosed. While the press were running stories about Lord Sainsbury's £2 million donation to the party some of the other

donations over £5,000 made interesting reading. Over the last few years the arms manufacturers, British Aerospace, Raytheon and Lockheed Martin have made substantial donations to the party. Former public service industries North West Water, Scottish Power and Railtrack have also contributed. Giant retailers Tesco's and Somerfield and a firm with big interests in GM foods, Novartis, have also thrown a few thousand pounds the Labour Party's way.

## Empty spin

From the point of view of Blair, Brown, Campbell and the rest of the Millbank tendency, the growing mood of frustration and anger amongst activists had to be placated. At the same time a populist face had to be shown to the electorate at large. But above all nothing should be done (that really didn't have to be done) that might upset their big business friends in the city.

The carrot and stick approach was swiftly put into operation to placate the activists. The prime minister magnanimously acknowledged that while much had been achieved already, there was still much to be done. In the all too familiar New Labour approach, delegates, activists and traditional labour supporters were subjected to a plethora of spin: the minimum

wage, the new employment legislation, youth unemployment halved, evidently as a result of the new deal, the working families tax credit, the pensioners to receive £100 this November, increases in educational standards... and so on and so forth.

All this, and the budget surplus, according to the Labour leadership was down to their prudent and responsible handling of the economy. By implication of course this means that it has nothing to do with the continuing US fuelled upturn in the economy or perhaps more significantly the fact that these so called reforms were so minimal that their cost as well as their effect was negligible.

However the important thing for the leadership was that the activists and the electorate were sold the illusion that something was being done. Having established this illusion the next stage of the operation was to manfully admit that there was much more that needed to be done and to raise the activists' and the electorate's aspirations, (without frightening "our friends" in the City of course).

## Vague visions

In the following few days the delegates were bombarded with visions of Labour eradicating unemployment within the next generation and child poverty within the next twenty years. There were hints (although strangely not specific promises or costings) at increased spending on health and education. More specifically there was a promise of access for all to NHS dentistry in the next few years and shopping discount cards for youngsters in further education (neither scheme will break the bank).

The word socialism was used on more than one occasion by various luminaries in the leadership, most notably Gordon Brown, but of course it had to be 'credible and radical'. To be credible we were told we have to be cautious. So ended our sermon that was the carrot to keep activists, voters and big business on message. Now came the stick.

It was suggested that if activists and trade unionists were to successfully pressurise the government to spend some of the billions of surplus that has accumulated as a result of the boom in the economy (apologies, New Labour's prudent handling of the economy) there would be trouble.

We were informed that if the 'vested

interests' and the 'conservative forces in society' (i.e. the trade unions and the electorate who put Mr. Blair into office in the first place) were to succeed then it wouldn't be a more left wing Labour government we had at the next election it would be a right wing Tory government. That by implication meant throwing away the chance of building on what had already been achieved (!) and ditching any hope we may have of ending child poverty and unemployment and all the other illusions/visions that the Millbank regime had regaled us with. That, they thought, should be enough to frighten the activists, the trade unionists and the voters while keeping big business happy.

### Groundless threats

While it is quite clear that, following a major slump and a revitalisation of their party, the Tories could make a comeback, anyone witnessing the lunatic carry on at the Tory party conference the following week cannot fail to view the return of the Tories at the next election as anything but laughable.

However, it is not entirely ruled out, and although Blair views the possibility of a coalition with the Liberals in the longer rather than the shorter term, the 'project' (i.e. coalition with the Liberals and breaking the links with the trade unions) was kept ticking over on the back burner. Paddy Ashdown the former leader of the Liberals was sharing a platform at a fringe meeting with foreign secretary Robin (ethical) Cook. He heaped praise on the Labour governments handling of the Kosovo crisis. (This in and of itself speaks volumes about New Labour's role in the illegal and murderous bombing of innocent civilians in Yugoslavia), and called for more collaboration between the two parties.

Significantly, on the eve of conference, newspapers also carried stories, in relation to Ashdown's diaries, that Labour leaders hope will be published after rather than before the next election. Evidently the diaries outline the close, and very secret working relationship between Mr. Blair and Mr. Ashdown. A relationship that considered the possibility of entering the last election on a joint policy manifesto and one that could have led to a coalition government if Labour hadn't got such a thumping majority.

However away from the world of political machinations, spin and illusion, away from the infantile concept of social partnership, the end of class conflict and a strike

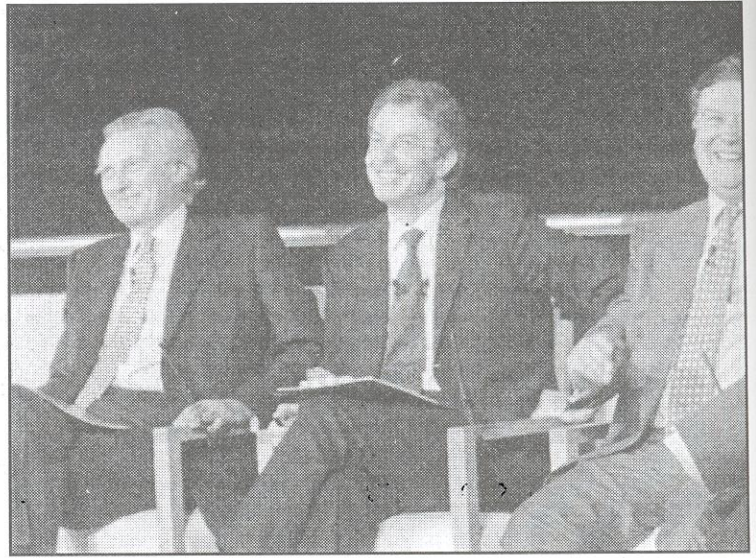
free future reality had a nasty habit of intervening again and again. At the end of the first day of conference there appeared at first sight to be a minor but embarrassing wrangle over a constitutional issue. A delegate from Brighton sought to refer back sections of a report.

Eventually her attempts to do so were bureaucratically blocked. The significance was that the parts of the report that the delegate was seeking to refer back were in relation to the private finance initiative (PFI). The bureaucratic manoeuvres were a reflection of the leadership's knowledge that they would be unable to win an argument in favour of this Tory privatisation policy on the floor of conference and therefore had to stop it being debated and voted on by other means.

### Union victories

Their fears in relation to this issue proved correct a few days later when the Communications Workers' Union (CWU) won overwhelming support for their resolution committing Labour to include in its election manifesto "a commitment to full public ownership of the post office" (the Millbank machine has been trying to edge the post office ever closer to privatisation ever since Labour took office).

It wasn't the only defeat that the leadership suffered. The Trade and Industry Secretary was forced to retreat on the 48 hour working time directive. A fortnight previously he had informed the TUC that the government's legislation exempting employers from the obligation to keep records of those working more than 48 hours would only be counterbalanced by non binding guidance. In response to legal pressure, but much more significantly under the pressure that the unions were applying at the conference, the position shifted to "no-one has to work more than 48 hours under the law". Although this is still wide open to manipulation and abuse by the employers the victory for the unions



at conference should not be underestimated.

Quite clearly there were a number of other issues on which, if they had been allowed to reach the floor of conference, the leadership would have been defeated on. In relation to privatisation, when delegates opposed the proposed privatisation of Air Traffic Control and the London Underground they received rapturous applause. Jimmy Knapp, the general secretary of the Rail and Maritime and Transport union (RMT) received very warm applause when he said "a publicly owned rail industry, because that's the only way to real integration". There was a similar response when Barbara Castle spoke on pensions putting the argument for an immediate increase and index linking to earnings. However the loudest response of all was for a delegate from the Broadcasting union, BECTU, who won cheers and slaps on the back from conference delegates when he complained that the conference had been stage managed.

Contrast this with the sparse applause received by the Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling when he spoke on 'welfare reforms' (for reforms read cuts).

Unfortunately the response on the clapometre in relation to these issues does not determine the parties policy. Having said that it does not alter the fact that if they were properly debated and voted on at conference it would be the old labour policies that won hands down. It is clearly an indication that the tide is slowly beginning to turn. ☆

# Wintery storms lie ahead...

At New Labour's party conference in Bournemouth, Chancellor Gordon Brown, talked of a 'full employment' economy and job opportunities for all. He proclaimed that this achievement was due to Labour's workfare policies. Of course, that's poppycock. New Labour's jobs programmes have hardly dented the levels of long-term unemployment.

by Michael Roberts

But it is true that the overall unemployment rate (as measured by the International Labour Organisation and not by the bogus job claimant measure) is fast approaching US levels and could pass below one million by next spring. The unemployment rate stands now at 5.9%.

The reason is clear. UK economic growth is picking up. Fears of a recession, which were abound at the beginning of this year, have receded. Indeed, real GDP growth in the third quarter of this year was trundling along at 1.8% - hardly exciting, but certainly not slump conditions. As a result, there are more jobs appearing on the scene. Now there are 27.5m people in jobs in Britain, with 150,000 extra in employment in the last three months.

Of course, as we have explained in the past, these jobs are not to be found where people most need them - in the declining industrial areas of the north, Scotland and Northern Ireland - but are found in the already overcrowded and over-expensive south-east in the main. Manufacturing employment continues to fall, while finance and business jobs were up 42,000 between April and June this year. And most of these new jobs are not well-paid and permanent, but mainly poorly-paid, short-term contract work, with unsocial hours and no pensions and conditions. But they are jobs.

As a result, the average household is managing to make ends meet - just. With prices and taxes for the average home currently rising at just 0.5% a year, real take-home pay for the average household is growing at almost 4.5% a year! Fear of redundancy and vicious anti-trade union laws remain the main reasons why industrial action is low. However, strikes are

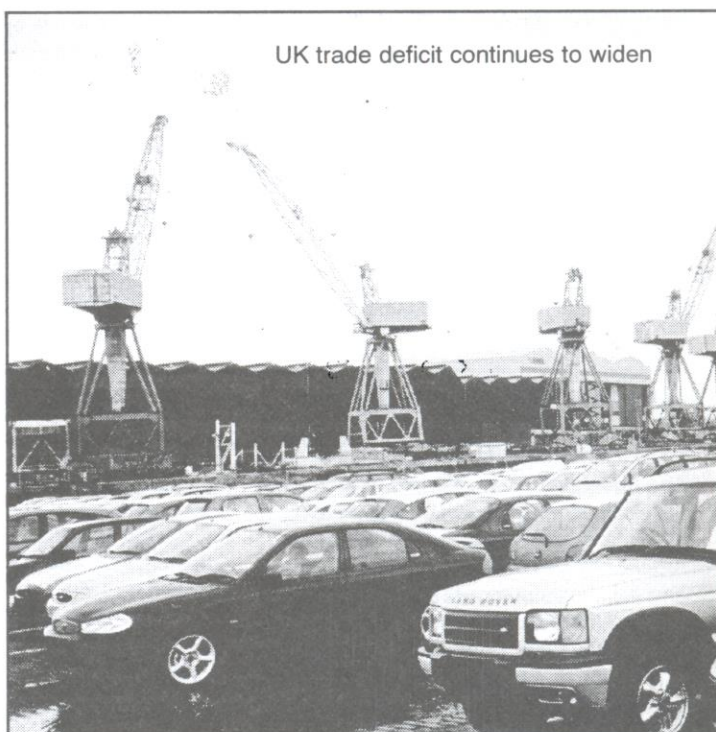
beginning to pick up as witnessed by defensive action by organised layers like the post office workers (over conditions), and rail-workers (over safety) or the unofficial offensive strike of electricians.

Everything in the capitalist garden is certainly not coming up roses - and winter is approaching! First, slightly better conditions apply only to the average household. That means for over 50% of households, things are not much better and may be even worse. And they are the low-paid, unorganised, unemployed, part-time, the old and the youth. Relative economic improvement in 1999 over 1998 has passed them by.

## Latest data

And second, what wealth British capitalism has created is not distributed evenly. Nothing more reveals that than the latest data on wealth in the UK from the Institute of Fiscal Studies. They found that half the population had less than £750 in savings compared to the richest 10%, who had an average £22,000. Of course, most wealth is in people's houses and in their pension provisions. But it's precisely in these two areas that the poorest half of the population has the least. There are still one-third of households that rent their homes and have no equity stake in them. And many of those that do 'own' their home have borrowed heavily from the mortgage companies and own little themselves. And most people still have totally inadequate pension provision and little extra savings to increase contributions.

As we enter the new millennium, the reality is that most Britons have insufficient reserves to withstand any disastrous turn in the fortunes of the British capitalist ship.



UK trade deficit continues to widen

And wintry storms lie ahead.

As this column has argued before, British capitalism was saved from slump this year by the continued growth of the US economy. The UK is the 51st state of the United States of America. Its economic cycle moves in tandem with the US and much of its economic structure is increasingly similar. This month is the anniversary of the abolition of controls on the 'free movement' of capital and money in and out of the UK. Under Thatcher, the UK was turned into a free-for-all capitalist market. Investment flooded in from the US and British companies sent the profits they got out of British workers abroad in billions. British industry was closed down or bought out. Even British finance was 'globalised' as Germans and American banks arrived in the 'big bang' of the late 1980s.

## Lilliputian version

So the UK economy was turned into a Lilliputian version of the US. Now 15% of the profits of US companies abroad come from the UK alone (making it the leading contributor to US overseas profits) and only half of the profits made by the top 100 UK companies come from the UK itself. Over 40% of all US investment to Europe goes to the UK.

So if the US economy booms, the little UK economy rings. And so far this year, the US economy has continued to grow at a 4% rate. But this breakneck pace will eventually break some necks! Such growth is not justified by increases in US corporate profits. Investment by US companies is only being financed by more and more stock market or bond issues or by huge borrowing. US companies have never had such high net borrowing. This easy money has kept the stock market going until recently!

Fear is now setting in. The US capitalism is way overextended. Over 4% growth a year does not sound much, but it's too much for even the most dynamic capitalist economy in the world. Raw material prices are picking up and the dollar is weakening as the US runs a huge trade deficit with the rest of the world, approaching \$350bn, or nearly 25% of the UK's annual production.

Eventually the current trickle of selling on the stock market will turn into a flood. Then all the paper wealth of these US corporations will be exposed for what it is - a sham. And the wealth of the people who have invested in these companies will evaporate. And that's a lot of Americans. They will stop spending and America's prosperity will reverse.

And if the US sneezes, then the UK will have flu. Even though the UK is growing at less than 2%, there are already signs here of overheating. Property prices are now racing along at over 10%, and at 20% in London. Labour costs for British businesses are picking up. The trade deficit is widening so fast that it is already knocking 2% points off potential British growth. The Bank of England, just like the US Federal Reserve Bank and the European Central Bank, is getting ready to impose substantial interest rate hikes to 'cool down' the economy. Then the property wealth for those that have it will disappear like snow in the spring.

Our Labour Chancellor Gordon Brown says it's fine if the Bank of England sees the need to raise interest rates to stop inflation spiralling. But it won't be fine for British industry and the two-thirds of British households that have a large mortgage. And then the jobs will begin to vanish too.

Both the US and the UK have escaped a slump in 1999 but only to stack up even bigger trouble for the new millennium. After the new year celebrations will come the economic hangover. ☆

# Renationalise us, says Railtrack-73% of voters agree!

**What more could underline the case for nationalisation than Railtrack asking the Labour government to take part of it over?**

But that is precisely what has happened. Railtrack bosses have asked the government to renationalise part of the company in an attempt to free more resources to pay for the improvements to safety that have been demanded. In the next 10 years it is due to finance a £28 billion renewal and investment programme.

Railtrack has suggested that the government take a 15% stake in exchange for a stake in the London Underground or the franchise to run trains on the East Coast main line. One rail company source said: "The state has to take a stake in Railtrack to get the rights issue away. They can't do it otherwise."

The options facing Railtrack are: higher borrowing, higher profits or fresh liquidity. So why offer part renationalisation? What they mean is after the furore of the Paddington disaster and the need to shell out more on investment in the crumbling infrastructure, profits are going to be squeezed and the City won't be too keen on investing. The state should come and bail Railtrack out by ensuring that it picks up the bill for the new shares.

But why should the government continue to dish out tax payers money to fat cat profiteers? Railtrack and the rest of the railways should be brought back into public ownership, but with no compensation to the fat cats.

There is huge support for renationalisation, especially after Paddington. In a Guardian/ICM poll 73% wanted Railtrack to be brought back into public ownership. Astonishingly, this included two-thirds of Conservative voters! Unfortunately, the Labour government is embarrassed about renationalisation. "Nothing brings such horror to the New Labour countenance as nationalisation", says the editorial of the Observer (24th October). "John Major wanted to show his Thatcherite credentials by rail privatisation; now New Labour want to show its Thatcherite credentials by privatising the air traffic control."

Renationalisation is opposed by Lord (Gus) MacDonald, the transport minister, as well as John Prescott. The latter went so far as to emphatically stress that the Paddington disaster had nothing to do with privatisation. But nobody believes this nonsense.

Pressure must be exerted on the Labour government to act now. It is time to drop the privatisation of air traffic control - a potential Railtrack in the sky - and push through emergency legislation to take the railways back into public ownership. If Railtrack can raise the idea of part renationalisation, then the Labour movement must push for the whole hog to be taken over without delay.

Resolutions should be put through trade union branches, Labour Parties, shop stewards committees and other bodies demanding Labour act immediately. ☆

## Socialist appeal Industrial Conference

### No to 'social partnership'! For militant trade unionism!

Speakers include (in personal capacity):

**Steve Jones**, National Executive, RMT

**Alan Woods**, editor *Socialist Appeal*

**Nigel Pearce**, National Executive, National Union of Mineworkers

**John Ireland**, National Executive, Communication Workers Union

**Jeremy Dear**, National Organiser, Newspapers, National Union of Journalists

**Jack Munday**, Joint Sites Committee

**Leonidas Karygianni**, Athens Trade Union Council, Greek Building Workers Executive

**Saturday, 6th  
November  
11 am - 5pm  
Imperial Hotel,  
Southampton  
Row, London WC1  
(nearest tube Holborn  
or Russel Sq).**

For more information:

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# The meaning of October



*"The October revolution laid the foundation of a new culture, taking everybody into consideration, and for that very reason immediately acquiring international significance. Even supposing for a moment that owing to unfavourable circumstances and hostile blows the Soviet regime should be temporarily overthrown, the inexpungable imprint of the October revolution would nevertheless remain upon the whole future development of mankind."*

*Trotsky - The History of the Russian Revolution*

**This month is the anniversary of the Russian revolution. To commemorate this we are republishing an article by Alan Woods written in late 1992. The second part will be in the December *Socialist appeal*.**

**In the first of a two-part series on the history and significance of the Russian Revolution, Alan Woods examines the process of revolution, the events leading up to the February Revolution, the role of the Provisional Government and the part played by Lenin and Trotsky in the revolutionary movement.**

75 years ago this month, an event took place which altered the entire course of human history. For the first time - if we exclude the brief but glorious episode of the Paris Commune - the working people took power into their own hands and began the gigantic task of the socialist reconstruction of society.

Now, on the eve of this great anniversary, the masses of the former Soviet Union are faced with the spectre of capitalist counter-revolution. Amidst the most appalling scenes of economic and social chaos, all the dark forces which had been swept aside by the revolutionary flood-tide, are creeping back. Private property, speculation, the Orthodox church, racism, nationalism, pogroms, prostitution, unemployment and inequality - like a swarm of grotesque and poisonous insects from under a stone.

And this is hailed as a "new dawn" by the Western media. People capable of

identifying such monstrosities with "progress" are capable of stopping at nothing. No lies are too great for them, no distortion too vile. And the avalanche of lies has already begun.

In order to justify the capitalist system, it is necessary to blacken the name of socialism, and especially of scientific socialism, as expressed in the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Above all, it is necessary to show that revolution is a bad thing, that it represents a horrible deviation from the "norms" of peaceful social evolution, which inevitably ends in disaster.

Not long ago, we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the French revolution. Despite the fact that this was a bourgeois revolution, despite the fact that it occurred two centuries ago, nevertheless, the ruling class in France and elsewhere could not refrain from denigrating the memory of 1789-93. Even such a distant historical event was an uncomfortable reminder to the rich and powerful of what happens when a given socio-economic system reaches its limits. They even propose to change the terrible words of the "Marseillaise"!

Yet revolutions happen, and not by accident. A revolution becomes inevitable when a particular form of society enters into conflict with the development of the productive forces, which form the basis of all human progress.

One of the greatest books of the twentieth century is Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. This monumental study of the event of 1917 has never been equalled. It is an outstanding example of the use of the method of historical materialism to elucidate the processes at

work in society. The events leading up to October are not merely recounted, but explained in a way which has a validity and an application far more extensive than the Russian Revolution itself.

In an effort to discredit the October Revolution, the ruling class, through the agency of its hired hacks in the Universities, has assiduously cultivated the myth that the Bolshevik Revolution was only a "coup d'etat" pulled off by Lenin and a handful of conspirators.

## Intervention of Masses

In reality, as Trotsky explains, the essence of a revolution is the direct intervention of the masses in the life of society and politics. In "normal" periods, the majority of people are content to leave the running of society in the hands of the "experts" - the parliamentarians, councillors, lawyers, journalists, trade union officials, university professors, and the rest of them.

Over a period, which may be a protracted period of years or even decades, society may acquire the appearance of a certain "equilibrium." This is particularly true in a prolonged period of capitalist economic upswing, like that which lasted for nearly four decades after the end of World War Two.

In such periods, the ideas of Marxism are not readily accepted or understood, because they appear to fly in the face of "the facts." On the contrary, the illusions of the reformists Labour leaders of a slow, gradual, evolutionary change - "today better than yesterday, and tomorrow better than today" - achieve a widespread audience.

However, beneath the apparently

calm surface, powerful currents are building up. There is a gradual accumulation of discontent and frustration in the masses, and an increasing malaise among the middle layers of society. This is particularly felt by the intellectuals and students, who are a sensitive barometer reflecting the changing moods of society.

In a marvellously graphic phrase, Trotsky refers to the "molecular process of revolution", which goes on in uninterrupted fashion in the minds of the workers. However, since this process is a gradual one which does not affect the general political physiognomy of society, it goes unnoticed by everyone - except the Marxists.

In just the same way, the ground appears to be solid and firm under our feet ("as steady as a rock," as the saying goes). But geology teaches that rocks are by no means steady, and that the ground is constantly shifting beneath our feet. The continents are on the march, and in a state of perpetual "warfare," one colliding with another. Since geological change is not measured by years or even centuries, but aeons, the continental shifts remain unnoticed except for specialists. But fault-lines build up, subject to unimaginable pressures, which eventually erupt in earthquakes.

**Wars and Revolutions**

Similar fault-lines exist in the best-ordered societies. The sudden eruption of wars and revolutions obey approximately the same laws as earthquakes, and are just as inevitable. The moment inevitably arrives when the mass of people decide that "things can't go on like this any longer." The break occurs when the majority move to take their lives and destiny into their own hands. This, and nothing else, is the inner meaning of a revolution.

For the well-fed academic, a revolution is an aberration, a "freak," a deviation from the norm. Society temporarily goes "mad," until eventually "order" is restored. For such a psychology, the most satisfactory mental image of a revolution is that of a blind herd which has suddenly panicked, or, better still, a conspiracy hatched by demagogues.

In reality, the psychological changes which occur with extreme abruptness in any revolution, are not accidental, but are rooted in the whole previous period.

The human mind, in general, is not revolutionary, but conservative. As long as conditions are generally acceptable, people tend to accept the existing state of affairs within society. Consciousness tends to lag far behind the changes which occur in the objective world of the economy and society.

Only in the last resort, when there is no alternative, do the majority opt for a decisive break with the existing order. Long before this, they will try by every means to adapt, to compromise, to seek the imagined "line of least resistance."

That is the secret of the appeal of reformist politics, especially in a period of capitalist upswing, but not exclusively.

The October Revolution was the product of the entire preceding period. Before finally opting for the Bolsheviks, the Russian workers and peasants had already passed through the experience of two revolutions (1905 and February 1917) and two wars (1904-5 and 1914-17).

Tsarist Russia, which was numbered as one of the principal imperialist states with a powerful army, was nevertheless an economically backward capitalist power. By the law of combined and uneven development, large-scale industry was established in a handful of centres (mainly Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Western region, Urals and Donbass) as a result of Western investment. However, the vast majority of the population were peasants, sunk in conditions of almost medieval backwardness. In many respects, the social composition of Russian tsarism was similar to that of many Third World countries today.

Despite its numerical smallness, the Russian working class set its stamp on events very early on. In the stormy strike wave of the 1890's, it announced its existence to the world. From that moment, the "labour question" was to occupy a central position in Russian politics.

The stormy growth of industry in the early years of this century led to a rapid growth of the working class. Unlike Britain,



where capitalism experienced a slow, gradual, organic growth for 200 years, the development of capitalism in Russia was telescoped into a couple of decades.

As a result, Russian industry did not have to pass through the phase of handicrafts, small cottage industry, through manufacture to large-scale enterprises. Huge factories were established with the most modern techniques imported from Britain, Germany and the USA. Along with the most modern technology imported from the West, came the most modern and advanced ideas of socialism.

From the 1890's onwards, Marxism succeeded in displacing the old terrorist and utopian socialist trend of Narodism as the dominant tendency in the workers' movement.

**Narodniks**

The more sophisticated critics of Bolshevism try to draw a distinction between civilised "Western" Marxism, and crude, barbarous Leninism, a product, allegedly, of Russian backwardness.

As a matter of fact, there is little or nothing of a specifically Russian character about the ideas of Lenin, who spent all his life tirelessly combating the Narodniks for their "Russian road to socialism."

Both Lenin and Trotsky dedicated their lives to the defence of socialist internationalism. Their ideas can no more be





considered "Russian" than Marx's ideas be portrayed as "German." Lenin and Trotsky developed and expanded Marxism, but defended the fundamental ideas and principles worked out by Marx and Engels from 1848 on.

The first great test for the Russian Marxists came in 1905.

The deep social crisis was brought to a head by the Russo-Japanese war, which ended in a military disaster for tsarism. On the ninth of January 1905, the working people of St. Petersburg assembled, with their families, for a peaceful demonstration on the square of the Winter palace. Their aim was to present a petition to the tsar - the "little father."

The bulk of these workers, most of whom had only recently come from the villages, were not only religious, but monarchists. The Marxists (or Social Democrats, as they were then called) had very small forces, and were split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. When they tried to distribute leaflets denouncing the monarchy, in several places the workers tore up the leaflets and even beat them up.

Yet within nine months the same workers had organised a revolutionary general strike and a soviet, and by the end of the year, the workers of Moscow had risen in armed insurrection.

In all the urban centres the Social Democrats become transformed into the

decisive force. The 1905 revolution was defeated in the main because the movement in the countryside only got underway after the workers in the towns had suffered a defeat.

For a number of years (1907-11), Russia was plunged into the dark night of reaction. Yet by 1911-12, there was a new beginning, characterised by a massive strike wave (partly reflecting an upturn in the economy), which, beginning with economic demands, rapidly took on a political character.

During this period the Bolsheviks gained a decisive majority in the organised working class. They broke with the opportunist Menshevik wing in 1912 and set up the Bolshevik Party.

It should be remembered, however, that the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had been tendencies in the existing traditional mass party of the workers - the RSDLP (Russian Social Democratic Labour Party), and even after 1912, the Bolsheviks still called themselves the RSDLP (B).

### First World War

On the eve of the First World War, Russia stood once more on the brink of revolution. It is possible that the Bolsheviks could have come to power then, but the situation was cut across by the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914. During the war, the Bolshevik party was decimated by arrests and exile. The youth, which was the party's main avenue of recruitment, was conscripted into the army, where the worker element was scattered in a sea of backward peasant soldiers.

In exile, Lenin was in contact with maybe a couple of dozen collaborators. In 1915, at the Conference of socialist internationalists in Zimmerwald, Lenin joked that you could put all the internationalists in the world into two stage-coaches.

At a meeting of Swiss young socialists in January 1917, Lenin said that he probably would not live to see the socialist revolution. Within a few weeks, the tsar had been overthrown, and by the end of

the year, Lenin was at the head of the first workers' government in the world.

How to explain such a dramatic turn of events? Vulgar historians explain revolution as the product of extreme misery. That is one-sided and false. If that were true, as Trotsky explains, the masses in a country like India would always be in revolt. The victory of reaction in the period of 1907-11 was facilitated by the economic crisis which, coming after a political defeat, temporarily stunned and disoriented the workers. As Trotsky predicted, it took an economic revival (1911-12) to allow the movement to recover.

### Booms and Slumps

In reality, neither booms nor slumps in and of themselves cause revolutions. But it is the rapid successions of boom and slump, the interruption of the "normal" pattern of existence, which provokes general uncertainty and instability, and causes people to question the existing state of things. Even more profound are the shocks caused by wars, which turn the world upside down, uproot millions and compel men and women to shed their illusions and finally stand face to face with reality.

The February revolution was a concrete expression of the fact that the old regime had reached an impasse. As in 1904-5, the sledge-hammer of military defeat served to expose the inner rottenness of tsarism.

But to expose something is not to cause it. The crisis on international finance markets and the run on the pound recently exposed the chronic weakness of the British economy. But the decay of British capitalism has taken place gradually over a period of decades, disguised by the general upswing of the world economy. This was explained by the Marxists decades ago. The difference now is that, under the relentless pressure of world capitalist crisis, the mass of the British people are beginning to wake up to the fact.

Beginning even during the war, the strike movement in Petrograd assumed sweeping proportions at the start of 1917. The mood of discontent emanating from the industrial centres found an echo in the ranks of the army, suffering from defeat and exhaustion. The crisis of the regime anticipated the movement of the masses.

Every revolution begins, not at the



bottom, but at the top. Its first manifestation is a series of crises and splits in the ruling class, which feels itself to be in a blind alley, and unable to continue to rule in the old way.

Trotsky expresses it in the following sense: "A revolution breaks out when all the antagonisms of a society have reached their highest tension. But this makes the situation unbearable even for the classes of the old society - that is, those who are doomed to break up."

The smell of corruption and scandal always hangs around a regime which has outlived itself. The present-day epidemic of political and financial scandals in Britain, Japan, the USA, Italy, are no more an accident than the Rasputin regime at the court of "Nicholas the Bloody," or the "Pompadour factor" of the Ancient Regime in France.

### Cossacks

Despite all its armed might, its police, its Cossacks, its secret police, tsarism fell at the first serious challenge, like a rotten apple in a puff of wind. The army collapsed like a pack of cards, once the workers confronted it with a manifest determination to change society.

The working-class as a whole learns from experience - especially the experience of great events. The experience of 1905, despite the defeat, had left an indelible impression which immediately re-emerged in February with the creation of the Soviets - elected committees of workers and soldiers - which were at the same time organs of struggle and, potentially, organs of a new power.

As has happened many times in history, in the February Revolution, the workers had the power in their hands, but did not recognise the fact. With correct leadership, the working class could have imme-

diately carried out the socialist revolution. But under the leadership of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, the February revolution ended in the abortion of "dual power."

Revolution means the explo-

sive entry onto the political stage of millions of men and women with no previous experience of politics, in search of a solution to their most pressing problems.

Inevitably, in the first instance, the masses seek the line of least resistance, the easiest solutions, the well-known political figures, the familiar political parties.

In the case of Russia, the war itself had a fundamental effect on the balance of class forces. Here, the "masses" represented, first and foremost, the peasantry, which had been the backbone of the tsarist army. Up to 1914, the Bolsheviks had the leadership of four-fifths of the organised working class. But that situation was altered by the war.

In the February revolution, the entire balance of class forces was changed by the explosive emergence on the scene of the mass of politically untutored workers, who tended to back the Mensheviks. The decisive element in the equation was the army, and here the peasants had a crushing preponderance. The peasant soldiers, recently awakened to political life, looked, not to the Bolsheviks, but to the "moderate" Socialist leaders the Mensheviks and especially the Social Revolutionaries.

The workers, after the experience of 1905, were fearful of a rupture with the peasants in uniform, and, for the time being, were prepared to wait. The combined weight of the peasantry and the politically inexperienced mass of workers swung behind the Mensheviks and the SRs, reducing the Bolsheviks to a small minority in the first stages of the revolution.

### Mensheviks

The masses placed their trust in the reformist labour leaders. And the latter, as always, placed their trust in the "liberal" wing of the bourgeoisie, which in turn, was

desperately striving to defend the monarchy and put an end to the revolution. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, the reactionary generals were preparing a counter-coup.

Not for the first or last time, the workers had fought and conquered, only to be cheated of the fruits of victory by their leadership. The SR and Menshevik leaders were obsessed by a single idea: to hand back the power as quickly as possible to the bankers and capitalists.

The Provisional Government which emerged from the February Revolution was a government of landlords and capitalists calling themselves "democrats." The right-wing Labour ("Trudovik") leader Kerensky entered the government as Minister of Justice. The war minister was the big Moscow industrialist, Guchkov. The "liberal" Milyukov became Foreign Minister.

### Worker activists

The worker activists were deeply distrustful of the government. But among the mass of society there was a wave of euphoria. The masses had illusions in their leaders, and regarded Kerensky as their spokesman in the government.

The prevailing atmosphere of revolutionary democratic intoxication even affected some of the Bolshevik leaders in Petrograd. Lenin was still in exile in Switzerland. The main leaders in Petrograd were Kamenev and Stalin, who succumbed to the pressure for "unity." Instinctively, the Petrograd Bolsheviks came out against the Provisional Government, which they correctly characterised as a counter-revolutionary government. However, Kamenev and Stalin steered the party into a close alliance with the SRs and Mensheviks, and even proposed re-unification with the latter.

From the exile in Switzerland, Lenin watched the situation with alarm. His first telegrams to Petrograd were utterly intransigent in tone and content: "Our tactic: absolute lack of confidence; no support to the new government; suspect Kerensky especially; arming of the proletariat the sole guarantee; immediate elections to the Petrograd town council; no rapprochement with other parties."

After Lenin's return in April, the Bolshevik Party entered into a crisis. This

is a law in a revolutionary situation, when the pressure of alien class forces bears heavily upon the party and its leadership: the pressure for "left unity," the fear of isolation, and the rest.

The tension between Lenin and the majority of the leaders was so great that, immediately after his return, Lenin was compelled to publish his April Theses in Pravda under his own signature.

At the April Conference, where fierce struggle occurred, Lenin warned that, rather than accept the position of Kamenev and Stalin, he would prefer to be alone "like Karl Liebknecht, one against 110" (referring to Liebknecht's courageous anti-war stand in the parliamentary faction of the German SPD).

Lenin explained that the revolution had not achieved its central objectives: that it was necessary to overthrow the provisional government; that the workers must take power, allied with the mass of poor peasants. Only by these means could the war be ended, the land be given to the peasants and the conditions established for a transition to a socialist regime.

In essence, these ideas were identical to the perspectives brilliantly worked out by Trotsky in 1904-5, and known to history as the "permanent revolution."

Lenin's ideas won the day. However, the Bolsheviks remained a minority in the Soviets, and the Soviet leaders - the SRs and Mensheviks - were backing the Provisional Government. And here we see the flexible tactics of Lenin, far removed from ultra-left adventurism. Under the slogan: "Patiently Explain," he urged the Bolsheviks to face to the Soviet workers to put demands on the reformist leaders, to demand action instead of words, to publish the secret treaties, to end the war, to break with the bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands. If they would do these things, Lenin repeated many times, then the struggle for power would be reduced to the peaceful struggle for a majority in the Soviets.

### Taking Power

However, the Mensheviks and SR leaders had no intention of breaking with the bourgeois Provisional Government. In reality, they were terrified of taking power, and were more afraid of the workers and peasants than the counter-revolutionary general staff.

The truth was that the Provisional Government was an empty shell. There were only two real powers in the land, and one or the other had to be overthrown.

On the one hand, the Soviets of workers and peasants' deputies; on the other, the remnants of the old state apparatus, grouped around the monarchy and the general staff, which, under the protective shadow of the Provisional Government, was preparing for a showdown with the Soviets.

### Explosive Growth

One of the main features of a revolutionary situation is the suddenness with which the mood of the masses can change. The workers learn quickly on the basis of events.

Thus a revolutionary tendency can experience explosive growth, passing from a tiny minority to a decisive force, on one condition; that it combines flexible tactics with implacable firmness on all political questions.

At the beginning, Lenin was derided by his opponents as a hopeless "sectarian," who was doomed to impotence by keeping out of the "left unity." However, the tide soon began to flow strongly in the direction of Bolshevism.

In a revolution, Trotsky wrote, "the more extreme always supersedes the less." The workers come to understand the correctness of the ideas of the revolutionary tendency from their own experience, especially the experience of great events.

These are absolutely necessary in order that the workers convince themselves of the need for a radical transformation of society. The different stages in the growth of consciousness of the class are reflected by the rise and fall of successive political parties, trends, programmes and individuals.

The failure of the bourgeois Provisional Government to solve a single one of the basic problems of society pro-



oked a sharp reaction in the main working class centres, especially Petrograd, where the militant proletariat was combined with the revolutionary sailors (who, unlike the infantry, were usually drawn from the factory proletariat, especially the skilled workers).

The constant increase in prices, the cut in the bread ration, caused a ferment of discontent. Above all the continuation of the war raised the temperature to boiling point.

The workers reacted by a series of mass demonstrations starting in April, which indicated an ever-increasing shift to the left in the mood of the workers. In a parallel move, the forces of reaction attempted to mobilise on the streets, leading to a series of clashes.

### Demonstration

The Bolsheviks called a demonstration in April, to put pressure on the reformist leaders, and test the mood of the capital.

Resolutions from the factories and workers' districts flooded in to the Soviet Executive, demanding a break with the bourgeoisie. Workers came to the local committees asking how to transfer their names from the Mensheviks to the Bolsheviks.

By the beginning of May, the Bolsheviks already had at least one third of the workers in Petrograd.

*"Every mass action," wrote Trotsky, "regardless of its immediate aim, is a warning addressed to the leadership. This warning is at first mild in character, but becomes more and more resolute. By July it has become a threat. In October we have the final act." ☆*

# Pakistan... military rule once again

On October 12th Pakistan's army moved once again to take the reins of power directly into its hands. This is the fourth successful coup staged by the army in 52 years. However this coup has more of an accidental character. Although it had been planned for some time, its actual carrying out depended on events beyond the control of the executioners. In fact it was a counter coup.

*By Lal Khan, editor of the Pakistan marxist paper "The Struggle".*



Due to the intense crisis of the regime, Nawaz Sharif was trying to amass more and more power into his hands. During his second tenure in office as Prime Minister Sharif had already dismissed the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the President of Pakistan and the Chief of the Armed Forces.

After the fiasco in Kargill (Kashmir) where the army was forced to beat a humiliating retreat by Sharif, under pressure from US imperialism, there was severe resentment within the army. The army chief Pervaiz Musharaf faced widespread criticism from the lower officers when he visited the garrisons. Sharif and the army chiefs were making scapegoats out of each other. Things were heating up and pressure from below in the army was beginning to take its toll on Musharaf.

Rumours of the coup had been raging for some weeks, yet the military elite was feeling too weak and debilitated to act. Sensing the danger Sharif intensified his interference in the affairs of the army.

He had already elevated a family friend General Ziauddin Ahmed to the coveted post of the head of the notorious I.S.I. (Inter Services Intelligence) agency. This institution played a major role in the counter revolution in Afghanistan during the 80's. It also plays a major role in domestic politics controlling sectarian organisations, fundamentalist groups and infiltrating political parties. This agency and other state secret services often instigate bloodshed, violence, sectarian clashes and other conflicts to destabilise and even overthrow unwanted governments.

As the crisis worsened, Sharif was conspiring to remove General Musharaf, but the military chief struck the first blow by forcibly retiring a key Sharif ally, General Tariq Pervaiz, the corps commander at

Quetta. This created panic in the Sharif camp. The top brass of the army was clearly split and for the first time this came out into the open.

According to protocol General Musharaf was to visit Sri Lanka to attend its 50th anniversary parade and celebrations. Both sides intensified their intrigues and the conspiracy was in full swing before Musharaf's departure for Colombo. They were on a collision course. An open clash had become inevitable.

## General Musharaf

On 12th of October the PIA commercial flight carrying General Musharaf back home was refused landing permission at Karachi airport. The plane hovered over Karachi for 48 minutes. The authorities in the control tower, being directly instructed by Sharif by telephone from the Prime Minister's house, told the pilot to take the plane to Dubai or to some airport in India. But when the pilot complained that there was only six minutes of fuel left he was asked to land at some remote airport in Sindh from where Musharaf could be arrested with relative ease. However, General Musharaf took control of the radio system in the cockpit and ordered his generals to launch a counter operation, the plans for which had been prepared in advance.

A few hours before this episode Sharif had announced the dismissal of Musharaf as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and as the head of the army and had nominated General Ziauddin Ahmed as his replacement. However when the new military boss tried to speak to the corps commanders by phone there was a menacing silence at the other end of the line.

Sharif went to the television station to

speaking live to the "Nation". But the Islamabad TV studios had already been occupied by the troops of the 111th Brigade. All the important buildings and installations of the capital were cordoned off by the Rawalpindi based 10th corps. Sharif's military secretary Brig. Javed Malik tried to threaten the Major commanding the soldiers in the TV station but it was to no avail.

Sharif was arrested and taken into 'protective custody' and whisked away in a military vehicle. This was the end of Sharif's sad saga.

Meanwhile the pro-Musharaf troops stormed the Karachi airport building and rescued General Musharaf's family which had been in police custody for a few hours. They also arrested the police and pro-Sharif army officers and top Ministers and bureaucrats who were at the airport controlling the operation.

The plane landed and General Musharaf took command. Loyalties changed in seconds, even those generals who had received hefty briefcases from Sharif's cronies not so long ago swore to defend the integrity, sovereignty and unity of the sacrosanct armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The coup was complete. Or was it?

The economy is on the verge of bankruptcy, sectarian violence is claiming hundreds of lives, the number of suicides across the country is growing dramatically. Unemployment, corruption, crime, disease, illiteracy, hunger, poverty and misery stalks the land. During the 11 year democratic interlude so-called civilian politicians played havoc with the economy and the assets of the state. They plundered and looted the exchequer and the resources of the country. New records of corruption were set.

Yet in all these eleven years the army never really relinquished power. It was always there in the background looking over the shoulders of the civilian rulers. The army officers enjoyed all the perks and privileges and the civilian rulers were subservient to them in a thousand ways. During these years of civilian rule not a single government was able to complete its tenure. Seven governments changed during this interregnum of a botched democracy.

The first military dictatorship of General Ayub Khan was imposed through a coup on 27th October 1958, eleven years after Pakistan's "independence" from the British Raj in 1947. That military coup came in the aftermath of a corrupt, chaotic and anarchic rule of the feudal and capitalist politicians, who couldn't even formulate a constitution.

The Ayub Khan dictatorship survived till March 1969 when it was removed by another declaration of martial law by Gen. Yahya Khan. The prolongation of the Ayub dictatorship was mainly due to high economic growth rates and rapid industrialisation, which was the result of the spin-off effect of the boom in the West during the 50's and the 60's. However this industrial growth never managed to develop society and raise the living standards as a whole.

Paradoxically, this uneven and combined nature of development created a fresh and virgin proletariat. In 1968-69 this proletariat struck. A movement of the students erupted which culminated in a revolutionary situation. Power had passed from the echelons of the rulership into the streets, factories, shanty towns, villages and towns. The working masses actually felt power in their hands and the fragrance of revolution was in the air.

Unfortunately due to the lack of a Bolshevik party and a Marxist leadership the revolution was diverted along nationalist lines and led to the war of Bengal in 1971. After the humiliating defeat of the Pakistan army in the war, again a revolutionary situation broke out.

However, this time reforms were used to derail the revolution. The installation of the first elected government was the by-product of the revolution. This new PPP government was headed by Ayub Khan's ex foreign minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He had understood the real character of the 1968-69 revolution and accordingly developed a radical Socialist programme during that delicate and exceptional revolutionary

period. This made him a legend which persists till today.

Under pressure from below he carried through massive nationalisation and the most radical reforms in the history of Pakistan. But behind this facade of reform he was carrying out a democratic counter revolution to avert an impending socialist revolution in Pakistan. His reforms become counter reforms in a short period. Inflation and price hikes lead to crisis which was further aggravated by the 1974 world recession.

### Reactionary movement

The discontent of the masses was exasperated by the rightward capitulation of Bhutto. A right wing reactionary movement was initiated at the behest of the CIA and this culminated in the military coup of 4th July 1977 lead by General Zia ul Haq. Bhutto was interned, imprisoned and later assassinated on the gallows of the vicious dictator in April 1979.

This was the beginning of one of the most tyrannical epochs of Pakistan's tragic history. Thousands of workers, peasants, youth, students and political workers were tortured, lashed, imprisoned and hanged. The dictatorship carried out mass genocide of the movements which rose against it. In the 1983 movement in Sindh 1063 people were killed by the army alone. All this brutality was not only tolerated but was actively encouraged and supported by U.S. imperialism.

The Zia dictatorship was also used as a bulwark of reaction by the Americans in the whole region. The counter revolution in Afghanistan was the biggest covert operation ever carried out by the CIA. Four million Afghans were displaced and hundreds of thousands killed in this imperialist sponsored Islamic Jihad (holy war). The manufacture and smuggling of heroin was encouraged by the CIA, to fund the reactionary insurgency. They also provided the technical skills and know-how for converting raw opium into refined white powder (heroin). All this was being conducted under the auspices of the Pakistan army.

This interference in civil society had a significant impact on the discipline and character of the army. The generals and senior officers became

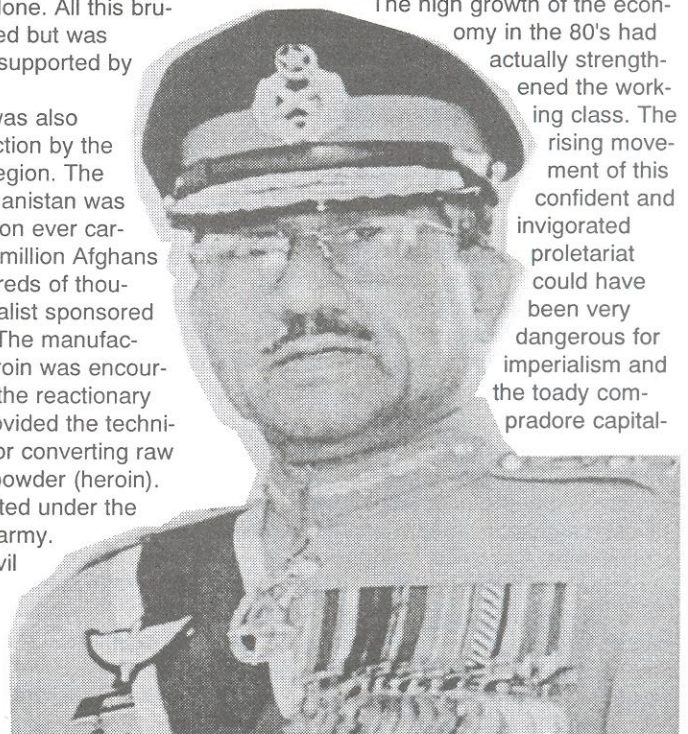
millionaires overnight. The so-called black money ballooned and it started having its political and social impacts on society. The phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism gained new force from the flow of this black money and through U.S. patronage. The Zia dictatorship was based on very strong fundamentalist overtones. It used Islam to gain a social base amongst primitive sections of society.

Its prolongation was also based on other factors. Mainly a relatively high growth rate of an average of 7.2% per annum, high levels of remittances (\$3.2 billion per year) from Pakistani workers abroad, support of imperialism for its own strategic reasons and above all the pathetic role of the 'Democratic opposition leaders'.

As the saying goes "Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad". Zia became over-obsessed with power and he started having the hallucination of being a reincarnated Caliph. He wanted to go to Kabul to say prayers in the main mosque, and proclaim a pan-Islamic state. He was going too far even for his own mentors. Ultimately he was killed in a plane crash orchestrated by the CIA, in August 1988.

However, towards the end of his rule a movement was building up. The huge welcome for Benazir Bhutto on 10th of April 1986 had really sealed General Zia's fate.

The high growth of the economy in the 80's had actually strengthened the working class. The rising movement of this confident and invigorated proletariat could have been very dangerous for imperialism and the toady comprador capital-



ist/ feudal set up in Pakistan.

So on the one hand the ruling elite got rid of Zia and on the other hand they brought in Benazir, prepared and indoctrinated in the ethics of bourgeois democracy and social democratic ideology, to stem the tide, water down the movement and divert the revolutionary upsurge. The masses rallied around the banner of the PPP and more than 10 million thronged the streets and squares of Pakistan to welcome Ms Bhutto, chanting the slogan 'Benazir has come - she has brought the revolution'.

But Benazir did what she was sent to do. She saved the rulers, the military, the state and capitalism. She was able to vent the wrath of the masses with another democratic counter revolution. History was repeating itself both as a tragedy and a farce. The hopes of the teeming millions were dashed and the old order re-established itself under the guise of this democratic facade.

The ensuing democratic period was another nightmare for the masses. For example, the expenditure on health, education and welfare during the years of the military dictatorship in the 80's was 8.4% of GDP, while in the 90's in the so-called "democratic era" this expenditure went down to 2.15% of GDP. This was accompanied by a constant social turmoil and political conflagration. Governments changed like musical chairs. The last regime of Nawaz Sharif came to power after the February '97 elections. He got a thumping two thirds majority in parliament, but only 17% of the electorate actually went to the polls.

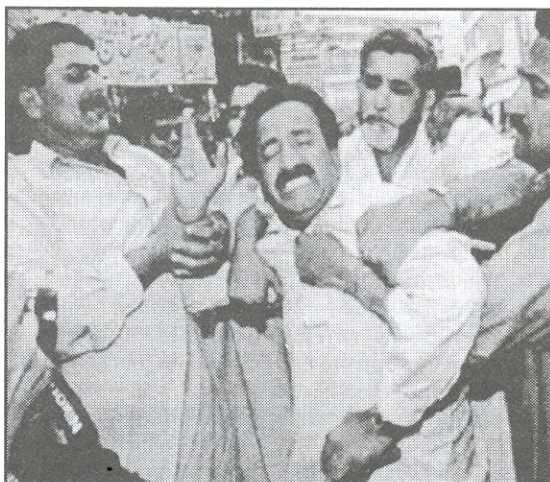
Under the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank, Sharif carried out the most reactionary policies of privatisation, downsizing and massive cuts in welfare and other state subsidies. Unemployment rose by one million yearly, drug addiction and crime soared amongst the youth.

The bad loans of the bank defaulters had reached a staggering Rs.497 billion by the end of Sharif's rule. More than 5000 medium and large scale factory units have closed down due to the tariff policies imposed by the IMF and the WTO. Growth rates have been falling drastically in the last period with an average of 2.8% for the last decade. Now the growth rate in manufacturing industry has gone into the negative, -1.8%. In the agrarian sector the

growth is a meagre 0.35%.

Only one per cent of the population pays taxes here and a majority of those are state employees. The informal (black) economy is almost twice that of the formal (white) economy. The country has a total debt of \$82 billion which consumes 56% of GDP in servicing alone. Around 40% is spent on the military, nuclear bombs and other destructive scrap.

There is hardly anything left for the state to spend on development or social welfare. Pakistan's GNP is \$67 billion while less than thirty individuals, both civilian and military, have stashed away more than \$80 billion in western banks. In its last stint in power of 960 days the Sharif family (one of the largest industrial tycoon families of Pakistan) wound up 80% of their business



in Pakistan and bought shares in South Korean multinationals. Such was the confidence of the Pakistani bourgeoisie in its system.

The literacy rate is officially 26%, infant mortality rates are amongst the highest in the world. More than 40% of the population lives below the official poverty line. The stagnation in society and the lack of a movement has created unprecedented suffocation, frustration, misery and violent attitudes and psychology in society. Hordes of lumpen gangs roam the country in the form of various Islamic fundamentalist organisations. Crime and robbery are conducted under the surveillance of the police. Dozens of youth are killed in police 'encounters'. Law and order is collapsing and insecurity of human life is at its peak. This is probably one of the least gender sensitive societies in the world. Women

are subject to several forms of economic, social and cultural exploitation. The curse of child labour is widespread and it can't be eliminated within the existing system as millions of families survive on the basis of this social stigma.

The conditions in the countryside are even worse. There are still massive landed estates which are owned by a reactionary feudal aristocracy. The middle and small peasants are close to bankruptcy, as the prices of their yields, especially cotton and rice, are lower than their costs. The landless peasants and bonded labourers live an animal existence of the dark ages. Before its fall the Sharif government was confronted by a wave of peasant movements which in some regions were being led by the Marxists. This could have rapidly evoked a movement in the cities where the situation was already very tense. The present military coup has temporarily cut across that development although it may come back very soon. The agrarian problem cannot be solved within the existing system.

The unrest among the oppressed nationalities is creating centrifugal currents in society. The Pakistani/Punjabi ruling classes have been carrying out national repression of the Sindhi, Balouch and other oppressed nationalities along with exploitation and oppression on the basis of gender, race, religion and class. They have failed to complete the formation of a nation state or a nation as such.

However, the reality on the ground is that the national liberation of the oppressed nationalities is not possible on a national basis and under the capitalist system. Only through the class solidarity of the workers of all nationalities and religions and a struggle on a class basis through a social and economic transformation of society can the cultural and other rights of the oppressed nationalities be guaranteed. A voluntary socialist federation of the sub-continent is the prerequisite to achieving this goal.

The demise of the paralysed, debilitated, anaemic and subservient "democratic" regime has once again demonstrated the incapacity of such a set up to solve the problems under capitalism and the crushing domination of the world market. There are no economic resources to sustain this political superstructure. They are being sucked up by the massive corruption of the

so-called national bourgeoisie, the landlords (who have pledged their huge landed estates with the banks and run off with loads of capital to far away lands, and are some of the biggest loan defaulters), the generals in and out of uniform, the chief justices, the bourgeois politicians and the top bureaucrats.

On the other hand with the intensifying crisis of world capitalism the imperialists want to suck every last drop of blood to keep their profits up and their system moving. In reality parliamentary politics had become a profitable business for the ruling elite. In reality the dictatorship of finance capital (black and white) continued even in the so-called democratic interregnum.

The masses could see that and bore the brunt of this democratic orgy. Hence at the demise of madam democracy and the corrupt capitalist Sharif regime not a tear was shed, not a wail was heard and not a gesture of protest was seen. The people were unperturbed, they felt a sort of a meek relief yet there were no real hopes in the new military regime. There was a generalised feeling of bewilderment and concern, still unspoken. This also proves that the Muslim League is less of a party and more of an offshoot of the state, which it uses to erect democratic facades.

The reaction of the predominant political leaders has been pathetic. The fundamentalists are crying for blood. They want the army to impose what they can't do themselves due to their meagre social base. The so-called democrats (bourgeois politicians) have more or less welcomed the coup. A large number of them are lining up to get a post in the "interim set-up". Their greed for power has become obscene.

The reaction of Benazir and the PPP leadership is shameful. While superficially opposing a dictatorship there was a clear welcoming tone for the military coup. History has turned full circle and yet they are expecting this military regime to hold elections and hand her power. The people fought against the dictatorships with blood sweat and tears, and their leaders led them into the dream of peace, prosperity and tranquillity. Yet when they woke the reality was pain, hunger, bloodshed and misery. If democracy was the solution then why the need for a dictatorship? And if the dictators could salvage societies and cleanse them from corruption then why do the struggles

for democracy erupt against the dictators?

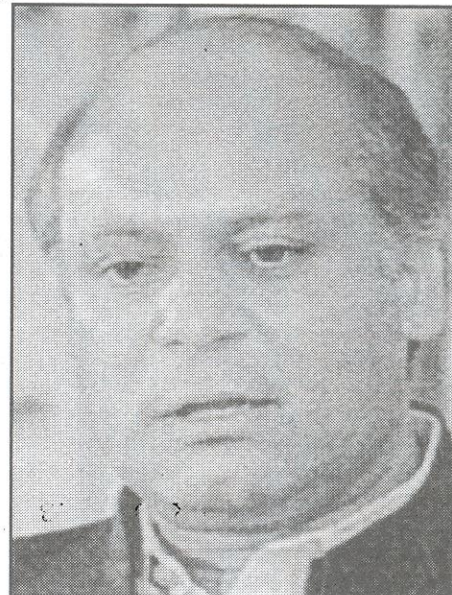
The reaction of imperialism is equally absurd. The Americans used to rely on military dictators to keep their supremacy in the third world, in the 50's, 60's and 70's. They had some bad experiences, from Panama to Pakistan. Hence they reverted to weak democratic regimes which were easier to control and change with relative ease. But even these democratic regimes became so corrupt that they often threatened to undermine the whole economic system. The main objective of the foreign policy of imperialism is to preserve the interests of multinationals and imperialist finance capital. They are not really interested in human rights, child labour, women's rights etc.

The initial denouncement and the subsequent wavering of U.S. and British imperialism is mainly to control this new dictatorship so that it gives top priority to the interests of imperialism. In spite of the threats of sanctions and other demagogic rhetoric of the Americans they will come to some sort of a compromise with this regime.

### Dictatorship

The initial actions of this regime show it to be a weak and confused set-up. The indecisiveness is evident in the delay and contradictions in policy announcements. Indubitably it is a dictatorship which is trying desperately to make itself more acceptable to imperialism. It tried to dispel any impression of its fundamentalist leanings, when the recitation of the Quran before General Musharaf's maiden speech on television was done by a clean shaved mullah.

But its weakness is its most dangerous aspect. It could resort to bloody repression if faced with even a semblance of a resistance movement. It is trying to install a mixture of ex or serving military high ranking officers, technocrats and some "respected" and "clean" (bourgeois) politicians. They have refrained from proclaiming martial law, which all the previous dictators did after taking power. Yet the ordinances proclaimed are as despotic as the martial law ordinances of the past. Musharaf has chosen a new and rather unorthodox name for his rulership - Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan rather than Chief Martial Law Administrator. This alters nothing. This



regime is the beginning of a new dictatorial rule and is a setback for the working masses of Pakistan.

The main dilemma facing the regime is how to cope with the intricacies and complexities of the constitution of the Pakistani ruling class. They have dismissed the national and provincial governments at all levels, suspended the parliament and the constitution has been set in abeyance. In reality according to article 6 of the constitution the punishment for the abrogation of the constitution is death. By removing a democratically elected government through a military coup, they have abrogated the constitution. But who cares? There is no dearth of legal experts and constitutional witch doctors who are always there to oblige the rulers. They will tailor the constitution or find some clauses which will justify the actions and satisfy the whims of the mighty. This could start up a frivolous constitutional debate especially amongst the 'left' and democratic political circles and the media. But in reality it will be a meaningless exercise. The new military regime has taken power, that is concrete.

The question is to what extent it can control the internal dissent within the army, which was so glaringly exposed during this coup, and to what extent this regime can salvage the bankrupt economy and the anarchic society. Like most despotic regimes, this one is also harping on corruption. They have short listed the names of 500 bank defaulters mainly from the previous regime, but it also contains the name of Benazir and her spouse. Orders for their arrest have been issued and it has been announced that they would only be released if they give back their ill-gotten



loot. How far they are going to be successful is another story, although this has got a positive response in some sections of society. It is absurd to even imagine that this rotten and corrupt state apparatus can extract anything from these drug barons and robbers of the ruling elite. They will make a few scapegoats for propaganda purposes. But it would be a fallacy to imagine that they could salvage the economy, fill the deficit, pay up the balance of payments and bridge the budgetary gap with these methods. In any case such anti-corruption fits of despotic rulers are like doses of heroin which further decimate the body of the economy.

They have distanced themselves from the fundamentalists and are trying to accomplish the dictates of imperialism, mainly forcing the defaulters to pay up and trying to channel the black economy into the mainstream to provide further market consumption for the multinationals.

The hesitation of the army to take such an adventurous step was totally justified. The mess is too dirty and complex. They have seemingly no resistance, yet they are too weak and incapacitated to carry out anything concrete. This means that they might not have a honeymoon period for long. Not only will they be under a constant threat from within the army, but the possibility of a mass upsurge looms large. Nothing is going to be solved. The coup had an image of being anti-American and nationalist, but the moment the military rulers entered the echelons of power the music changed.

In a capitalist set-up there is no escape from imperialism, there is no survival possible without accepting the dictates of the world economy. Sharif was trying to portray himself as an anti-fundamentalist zealot and both the Sharif brothers were giving anti-Taliban statements, but it was too late.

The Americans had come to the conclusion that he was too weak and was a burden. Hence all the pro-American pleas of Sharif went unheard. The CIA could not

be ignorant of the events taking place, they distanced themselves and let things proceed on course. The reluctance of the army (the only proficient institution left - according to General Musharaf) to take the helm is a clear indication of the death pangs of the Pakistani state.

Society is in distress beyond repair. Corruption is horrendous. Life is a misery. Democracy has failed. This dictatorship is no answer. Even the minimal rights the oppressed had, have been taken away. This dictatorship must be opposed and condemned by the labour movement and the PPP. Ultimately it is going to crush the working class and the youth to develop 'investor confidence' and the interests of finance capital. The illusion of it bringing back the PPP into power through 'free', 'fair' and 'genuine' elections is a dangerous delusion. This can wreck the movement. The misery is too intense, the pain is too deep, the exploitation has become too intolerable and the endurance is coming to an end.

### Programme

The masses will rise, they have no other option. The PPP will have to come out with its founding manifesto, which says 'that democracy without any socio-economic equality is a farce and insult to the people'. The founding documents of the PPP begin with the sentence "the ultimate objective of the party's policy is the attainment of a classless society, which is only possible through Socialism in our times".

If the PPP doesn't adhere to its basic programme it will pronounce its own demise. But the masses have to live and survive. The present regime will prove to the people that it is a change without a change. This realisation might be decisive for the new dictatorship as well as for the existence of the system. The bewildered masses are going to break out of this phase. They are going to enter the realm of history to change their destiny. Once they do that the PPP leadership will have to succumb to their wishes, otherwise they will be thrown to the sidelines. They will sculpt a new leadership from the movement, which can and will guide them to their destiny - a Socialist Revolution. The basis of that leadership is already laid in Pakistan. ☆

## Irish nurses show the way

The first ever strike by 27,000 Irish nurses represents the severest challenge to capitalism in the state this decade. It will be the largest industrial dispute in the state's history and presents a focus for thousands of disillusioned workers being ignored by the so called "Celtic Tiger".

Nurses grievances have been simmering for four years during which hospital bosses and government ministers have fudged and minimised the issues involved. The origin of the dispute lies in the drastic health cuts directed at the services during the mid to late 1980's, a health care system still under attack and underfunded despite record exchequer returns.

The "Irish Nurses Organisation" (INO) formally transformed itself into an official trade union in the mid 1990's ushering in a new era of militancy in nursing. The INO and PNA (Psychiatric Nurses Association) have formed an alliance with the two public sector unions (SIPTU and IMPACT). The inclusion of the latter unions raises the possibility of non-nursing hospital workers coming out and considerably widening the dispute.

The government has issued a number of hard-line statements in the weeks preceding the action but have recently become alarmed by the stance of other public sector workers including the police and teachers! Irish workers have been constrained for a decade by the scores of "partnership" deals with bosses. Overseeing an era when capitalists have gained untold wealth whilst the workers who have created the boom barely keep par with inflation. Rising housing costs, revelations of tax evasion by political and business figures and public sector unrest will smash in its infancy the proposed Partnership 2000 and will spell the death knell of the current deal.

Whatever the outcome of the current strike its repercussions will continue to haunt the capitalists and their cohorts into the next millennium. ☆

by Rachel Foley.



# SPD's third way: recipe for disaster

**In September 1998, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) scored a big victory in the Bundestag elections, ousting the bourgeois coalition under Kohl which had held power for 16 years. The new "red-green" coalition government under chancellor Schröder was greeted with great hope by millions of workers and youth. Now the SPD as well as the Greens are stumbling from defeat to catastrophe to disaster.**

*by Hans-Gerd Öfinger,  
editor of Der Funke, German  
Marxist journal*

In June 1999 a four month election marathon began with the elections to the European parliament and ended with the council elections in Berlin on October 10th. The SPD losses in the Berlin local elections of October 10 were smaller than many activists and commentators had expected, after the previous disastrous results. Immediately the Schröderites in the party apparatus began to celebrate this as a positive sign of stabilisation. Yet 22.4% was their worst result at the post war period.

The Christian Democrats scored big gains in percentage terms and managed to take over SPD strongholds such as Hessen and the Saarland and the councils of important cities such as Cologne, Düsseldorf and Essen. Should this trend continue and should the SPD lose their strongholds in Schlesweig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia next Spring, the Schröder administration will be in very serious trouble. The election results of 1999 are an expression of frustration and disappointment with the SPD dominated Schröder government.

A general trend has been the very low turn-out in all the recent elections, and there was no major swing of millions to the CDs. In the states of Brandenburg and the Saarland the number of non-voters has doubled since the 1998 general election. Whereas the CDs managed to mobilise their electoral potential much better, the SPD failed completely.

In comparison with the number of SPD voters in September 1998, the SPD lost: 26% in Hessen in February; 38% in Bremen in June; 59% in the Euro elections

nationally; 31% in the Saarland in September; 61% in Thuringia in September; 71% in Saxony in September; 53% in Berlin in October.

In addition to the high levels of abstention, in the Eastern states of Thuringia, Saxony, Brandenburg, and East Berlin, the PDS (the former East German Communist Party) gained at the expense of the SPD. In Thuringia the PDS for the first time eclipsed the SPD, and in Saxony the SPD got less than half the votes cast for the PDS. When there is a strong and established party to the left of the SPD (not just small sectarian grouplets) taking up burning questions facing the workers, gains are possible.

However, the PDS is still mainly a party of the East and has only just managed to reach 3000 members in the West (it has over 85,000 in the East). Nevertheless, in the elections in West Berlin as well as in the municipal elections in the industrial heartlands of the West, in North Rhine-Westphalia, the PDS made some advances and gained dozens of local councillors (over 4% in the City of Duisburg). But elsewhere the PDS in the West is still at the level of a one percenter.

Marxists should not be surprised by the fact that a government lead by the German Blairite Schröder, firmly based on capitalism and liberalism, should come into serious trouble and frustrate their working class supporters. What is surprising is how quickly this has developed.

Under pressure from below and from the unions, last year's SPD election manifesto called for the reversal of some drastic cuts carried out under Kohl. This was enthusiastically applauded in the election rallies and secured victory. But, the manifesto also stated that any further reforms were strictly subject to financial resources.

The Hessen election in February marked the end of the honeymoon for Schröder when the Christian Democrats, on the basis of a racist campaign, managed to score a narrow, unexpected victory. Their reactionary leader Koch had campaigned with law and order slogans, mainly with his opposition to double nationality for immigrants. This was a relatively progressive and overdue piece of legislation proposed by the Schröder government to enable millions of immigrants to acquire German nationality without necessarily



abandoning their original nationality. The CDs mobilised to collect signatures "against the foreigners". This was followed by the victory of Koch. So Schröder rushed to make a watered down compromise on the issue with the liberal Free Democrats (who had been in Kohl's government for 16 years but would not support the racist campaign).

A few weeks later, the conflict between big business and the Schröderites on the one hand and the then finance minister and SPD chairman, Oskar Lafontaine, reached new heights. Twenty-two top company managers warned Schröder not to introduce changes in the tax system proposed by Lafontaine. The major insurance company, Allianz, threatened to move their headquarters abroad. The Handelsblatt newspaper, (the German Financial Times), on March 1st quoted a top manager saying "the revolution of big business has begun". Against Schröder and the minister of the economy, Müller (a non-party member and former industrial manager), Lafontaine made public statements saying that the big companies and banks had enough cash to make a bigger fiscal contribution. With Keynesian ideas and with the idea of exerting an effective political control over the finance sector, Lafontaine provoked conflict with big business and their direct representatives in the cabinet, while at the same time encouraging the unions to fight for bigger wage rises.

In mid March, Lafontaine resigned from all his political positions (cabinet minister, party chairman and MP). Although he had never been a consistent left winger, he had

raised hopes and had been a point of reference for many left activists and trade unionists and was seen as a counterweight to Blairism in the SPD. His resignation came as a major shock to many grassroots activists. Lafontaine left the path open to Schröder who was elected party chairman a month later. It is clear that on the basis of an open political fight Lafontaine could have got enormous support. But he went home, kept his mouth shut and it wasn't until May Day that he reappeared in public criticising the policy pursued by Schröder.

Party and union activists had only just digested the shock after Lafontaine's resignation when, for the first time in 54 years, the German army was involved in warfare. The new coalition, had emphasised "continuity" in German foreign policy and thus Germany should actively participate in the NATO war against Yugoslavia. Whereas in other European imperialist countries such as Britain and France imperialist wars had always been on the order of the day even in the so-called "post war period", in Germany pacifism and the idea of abstention from international military intervention had had a strong basis in the labour movement. The fact that it was a "red-green" coalition that launched the third aggressive war of Germany against Serbia this century produced shock and disgust with many labour movement activists. Under the impact of media and government propaganda a silent majority in the country (especially in the West) and loyal members in the labour organisations tolerated the war without enthusiasm, a number of long-standing party activists left the party.

Another blow came just a few days before the Euro elections: the Blair-Schröder document arguing the "third way" was launched, allegedly to mobilise voters from the "new centre". Yet Schröder's SPD and Blair's New Labour turned out to be the main losers of the Euro elections. Of the 20 millions votes cast nationally for the SPD in 1998, the party lost nearly 12 million this time! The message was clearly felt by many party and union activists. This allegedly "modern" Blair-Schröder document represents an attempt to break with 150 years of labour movement traditions and is a recipe for privatisation, for the further dismantling of the welfare state and attacks on the poor and the unemployed.

The practical consequences of this document followed suit. Just before the summer holidays, the cabinet passed a

programme of cuts to the amount of 30 billion DM per year which will hit especially the unemployed and pensioners, whereas corporations and the rich in general are to be found on the winning side. In the 1998 election Schröder had promised that cutting unemployment was going to be his main aim, now all the emphasis is on "sound budgets", with the unemployed being subjected to more pressure to accept any job however badly paid it might be.

Schröder argues that his course may be unpopular for the time being but will produce results in the medium term and lay the basis for a sustained boom and a return to office in the 2002 elections. However, even before a world economic crisis he could quickly find himself facing the abyss.

This is the most serious crisis facing the SPD for decades. Party and union

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**The fact that it was a "red-green" coalition that launched the third aggressive war of Germany against Serbia this century produced shock and disgust with many labour movement activists.**

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activists at recent conferences have already voiced strong criticism of the government line. But how is this opposition voiced and organised? Left wing activists hope that someone at the top will voice their criticism and express some sort of left alternative. Lafontaine, in his typical individualist approach, gave up all his positions and consulted nobody. Although his new book expresses important points of criticism, he has remained virtually silent for more than six, decisive, months. A close friend of Lafontaine's and his successor as prime minister in the Saarland, Reinhard Klimmt, was seen as a new champion and mouthpiece by many workers in the region when he openly voiced criticism of the cuts and demanded more social justice. With his semi-opposition to Schröder, Klimmt managed to motivate

party activists and thus the SPD in the Saarland lost to a smaller degree than elsewhere and was only defeated by the CDs by a very narrow margin. Yet only three days after his defeat he was bought off as he agreed to move to Berlin to become the new minister of transport in the Schröder administration.

Many of those who are seen as the party "left", MPs and regional leading figures loosely grouped around the "Frankfurter Kreis", have stated they were not too happy about the lack of social justice in the recent programme of cuts but they were going to vote in favour anyway.

A new opposition of some 40 MPs (not the leading figures of the Frankfurter Kreis but a number of "back benchers" with more grassroots connections) has come out with a document against both the Blair-Schröder document and the programme of cuts. Yet the decisive driving force of this loose opposition, former Juso deputy chair Uwe Hiksich, surprised his co-supporters in late September as he suddenly decided to resign from the SPD and join the PDS, again a purely individualist step. Hiksich had won a Bavarian constituency from the CDs in 1998. So far he has not found even a handful of local party activists prepared to follow him. Had he remained an SPD MP voting against the cuts, he could have become a point of reference. His resignation, before any real fight against the Schröderites has begun, has caused further confusion rather than strengthening the opposition.

Nevertheless, in local party organisations there is ferment. Schröder got a hammering from delegates at a regional party conference in Bochum (Ruhr) at the end of September. In Frankfurt local party activists pressed for a special city party conference which eventually condemned the programme of cuts. Some have formed opposition circles with the aim of retying the knot with the "good old days" of Willy Brandt. Although there is a lot of political confusion, the ferment and crisis will continue.

Party and union activists as well as millions of working people are about to learn painful lessons. There is no solution to unemployment or the huge budget deficit without the nationalisation of the banks and giant industrial monopolies. The ideas of Marxism have a strong tradition in the German labour movement and are going to find fertile soil in the coming period. ☆

# Why we cannot trust the food industry

**"Mad cow", dioxin contaminated chickens, hormone injected cattle, genetically modified Soya, animal carcasses used to make animal feed, contaminated mineral water and Coca-Cola. The list of contaminated food is getting longer and longer. There is a common thread running through all this: the search for the highest profits on the part of multinationals in the food industry to the detriment of everybody's health.**

by Michele Fabbri

Each time one of these scandals breaks out it is presented as a one off case. Delays, incompetence and sometimes downright complicity on the part of the authorities, who are supposed to carry out checks, are covered up (see the attempt on the part of the European Commission in August to double the permitted levels of PCB residues - a precursor to dioxins - in food). Dioxin has been discovered in chickens on several occasions in the past. In 1998 unacceptable levels of dioxin were found in milk produced in the North of France. Dioxin spewing out of incinerator plants settled on the grass and got chewed by the cows where it was concentrated mainly in their fat deposits and from there into their milk. At each successive stage the dioxin was more and more concentrated.

Successive concentration is in fact the most subtle and dangerous feature of this carcinogenic substance. Thanks to animal feeding techniques (feed made from animal fats, industrial waste and sewage residues), dioxin concentration increases in the last link in the chain by as much as thousands of times the initial level. Humans are always the last link in this artificially extended chain. There is much more dioxin in human milk than in cow's milk!

The incineration of refuse (especially waste plastic) is still the main source of dioxin emissions. In spite of improvements in the incinerators, the quantity of dioxin produced is still considerable. A modern incinerator, pumps out into the atmosphere about 250 billion picograms of dioxin a year (one picogram = one billionth of a gram).

Available data reveals that in Belgian chickens, that had a lower level of contamination (although well above the legal limit),

they found about 550 thousand picograms of dioxin. The amount of dioxin produced each year by just one incinerator could be enough to seriously contaminate nearly half a million chickens! Obviously not all the dioxin produced by an incinerator ends up in the chickens. However, we should remember that the life span of an incinerator is about 20 years. If we add to this the number of existing incinerators then we get a clearer picture of the potential for dioxin contamination. The average amount of dioxin produced per capita in Europe is 13.2 micrograms. The highest levels per capita are in Belgium, with 45.2 micrograms per capita. This is the result of the high level of refuse incineration: 54% of the total, another European record.

In the 1980s the British food industry pushed for a liberalisation of beef production in an attempt to reduce costs. They did not foresee the disastrous effects on the health of both cows and humans that this would have. In 1996 the discovery of BSE ("mad cow" disease) raised suspicions about the type of feed being used. Again, this was presented as an isolated case, and it was declared that beef in the rest of Europe was safe. Very few bothered to point out that it was the whole of the food industry that was to blame because its methods were based purely on the maximisation of profits.

The farmers took the blame, the very same people who bore the brunt of the financial losses, while in reality they were the victims of the animal feed producers and their allies. Nothing was done to get to the root cause of the problem.

Nowadays the use of animal carcasses in the production of animal feed to boost its protein content is widely criticised, but the meat industry has built its power and competitive edge on an inexhaustible source of raw materials, the recycled waste of the slaughterhouses that is transformed into animal feed. Everyday millions of eggs are exported to the four corners of the world from Holland. Dutch eggs sell all over the world because they are so cheap. How have they managed to reduce the cost of production so dramatically?

The British and the Dutch are not solely to blame for this situation. The finger should be pointed at the Common Agricultural Policy which has been developed by all the national governments of Europe. They continued to authorise the

use of animal based feeds for pigs and chickens. A few months later the EU had to order the destruction of millions of pigs due to the outbreak of an epidemic. This cost about £700 million, half of which was paid by European tax payers. After the Belgian chicken scandal France suggested once again the banning of animal feed produced from animal waste. Once again everything was hushed up!

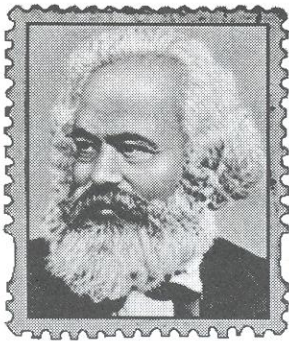
No stop-gap measure will eliminate problems that derive from a productive system, imposed by the Common Agricultural Policy, whose only aim is to increase the profits of the powerful food industry and in particular of the multinational corporations that produce animal feed, antibiotics and growth stimulants. According to official statistics, on livestock farms with less than 100 pigs the cost of antibiotics are about £40 per head. When there is a high concentration of animals in one place the cost can be over £100 per head.

Their aim is not to keep the animals healthy, but to achieve an artificial weight gain through a constant low intensity input of antibiotics in order to avoid even the slightest infection. But bacteria is becoming ever more resistant due to the excessive use of antibiotics and this is causing growing problems in the treatment of infectious diseases.

The scientific committee of the European Union has suggested a ban on the widespread use of antibiotics. But so far the European Union had not taken any notice. There are too many vested interests at stake. This sector alone accounts for \$250 billion of the world market for pharmaceutical products.

It is up to the European labour movement to defend our right to safe food. Leaving this essential task in the hands of environmental or consumer groups means that in the best of cases all that will be achieved is a denunciation of the problem.

So long as food production is in the hands of the capitalists these scandals will continue. Inspections, laws and guidelines will have little effect because the authorities listen more to the large corporations than to the people they are supposed to represent. Good healthy food can only be achieved through the nationalisation of these corporations with a democratic planning of the resources. Even in the kitchen socialism is the only answer. ☆



# MAIL

## CORRESPONDENCE

Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1  
7SQ email: socappeal@easynet.co.uk



Dear comrades,

If you are elderly and need to go into hospital, depending on your general state of health, you may be putting yourself in serious danger. Should

a patient go into cardiac arrest, the crash-team rushes to the ward with the trolley loaded with equipment to resuscitate them. Unless of course the patient has been designated as not for resuscitation. This instruction is written in code on the patient's medical chart as, 'Not for 333' or a similar group of three digits.

The decision 'not to resuscitate' is a medical one which in most cases makes a lot of sense. Resuscitation is a very traumatic experience and to inflict it on a patient with little chance of recovery, or with a poor quality of life is not really in their best interests. Such a decision is discussed with the patient or their family on admittance to the hospital and is reviewed daily. Or is rather, it is supposed to be. due to acute shortage of staff and the continuing over-work of junior doctors, this procedure is sometimes forgotten with the result that a patient whose condition improves may be allowed to die simply because the instruction 'Not to resuscitate' has not been rescinded.

A patient at a major hospital was thought to be in the final stages of a terminal illness disease. The patient, himself a doctor was also convinced he was dying and it was generally agreed that all he would have in the way of treatment during the last days of his life was pain relief. Quite unexpectedly however, the disease went into recession and he began to recover. His health improved daily and he began to take an interest in life once more.

The patient was however very weak as the ravages of his disease had compromised many of his vital organs, but despite this it appeared that he would recover and eventually be allowed home. During one of the night shifts a young nurse happened to notice that even though he was making good progress he was still not to be resuscitated. This worried her greatly and put her in a dilemma. Should she fill out an incident report? Who could she tell? And what if the patient went into arrest during the shift? It would be her responsibility to call out the crash-team but with 'not for resuscitation' on

his chart she could be disciplined.

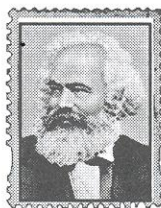
The patient did not arrest and eventually went home but in that he was very lucky, for as far as is known his chart was never amended to allow resuscitation.

A young nurse found herself in a very stressful and difficult position, a patient may have been left to die and some junior doctor could have had the death of a healthy patient on his conscience or have been sued for negligence. And why? Because not enough money is being spent in the right way on the NHS.

All nursing staff are bound to the job by a bond of dedication. All have trained in their various branches, some long and hard over a number of years. A nurse must train for three gruelling years for a starting rate of just over thirteen thousand pounds a year. A police constable trains for three months and starts on half as much again. Where's the justice in that?

It is the duty of a labour government to undo the injustices of the Tory years and restore to NHS workers what they have lost in hours and conditions, but not only that, we must pay them according to their true value to society, not the miserable pittance they get at present.

Yours Fraternally,  
Jane Foster



Dear comrade,

Glaxo Wellcome have announced 1700 job losses, coming 24 hours after the decision from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (Nice); the government's new assessment body for

NHS treatments, which dismissed the company's appeal against rejection of its anti-flu inhaler "Relenza". This was a big set back for Galaxo Wellcome, which is looking for other licenced drugs to replace its highly profitable Zantac, a successful ulcer drug. The majority of the jobs are to go at Dartford plant, Kent, and 200 jobs are to go in Speke, Liverpool.

Nice was set up to regulate new drugs before agreeing to fund them. Its remit are not only to ensure drug safety, efficacious, of a high quality, but cost effective. Cost effectiveness appears not to the liking of the drug companies.

Nice's decision means that this drug will not be available on the NHS. The assessment body's recommendation was based on there being no evidence that the inhaler would be of a benefit to vulnerable groups, for example, the elderly. At present, vulnerable patients are offered an annual influenza vaccination, which as a proven track record.

The pharmaceutical giants, (AstraZeneca and SmithKline Beecham) have joined with Glaxo Wellcome in denouncing Nice, and have jointly wrote to the Prime Minister with the strongest denunciation of government policy since Labour came to power.

Obviously, with a annual turnover of £27bn, any amount of regulation that may effect their profits is unacceptable. Certainly the honeymoon with big business is breaking down and heading towards the 'divorce courts'.

Whilst further regulation of the pharmaceutical industry is a step forward. It still remains a fact that these multinationals bleed the NHS dry. The Labour government must break with big business, and not be held ransom by them. What would be welcome within the NHS is the nationalisation of the pharmaceutical industry. Thus ensuring the NHS is supplied with cheap quality pharmaceutical products.

Yours,  
Jim Thwaite

## Cambridge rent strike!

On 23rd October a demonstration of around 1,500 students from Cambridge University protested against proposed increases in student rents. The mood on the demo was upbeat, but determined. Many students had come with home-made banners. Labour Students sported the only political banner on the demo, and the Labour contingent was the noisiest part of the march, with renditions of the 'Red Flag' and 'I'd rather be a picket than a scab'. The demo was addressed by representatives of strike committees, which have been formed in colleges including Kings and Trinity, the two largest in the University. An 'Access Alliance' has been formed comprising reps from the different strike committees, which are organising the rent strike. In Trinity College at the time of writing, over forty students have pledged non-payment of rent. The movement looks like increasing in scope, and further demonstrations are planned. The students were determined to oppose the rises on the grounds that 'equal access' to students from working class backgrounds would be further endangered and that Cambridge University would further become the exclusive preserve of the rich. ☆

# 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 split 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.

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by Alan Woods

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

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"The present work makes one realise the extraordinary richness and profundity of dialectical materialism which captures historical and socio-economic processes in transition, enabling us to get closer to their living dynamics, and not be deceived by erratic and static images of reality. The author's deep knowledge of Marxist theory, and particularly the thoughts and works of Leon Trotsky, leap from the written page."

Vsievobod Volkov (Trotsky's grandson)

Order your copies from Wellred Books, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ. Make cheques payable to Wellred, add £2.50 for postage.

# A future worth fighting for

We are now only one issue away from the last edition of *Socialist Appeal* to be produced for this year, this decade, this century and this millennium. Many of the problems faced by workers a hundred years ago are still with us. Indeed it can be said that not only the last hundred but the last thousand years represents, yes, a period of great advance for humankind but also must go down in history as a thousand years of exploitation, barbarism and class struggle.

In the last 12 months alone we have seen brutal wars in Europe, the indiscriminate bombing of Iraq, the crisis in East Timor, the struggle of the students in Iran and Indonesia and now the military coup in Pakistan. A visitor from 1000 AD would find on watching the news that the world has not changed that much after all. It is the job of *Socialist Appeal* to ensure that the next 10, 100 and 1000 years are better than the last. That is why we will keep publishing into the 21st Century now before us. Our fight is a socialist one but we need your support. We have, fortunately, no big business backers but instead rely on the support of our readers and sellers. That means you. Please help give us an early millennium present and send whatever donations you can. Cheques etc should be

made payable to *Socialist Appeal* and sent to us at PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ. We would like to thank readers who attended meetings in Brentwood, Edinburgh, Merseyside, London and Southampton for the various donations made at their meetings. Don't forget to redeem the IOUs!

Another £81 has come in from north London sellers from the summer sales of T-shirts together with a number of smaller amounts from the same group of comrades, raised at demonstrations, meetings and through the sale of sandwiches etc. An example of what can be done if you apply yourself to it! Thanks also for the individual donations, including £6 from Steve Amor. We need more. This is also a good point to remind readers of the year 2000 poster calendars available from this office, price £1 each.

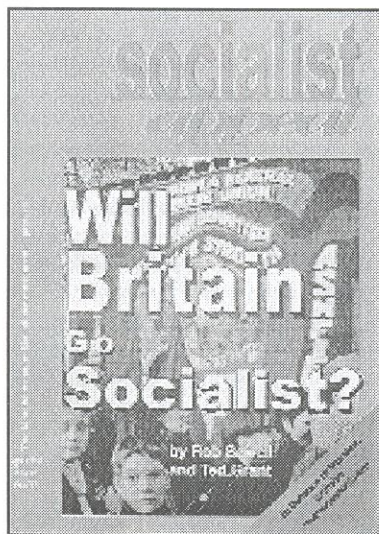
On the sales front, we had a very good few days in Bournemouth at the Labour Party conference where we had our best sale ever of journals, selling out of nearly all the various pamphlets we took! The mood was there for socialist ideas in a way that we have not seen at this event for a few years now. Sellers were also out in force at the various freshers fairs at colleges around the country. New sellers got



going in Oxford and Stoke with good results. Activities also took place in Edinburgh, Reading, Woolwich, Central London and elsewhere. In Cambridge over 100 students signed up to the Marxist discussion group with 24 journals and £15 worth of T-shirts being sold. In St. Andrews over £30 of material was quickly sold. In Southampton, sellers twice ran out of copies of our document on East Timor to sell. The facts cannot be denied—get out and sell *Socialist Appeal*, at the meetings, workplaces, street stalls and so on and you will get results.

Steve Jones

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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.



☆ **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 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.

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

☆ **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.

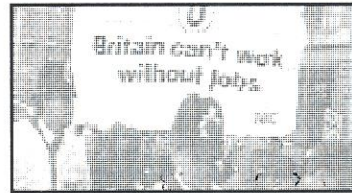
☆ **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.

☆ **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.



☆ **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.

☆ **The repeal of all Tory anti-union laws.** Full employment rights for all from day one. For the right to strike, the right to union representation and collective bargaining. Election of all trade union officials with the right of recall. No official to receive more than the wage of a skilled worker.



☆ **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.

☆ **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.

## ★ 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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